

Both Better and Forever Hebrews 7

Hebrews 7: Introduction

- Years ago we visited the state house in Boston Massachusetts where the corridors are lined with portraits of all the governors. Some of them, like John Hancock, date back a long time.
- No doubt most of them served well, but none of them served permanently.

- It is inevitable: All institutions change leaders from time to time.
 - Governments change governors.
 - Churches change pastors.
 - Football teams change quarterbacks – and coaches – and maybe everyone else on the payroll if they feel the need.
- Christ will never have to give up His position.

The ministry of the Old Testament priests was good.

The ministry of Christ is both better and forever.

Hebrews 7: Outline

- I. The Greatness of Melchizedek **7:1-10**
- II. The Priesthood of Melchizedek **7:11-19**
- III. The Eternal Priesthood of Jesus **7:20-28**

- The first two sections lay the foundation for the third.

I. The Greatness of Melchizedek 7:1-10

(Start with 6:19-20)

7:1 In Genesis 14 Abraham was confronted with a problem.

- A coalition of kings attacked the city of Sodom where his nephew Lot lived and took Lot captive along with all his possessions.
- Abraham took 318 of his own armed men and chased them down, freeing Lot and the other captives and restoring all their goods.
 - Read Genesis 14:16-20.

7:2 The name **Melchizedek** means “king of righteousness.”

- He was king of Jerusalem, or “**Salem**” which means “king of peace.”
- The original Hebrew readers would have caught those things immediately.

7:3 The Bible is inspired as much in what it doesn’t say as in what it says.

- In Genesis, a book with several genealogies, we have no information about the heritage of the kings in Genesis 14.
- That includes Melchizedek – a point the rabbi emphasizes here.
- This allows Mel to serve as an ideal “type” or foreshadowing picture of Christ.
- This absence also allows for the later “priest forever” prophecy that points directly to Christ in Psalm 110:4.
- Add to that the bread and wine, the meaning of his names, and this looks like more than coincidence.

7:3 It's not that Jesus is like him, but that he was "made like the Son of God."

- Some Bible teachers go so far as to suggest that our friend Mel was Jesus Christ – making a pre-incarnate cameo appearance.
- More, however, consider him a "type" or a foreshadowing picture of Christ.
- In other words, Mel was a real person, but the information we have in Scripture is recorded by the Holy Spirit selectively – in such a way as to paint a picture that suggests Christ – long before Christ was ever born.
- *"Melchizedek is the facsimile of which Christ is the reality."*
 - G.F. Hawthorne, Bible Commentator

7:4 The **tithe** or payment of 10% was common in the ancient Near East.

- It could have been a pure act of worship.
- It could also be something like a religious tax.
- When Abraham pays a tithe he is thanking God and simultaneously honoring Melchizedek as God's true priest.

Application:

- Giving a tithe or 10% of whatever God gives us back to Him is something that many believers still practice today.
- As we see from the Genesis passage about Abraham and Melchizedek, this practice predates the Law.
- The Lord wants His people to give generously to His work – a tithe is a good place to start.

7:5-10 This next point about **Levi** made more sense to the highly patriarchal original readers than it probably does to us.

- Levi's descendants became the priestly tribe of Israel.
- The Israelites were later required by law to pay tithes to those with "original Levi's genes," the **sons of Levi** – or **Levites**.
- Since Levi wasn't born yet, you might say he was "still in the loins of" Abraham, his great grandfather.
- There, in that unborn, yet-to-be-conceived state, he paid tithes, "so to speak" to Melchizedek – exemplifying Mel's greatness.

- Again, the original readers of this message were more genealogy-driven, more patriarchal; more "tribal" in their thoughts.
- To understand the point of the passage we need to try to read it more as they did.
- To them Levi paying tithes to Melchizedek was a strong point that showed the superiority of Mel's priesthood.

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II. The Priesthood of Melchizedek 7:11-19

7:11-12 The Levitical priesthood was insufficient – it never made anyone perfect.

- Therefore David, prophesying in **Psalm 110:4**, says that another priest would arise “according to the order of Melchizedek” and remain a priest forever.
- This would require a later change in the Law.

7:13-14 Christ came, not from the tribe of Levi, but from Judah, David’s royal tribe, the tribe of the kings.

- From Judah there were no priests – no one who served at the altar.

7:15-17 Christ’s authority doesn’t come from the earlier commandment in the law regarding Levi’s priesthood.

- That bit of law was destined to change.
- Christ’s authority comes from the power of an endless (literally “indestructible”) life.
- He is, therefore, uniquely qualified to serve in the capacity of a priest on our behalf.

7:18-19 Consider these words from a hymn by Isaac Watts (1674 – 1748):

*Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace
Nor wash away one stain.*

See **Hebrews 10:4**

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III. The Eternal Priesthood of Jesus 7:20-28

7:20-22 God never swore that the Levites would serve as priests forever in the order of Melchizedek.

- That promise or oath was given to the Messiah who was to come.
- The New Covenant we have in Christ is better than – superior to – the Old Covenant that Israel received through Moses.

7:22 **better** This Greek word appears more times in Hebrews than in the rest of the New Testament put together.

- It is not as if the Old Covenant (Old Testament) arrangement was bad and the New Covenant is good.
- The Old Covenant was good, and ordained by God for its time, but the New is better.

7:23-24 As we’ve said earlier, all earthly institutions change leaders from time to time.

- Governments change governors, churches change pastors.
- Football teams change quarterbacks, coaches and everyone else on the payroll if they feel the need.
- The Levitical priesthood was no different.

7:23-24 None of the Levitical priests could serve forever – because they all died.

- This high turnover rate was one of the key insufficiencies of the Levitical priesthood.
- Jesus Christ, on the other hand, will never leave His position – His role as high priest.

7:25 **save to the uttermost** means to save “completely and forever.”

7:26 Christ is truly human like us, but other things set Him apart, making Him a better high priest than any other human:

- **His sinlessness:** He shares our humanity, but doesn’t share in our flaws.
- **His deity:** He has authority over everything and everyone else.

7:27-28 **once for all** This is more like “once and for all,” or “once and only once.”

- Jesus stands out from the earthly priests:
- He has no need give an offering for His own sin, because He is sinless.
- He has no need to offer anything for the sins of others continually, because His one sacrifice perfectly completed this work.

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Take-Away Points

The Lord wants us to give generously to His work.

- Giving a tithe is a good place to start.
- Under the law it was a requirement in Israel.
- As we see from the passage about Abraham and Melchizedek, this practice predates the Law.
- It is not a requirement for us, but more of a pure act of worship that we know is pleasing to God.
- Our giving is more than God’s way of raising money (He owns it all anyway), it’s His way of raising children.

The Old Testament is Christ-centered.

The better you know it, the better you know Jesus Christ:

- The ancient Hebrew world in which He lived.
- The Bible that He and His followers used
- The biblical explanations of who He is
- The biblical background of His ministry

The whole Old Testament, through prophecies and pictures, ultimately points to Him.

God is fulfilling a long-term plan.

- Melchizedek and Abraham appeared on the scene some 2000 years before Christ.
- David prophesied regarding the priesthood of the Messiah some 1000 years before Christ.
- We now look back at the cross of Christ – from about 2000 years in the future.
- And Christ’s ministry will continue eternally.

We can trust God's word.

- The fulfillment of prophecy, as we have seen, can take thousands of years.
- Think again how long it took God to fulfill the promises given to Abraham or promises given through David.
- God's word proved trustworthy.
- We should not fret as if God will now prove to be unfaithful at some future point.

We reap the benefits of Christ's work.

- When we trust in Jesus, He becomes our representative in the throne room of heaven, where He reigns alongside the Father.
- As far as our author, the rabbi, is concerned, this is the main point of all this talk about Melchizedek, the priesthood and so on.

Read **8:1-2**

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