

LIFE Bible Study: Hebrews 7:1-10

For Discussion: What are some items or products that you use that have to be repeatedly changed or replaced? What shortcomings or difficulties are associated with these things that don't last?

Read Hebrews 6:19-7:10

For review: In Hebrews 6:13-20, the author resumes his teaching with an assurance of the certainty of God's promise. Those who place their hope in Christ have God's unbreakable oath on top of His infallible word guaranteeing them the blessings of salvation and close personal communion with Him. In the following section, he takes an in-depth look at the person and significance of Melchizedek. This mysterious figure was first mentioned and connected with Jesus through Psalm 110:4 back in Hebrews 5:6-10. The author now turns to the only other record of Melchizedek in the Bible in order to establish several key truths that will be foundational in the upcoming chapters to his arguments for the supremacy of Jesus and the efficacy of His ministry above all others.

Read Genesis 14:8-20. What does the author of Hebrews highlight as the two primary interactions between Melchizedek and Abraham?¹ What does this reveal about the status of each of them with respect to the other?² Given this difference in status, what does it say about how the priests (and the priesthoods) that would descend from each of them compare to one another?³

¹When Melchizedek met Abraham returning from war, he gave Abraham an unsolicited blessing (v.1, Gen. 14:19) and Abraham gave him a tenth of all the spoils (v.2, Gen. 14:20b).

¹**Blessing** – As with the Levitical priests, Melchizedek had the right to bestow a blessing on behalf of God (Deut. 21:5).

¹**Tithe** – Under the OT system, the tithe was the 1/10 portion that was to be dedicated back to God in tribute.

-It was used to supply the needs of the priests and Levites who were devoted fully to ministering before God (Deut. 10:8-9).

²As with earlier comparisons in Hebrews (E.g., Christ vs. angels – Heb. 1:3-4, Christ vs. Moses – Heb. 3:3-6a), it was a matter of greatness/ superiority of one over the other (v.4, 7).

-Having previously established Abraham as the recipient of God's promise (6:13), an exemplar of faith (6:15), and patriarch of the nation (v.4, i.e., progenitor of the priests), the author concludes that Melchizedek is even superior to him.

-Abraham and Melchizedek each recognized their place with one another and accepted the other person's response as appropriate.

³The author recognizes a fundamental association/similarity between those who are the heads of groups and their members (E.g., Rom. 5:12, 15). Descendants carry on the qualities of their predecessors (E.g., Levi's symbolic tithe "by association" to Melchizedek – v.9-10).

-The interaction between Abraham and Melchizedek demonstrated Melchizedek's superiority over Abraham, which translates to a superiority of Melchizedek's priestly order compared to Abraham's (Levi's great-grandfather).

-“The ancestor embodies, symbolizes, and represents the whole group of his descendants.” –William L. Lane

In verse 3, the author picks up on the silence of Scripture surrounding Melchizedek's origins and record or service to make several declarations about him. These qualities, among others, set him apart from the Levitical priests and show him instead to be a foreshadow of Christ. What are these four descriptions of Melchizedek?

Genealogies and recordkeeping were very important in Abraham's day and even more so for the priests. Given the careful regulation of the priesthood (Ezra 2:61-63) and the grave consequences for transgressing God's order for worship (E.g., Num. 18:1-7), the mystery surrounding Melchizedek's familial origins and priesthood would have been very noteworthy to a Jewish audience.

1) Without father or mother or genealogy – Read this as qualified with “recorded in Scripture.” There is no lineage or record of anyone having come before him to connect him to an earthly bloodline. *This clashes sharply with the priestly requirement of being a descendant of Levi.*

2) Having neither beginning of days nor end of life – Read this as qualified with “recorded in Scripture.” Melchizedek appeared on the scene suddenly and mysteriously and disappeared in like fashion. The lack of a beginning and end implies being unbounded by time: there was never a time when he was not, there will never be a time when he won't be.

3) He resembles the Son of God – This association comes from looking at Melchizedek through the lens of Ps. 110:1, 4 and Heb. 1:13, 4:14. The way the author describes Melchizedek in v.3 in a literary sense is who the Son of God is in a literal sense.

4) His priesthood continues forever – There is no record of a conclusion to Melchizedek's office or of a successor, and the same description is used for Jesus in Heb. 7:24. This unending priesthood ties in directly to his unending life. *The Levitical priests would have meticulously documented the beginning and conclusion of each priest's time of service.*

The primary characteristic that is emphasized for Melchizedek, and by extension Christ, is his eternal priesthood and the distinction of this priesthood from the one that came through Abraham.

What other similarities does the author list in this passage between Melchizedek and Christ?¹ From the two names of Melchizedek, why is peace a fitting counterpart to righteousness in the person of Jesus (Jas. 4:4 & Rom. 8:7-8; Heb. 2:17)?² What differences are there between the priests of the two orders?³

¹**Non-Levites** – It would not have been possible for either to be a priest under the Levitical system because neither were from the tribe of Levi (Jesus was from Judah – Heb. 7:14, Melchizedek was not from any tribe of Israel).

¹**Both king and priest** (v.1) – It was impossible for anyone to be both a king and a priest because they had to be descended from different tribes (Kings = Judah, Priests = Levi).

¹**King of righteousness** (v.2, Heb. 1:8-9, Jer. 23:5-6)

¹**King of peace** (v.2, Isa. 9:5-6, Zech. 9:9-10)

²As sovereign Creator, righteousness is God's benchmark, everything exists in reference to who He is, and everyone must answer to Him (Heb. 4:13).

²Absolute righteousness makes war on unrighteousness and vice versa, they are mutually exclusive.

-There is enmity between sinners and God. As long as rebellion persists, there can be no fellowship.

-Every transgression or disobedience receives a just retribution (2:2), there is a curse and a promise of fire for those who respond to God's goodness with contempt (6:7-8), wrath is reserved for the rebellious and hard-hearted (3:7-11).

-Jesus' righteousness qualified Him to make propitiation to bring peace between God and sinners.

²Jesus' final reign will be marked by peace (Isa. 32:16-18, Zech. 9:10).

³ Order of Levi	Order of Melchizedek
Dependent on the Law to stipulate the roles, regulations, and restrictions of the priesthood.	Predates the Law and was established independently of it (Heb. 5:1, 4-5).
Tithes were received by those (plural) who are mortal (v.8) – They were yet to die and would remain dead (Heb. 7:23).	The tithe was received by one (singular) who is testified to be living (v.8, 7:16, 24-25) – Christ experienced and overcame death; death/suffering was how He was “made perfect”/readied to serve in this role (Heb. 2:10, 5:8-9).
Tithes are given only by the priests' kinsmen (v.5) – There is no inherent entitlement to those tithes.	The tithe was given by a great man with no relation to Melchizedek.
Tithes were mandated by the Law.	Abraham tithed before the Law was given – He was prompted to do so spontaneously out of recognition of Melchizedek's true priesthood.

³Jesus' priesthood marks a return to an already established order. There was no change in plan, God had the end determined from the beginning and gave us a glimpse of it in the person of Melchizedek.

Thinking back to the limitations and frustrations of things that don't last, how much trust have you placed on things that will in the end will show themselves to be lacking?¹ How can the impermanence of things in this life lead you instead to call to mind and rest secure in the eternal priesthood of Christ?² How should this truth influence the way we think about God, how and what we pray for, and how we prioritize the things in our lives?³

¹These can take the form of possessions or immaterial things like status/reputation, achievements, relationships, etc.

²Ask God to use the limited nature of the things of the world to point us away from this life and back to Christ who restores to us the longevity we seek and is Himself our everlasting life.

-Our dissatisfaction with things should not lead us to despair but, rather, cause us to acknowledge their limits and recalibrate our expectations of them.

³We can believe (or agree with) all the right things about God but **how often are we subtly dismissive of who God is** (i.e., not bothering to try preventing God's revelation of Himself from becoming relegated to a place of inconsequence)?

-Are we awed by God or contemplative about who He is? Is an understanding of His attributes and character and what He is doing and will do in history present in our goal-setting and decision-making?

Reflection and application

We each have a longing for durability and endurance that isn't purely a matter of finances or convenience. It resonates with the sense of eternity that God has placed in us (Ecc. 3:11). However, we have lost this longevity in this life and our reality has become one marked by the expectation of endings; things that have a start have a conclusion. The Levitical priests themselves were prevented from continuing in their ministry by death if nothing else, a consequence of the sin that is in the world. But by God's foreknowledge and design, we have a permanent, eternal high priest who was revealed in Melchizedek long before the establishment of the Levitical priesthood, and what Melchizedek was in shadow, Christ is in substance. Through his interaction with Abraham, he showed himself to be the one who was superior, and if the precursor has surpassed the best that the old system had to offer, how much more so the fulfillment!

Christ stands as the timeless, final kingly priest who ministers to our need for righteousness and peace. Lay aside those things that threaten to take your eyes off Him and turn back in repentance, asking God for wisdom to see them for what they are and enabling grace to hold them in their proper place in your life.