

Hebrews 7

- As we leave chapter 6 and move into 7, we also enter into a four part proof of Jesus' superiority and His sufficiency for the believer
 - Chapter 7 returns to the issue of priesthood and examines the new priestly order that Christ inaugurates and its superiority over the Aaronic priesthood found in the Law
 - Chapter 8 will address the superior nature of the New Covenant in contrast to the old covenant
 - Chapter 9 shows the superiority of the heavenly tabernacle in comparison to the earthly tabernacle
 - Finally, chapter 10 demonstrates the superior quality of Christ's sacrifice over those performed under the Old Covenant
 - These four chapters then lead into the famous chapter 11, the Hall of Faith
 - So in a way, Chapter 6 and chapter 11 are bookends around these four chapters of comparison
 - They act as reminders both at the beginning and at the end of this four part proof that faith in God's word is the hallmark of righteousness and makes possible all good work

Heb. 6:20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Heb. 7:1 ¶ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, Heb. 7:2 to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation *of his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

Heb. 7:3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

- The thesis the writer uses to open this chapter is at the end of verse 20
 - Jesus' role as priest can be fully understood only by studying the person and work of a shadowy figure in scripture...this man Mel

- Let's begin simply by observing what we can about this man from scripture
 - Fact #1: Mel was king of Salem
 - Salem was the capital of the Jebusite dynasty in Canaan
 - Defeated by Joshua in the Promised Land
 - Verse 2 tells us Salem means peace
 - So Mel was the king of peace
 - Fact #2: Mel was a priest of the God Most High
 - God revealed himself to Melchizedek
 - Just as He had done to Abraham in Ur
 - God called him to be a priest
 - And intercessor who could offer sacrifice on behalf of men
 - Which leads us to fact #3
 - Abraham tithed to this priest on his return from defeating the kings

Gen. 14:14 When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

Gen. 14:15 He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.

Gen. 14:16 He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

Gen. 14:17 ¶ Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

Gen. 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.

Gen. 14:19 He blessed him and said,

“Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;

Gen. 14:20 And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”

He gave him a tenth of all.

- Abraham won an impressive defeat against these powerful kings of the east
 - He divided his forces – dumb move
 - His win would have to be a result of God's supernatural intervention
 - On his return, Abraham is met by the king of Salem
 - The king brings out bread and wine
 - And he was a priest
 - And the King blessed Abraham
 - And in return, Abraham paid a tithe to Mel
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 - Fact #4 - The writer also tells us that the name Mel is translated king of righteousness
 - Fact #5: Mel was a man who:
 - Without father, mother, genealogy,
 - No record of his birth and no record of his death
 - He was like the Son of Man, a priest perpetually
- So who was Mel exactly?
 - King of Peace, King of Righteousness, Priest of God, without a record of his beginning or end or genealogy
 - These details have given rise to considerable speculation
 - First, his life recorded in scripture in such a way as a picture of Christ
 - He is obviously very important in his day
 - And he was important enough to include in the Biblical record
 - Yet his origins are conspicuously missing from the Biblical record

- Birth and origins were always important in the books of Moses
 - Genesis = generations
 - It's notable that this man is missing this detail
- In Psalms he is a convenient picture of Jesus
 - So, the writer of Hebrews is doing that here
 - He's showing how Mel was a type of Christ
 - He then expects the reader to learn from that type to better understand Jesus
- A second camp of thought says that Mel was actually a theophany
 - A theophany is any manifestation of God in His creation
 - So the burning bush was a theophany
 - The pillar of cloud in the desert was a theophany
 - The dove descending to rest Christ in the river Jordon was a theophany
 - The view is that Mel might have actually been Jesus Himself in a pre-incarnate form
 - Pre-incarnate = Son appearing to men even before he took human form
 - Verse 3 seems to suggest
 - He was like the Son of Man
- There are several reasons we must reject this view
 - First, the writer never makes that claim outright
 - He always speaks of Mel as a type, one who is like Jesus or who pictures Jesus
 - Jesus priesthood is said to be according to the order (or arrangement) of Mel
 - Secondly, scripture refers to the man as someone who ruled in his day and lived on earth

- A theophany is always temporary fleeting thing
- Mel couldn't have been a true king of Salem and been Jesus the whole time
 - That wasn't consistent with God's purpose in showing Himself from time to time
- In fact, the name Mel includes a surname zedek, which was the dynasty name of the Jubusites
 - Joshua 10:1 shows one of Mel ancestors ruling the same people
- Thirdly, Psalms 110 refers to Mel and the Jesus in the same verse as two different people, not one and the same
- Finally, Heb has already established an important principle concerning priests
 - Only a human beings can serve as a priest on behalf of other human beings
 - A priest is an intercessor
 - One who stands in the pace of those who need representation
 - And therefore, a priest must be a man to represent men
 - If Mel was a priest representing Abraham and other men to God, then Mel must have been a man at that time
 - Not a reincarnate Christ, for a reincarnate Jesus is not a man yet, and therefore He's not a suitable representative for men in that day
- So, I believe that Mel was a man who lived and died
 - He had a mother and father
 - But his life was sovereignty directed by God and carefully recorded in scripture to illustrate something important about Jesus
 - He comes as a high priest and king
 - But a greater priest than the ones established under the law

- So what are those parallels?

Heb. 7:4 ¶ Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.

Heb. 7:5 And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.

Heb. 7:6 But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises.

Heb. 7:7 But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.

Heb. 7:8 In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.

Heb. 7:9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes,

Heb. 7:10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

- The writer asks us to observe how great Mel was
 - Favorite technique
 - He compares him to a historical figure who is already revered - Abraham
 - The writer's first point is that Abraham paid tithes
 - Tithes were required under the Law under three circumstances
 - First, tithes were given to support the priests
 - Num 18:21-24

Num. 18:24 "For the tithe of the sons of Israel, which they offer as an offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said concerning them, 'They shall have no inheritance among the sons of Israel.'"

- A second tithe was collected at three feasts each year
 - Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut 12, 14)
- A third tithe was collected every third year for the poor (Deut 14)
- The most prominent form of tithing was associated with the priesthood

- The author explains this in verse 4
 - The Levites customarily collected a tenth from the people – their brethren – in order to live since they had no inheritance
 - By inheritance we mean they had no land
 - No land meant no way to farm or care for themselves
 - They deserved support because of their service on behalf of the nation
 - They were honored by their brothers by receiving a tithe
- Now the writer points out the paradox in Genesis
 - Abraham was the patriarch of Israel
 - The one who had the promises
 - The father of every Jew
 - Every Jew literally traced their ancestry back to one man
 - Imagine what it would be like if every American could literally trace their ancestry back to a single great...grandfather
 - No man could be counted more worthy of respect among Jews
 - Yet no matter how great Abraham was when he met Mel, he showed that Mel was worthy of even greater respect
 - Abraham tithed to Mel
 - And Mel blessed but Mel blessed Abraham
 - Tithing is a sign of respect where the lesser tithes to the greater
 - And blessings naturally flow from the greater to the lesser (verse 7)
 - Both of these point to Mel as the greater, and Abraham acknowledged him as such

- Then in verse 8, we learn that mortal men received tithes, but this one who we witnessed lives on received them
 - In other words, the Levites were numerous and needed to be, because they died, another was needed to take their place
 - But the Biblical record never discusses the death of Mel
 - And no one is shown to come in his place except Jesus Himself
 - Even in Psalm 110, we're still referring to Jesus' priesthood as the order according to Mel
 - Again, temporary verse permanent comparison
- And then in verse 9, it could be said that even Levi tithed to Mel since Levi descended from Abraham
 - The father's honor always exceeded the son's
 - So if the Levites are to be honored as priests today
 - Then their honor cannot be greater than their father Abraham
 - And their father tithed to Mel
- Review
 - Mel received tithes from Abraham
 - Gave a blessing to Abraham
 - Even Levi would have been compelled to recognize Mel's greater authority
 - His order is perpetual and as a type, he lives on
 - The priesthood of Mel must be greater than the priesthood established under the law

Heb. 7:11 ¶ Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need *was there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?

Heb. 7:12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.

Heb. 7:13 For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar.

Heb. 7:14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.

- The first part of verse 11 says
 - That there is an inseparable relationship between the Levitical priesthood and the Law that established it
 - As one goes, so goes the other
 - For as long as the Levitical priesthood remains in operation, so does the Law that established it
 - But if the Law and priesthood according to the order of Aaron were the pinnacle of God's plan
 - If they had the power to perfect those who followed it
 - Then no other order would have been established
 - The psalmist would never have been inspired in Psalm 110 (long after the Law was given) to declare that the Messiah would be a priest in the order of Mel
 - He would have been a Levite and would have come in the pattern of Levi
 - So the conclusion in verse 12
 - If the priesthood of God changes, then by necessity God has also changed to a new Law which ordains that new priesthood
 - Rom 7:1-6; Gal 3:23-4-7
- Then the writer moves to a discussion of the Messiah Himself
 - He would be from a different tribe, scripture told

- He would be the Lion of Judah
- But no member of the tribe of Judah had ever been permitted to serve as a priest according to the Law
 - Only Levites could serve in that way by the Law of Moses
- Verse 14 confirms that Moses never spoke anything about Judah having that right
 - So, again the Law of Moses can't be the basis for the Messiah's priesthood
 - It had to be according to a new order
- Then he gives the final nail in the coffin of the Mosaic priesthood

Heb. 7:15 And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek,

Heb. 7:16 who has become *such* not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.

Heb. 7:17 For it is attested *of Him*,

"YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER
ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK."

- It's even clearer to us that if another priesthood arises after the Levitical priesthood, then it must be because a replacement was needed
 - And it came in the likeness of Mel
 - Not based on a law stipulating physical requirements
 - But on the basis of an indestructible life
 - In other words, the way you became a Levi priest was based on meeting the family requirements of the Law
 - The way you become a priest in the order of Mel is by having an indestructible life
 - You have to live forever so you can serve as a priest for eternity
 - God set the stipulation in Psalms 110
- Now the author moves to his real point

Heb. 7:18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness

Heb. 7:19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

- The real point here isn't the priesthood
 - The real issues is the Law itself
 - A priesthood existed to mediate the terms of a covenant
 - And the covenant contained the Law
 - But if a new priesthood is established, than a new Law must be in effect
 - And if a new Law, then there must be a new Covenant
 - And now the writer explains why God has established a new covenant, and Law and priesthood
- The former commandment (Mosaic Covenant) was set aside
 - Put away (Heb 9:26) - abolished
 - Because it was weak and useless
 - Weak = it required man will and ability to reach righteousness
 - It's weakness was that it's power depends on man's flesh
 - Useless = it couldn't produce righteousness, only reveal unrighteousness
 - Laws can never produce righteousness
 - Speeding Laws
- Verse 19 confirms this conclusion
 - This weak and useless covenant had to be superceded so that what it couldn't do, the New Covenant would do
 - While the Mosaic Law depended on the flesh, the New Covenant depends on the Spirit

- While the OC only revealed the unrighteousness of men, the NC has the power to actually produce righteousness in men
- We'll talk more about covenant in the next chapter and that's where the writer is going
- Before leaving the subject of priesthood, he adds

Heb. 7:20 And inasmuch as *it was* not without an oath

Heb. 7:21 (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him,

"THE LORD HAS SWORN
AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND,
'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER'");

Heb. 7:22 so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

- The writer is dealing with the issue of permanence here
 - Because if the priesthood could change once, maybe it could change again, right?
 - No
 - The first priesthood was given through the Law which was a covenant to a people for a time
 - With no oath given by God to assure its existence forever
 - In contrast, Psalm 110 says that God swore an oath that Jesus would be a priest forever
 - There can be no new priesthood to replace Jesus
 - And therefore, a more powerful, better, permanent priesthood gives us a guarantee of a better permanent covenant

Heb. 7:23 ¶ The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing,

Heb. 7:24 but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.

Heb. 7:25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Heb. 7:26 ¶ For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

Heb. 7:27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Heb. 7:28 For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, *appoints* a Son, made perfect forever.

- Finally, the culminating verses on priesthood and the transition to a discussion of covenant
 - The former priests came and went
 - One might serve as your intercessor one year, and another on another year
 - Establish relationship with one priest to obtain his favor in interceding on your behalf
 - Then another later
 - A picture of the imperfect system in capable of permanent intercession
 - By contrast, Jesus lives forever and is a priest forever
 - Therefore, He intercedes forever
 - And one He determines to intercede for you, his eternal existence means His intercession is also forever
 - Verse 25
 - He saves you forever
 - There is no back and forth
 - He is always alive to intercede for you
 - Forever saved (*eis panteles*) – to arrive complete

- For we have a high priest who is
 - Holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted
 - In contrast to the old priesthood
 - Which required its own sacrifices before offering them to others
 - The Law appointed weak men who were weak and died in their own sin
 - But God established through an oath the one who would reign perfectly forever
- The choice would be clear for his readers
 - What would be in their minds the next time they were tempted to visit the temple and perform a sacrifice under the Law?