

## Hebrews 7:1-10 The Greatness of Melchizedek: A Picture of Christ

Today we begin a very interesting subject in which we will camp out for a while. It is the subject of priesthood. Now, a priest is someone who goes between God and men, a mediator. And we see this subject from the beginning of the Bible, as there have always been men who have functioned as priests. I believe Adam was the first priest in the garden/temple of Eden, God's representative to mankind. I think of Job. Do you remember how he would offer sacrifices to God for his children? I could give more examples of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. And we see the priesthood developed particularly with the Law of Moses and the establishment of the tribe of Levi. When the Israelites entered the land, the other tribes received their inheritance, but the Levites did not receive land, but instead they were appointed by God as a system of priests to take care of the worship of God's people. And the people would give a tithe (a tenth) of their possessions to care for the Levites as God's priests. And at the head of this priesthood was of course the high priest, beginning officially with Aaron.

And this system was in place during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. And this priestly ministry was ALL the Hebrews ever knew. They were raised in it. They knew nothing else. And it was sooooo ingrained into their culture. For me, as I grew up on First Street, I think of the Cannon Mills and the downtown area and the YMCA, and most of all the bells at First Baptist Church striking every hour and then playing two hymns, day after day, week after week, year after year. Even today when I hear the bells, it reminds me of my culture. It is like Muslims who hear the call to prayer 5 times a day in their cities. There are so many cultural norms that are just a part of who we are and to leave them behind would be unthinkable. This was the context of the letter as these Hebrew Christians were leaving behind this system.

And now, with the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the author is saying, the old covenant has been fulfilled in Christ. The old system, in this case, the priesthood has changed. It has been fulfilled in the Messiah, who is superior in every way! This is really what the Book of Hebrews is about, the superiority of Christ! Look at 8:1 **“Now the point in which we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven . . .”** And this priest is not Aaron or his sons, for they are not sufficient. **“For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins”** (Heb. 10:4). With this in mind, the author uses the person of Melchizedek to make his point. Look back at 5:6: Speaking of Jesus' priesthood, he says, **“You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”** And in 5:9: **“And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.”** And then, in cp. 6 he pauses from this topic to give them a warning, urging them to hold fast to their hope. Why? In 6:29 he says, **“We have this a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest FOREVER after the order of Melchizedek.”**

Therefore, today, I want us to consider the GREATNESS of Melchizedek as way to picture the GREATNESS of Christ . . . our great high priest. The main point of the author in vv. 1-10 is that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, and consequently, he is greater than the Levitical priesthood that descends from him. Today, as I retell the story of Melchizedek, I have 5 ways

we see his greatness, which in turn will help us see the greatness of Christ in conclusion. Let's read the text (vv. 1-10).

1. He blesses Abraham. Look at v. 1: **“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him.”** And then in v. 7: **“It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.”** In these verses, we see that the one from whom all the blessings of the earth will come (Abraham), is actually blessed by another. Instead of Abraham blessing Melchizedek, it is the other way around. And the author is arguing that Melchizedek is superior to Abraham, and this is seen in his example of blessing. The “inferior is blessed by the superior.” This story is found in Gen. 14:17-24. (turn there with me.) The context is that Abraham had just rescued Lot his nephew, who had been taken prisoner during a war in which Sodom and Gomorrah were defeated. And so Abraham comes to the rescue. And he miraculously defeats the armies of 4 kings and rescues Lot and all their possessions. And on his way back to where he was living, Melchizedek, the King of Salem comes to meet him. He brings bread and wine and he blesses Abraham (Abram). Look at vv. 19: **“And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”**

This is the most amazing person, this Melchizedek! He is only mentioned here and again in Ps. 110:4. And he BLESSES the most important and greatest figure of Israel's history, Abraham. Abraham should be the one who gives the blessing. I think of the word GOAT. When hockey players think of the GOAT, who is it? (Wayne Gretzky). When basketball players refer to the GOAT, who is it? (Michael Jordan) When Israel thinks of the GOAT, who is it? It is Abraham. There are none of greater importance than him. Through him comes the covenant and the promises. From him, comes the son of the promise. From him come the patriarchs and the 12 tribes, and eventually the Levite family who become the priests. From him come instructions on how to worship God properly. From him come the inheritance of the land. From his posterity, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. When you think of it this way, is there anyone more important to the entire world than “Father” Abraham? Yet, this Melchizedek is the one who is given the honor of blessing because he is superior.

2. He receives tithes from Abraham. Look at v. 2: **“and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything.”** (Again, taken from Gen. 14.). Here, Abraham gives this Melchizedek a tenth of his spoils, as he had just come from war. I won't say much here. But, the importance of this fact is that, by giving a tenth, he acknowledges this man is a priest, one who represents God. Abraham is recognizing his position, and as one who is greater than himself.

3. His name is greater than Abraham. Look at v. 2 again. **“He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness.”** This is the very meaning of the name “Melchizedek,” righteousness. We aren't given specifics about his character. But his name means righteous. Abram means “exalted father” and Abraham means “father of many nations.”

4. His rule is greater than Abraham. Look at the end of v. 2: **“and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.”** Abraham came to this priest straight from a war. He literally, has blood on his hands. Yet, Melchizedek is a king of peace, one who did not take part in Abraham's war.

What is this word “Salem” in Hebrew? It means peace. I remember our days in Tatarstan as my Christian brothers would say to me in that language “Salem” or “peace to you.” You’ve probably heard the word “shalom.” Melchizedek’s city was the place of peace. I love this! Which city is the most famous city in the Bible? It is Jeru . . . . Salem. We aren’t told, but I believe he was the priest of Jerusalem before it became Jerusalem. (But, this is not the author’s point!)

5. His priesthood is eternal. Now, I had a difficult time wording this truth. But the Holy Spirit in directing these words describes the priesthood of Melchizedek as one that is COMPLETELY different than the priesthood of the Levites, those of Abraham’s offspring. Look at v. 3. **“He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.”** Wow! This is an amazing statement! The author is recognizing that the Bible does not mention this man’s parents, nor does it mention when he was born or when he died.

(Now, there are some who say this person was some kind of angelic being. Others say he was the pre-incarnate Christ, appearing as he does at other times in the OT. I do not believe this was the case. Melchizedek was a man. He couldn’t have been a priest if he were not a man. But the key is that the emphasis is not on his manhood. The emphasis is on his priesthood). Let’s think for a moment about the qualifications for a priest under Mosaic Law. A man could not be a priest if he could not identify his mother or father. They had to show they were from the tribe of Levi. Also, a priest could not begin his service until he was at the age of 25. And then at the age of 50 he could retire and stop service. But, the author, by the Holy Spirit says nothing about when his priesthood began or when it ended. Look at vv. 4-10: **“See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.”**

What the author is saying is that the regular rules for priesthood do not apply to him. This truth was COMPLETELY new for those Hebrews. He was not from the Tribe of Levi. The identity of his parents or his birth are not mentioned. This is reference to his priesthood, not his manhood. And as concerns his priesthood, he was greater than Abraham and he was greater than Aaron and the Levites. So my question in conclusion is Why this Melchizedek? Do you remember my sermon title? The Greatness of Melchizedek: A Picture of Christ! Brothers and sisters, the reason for this priest in Gen. 14 and Psalm 110:4 is ONE: to be a type, or a picture of Christ . . . That’s it! It is for sermons like this! . . . That I may speak about his greatness, that WE MAY SEE THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST, TO WHOM HE POINTS! That’s IT! The priesthood of Christ is not determined by the earthly priesthood of the Levites under Mosaic Law. Look back at 5:9: **“And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.”** Look at 6:19-20: **“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having**

become a high priest **FOREVER after the order of Melchizedek.**” Look again at 8:1: “**Not the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven.**” We are not told anything about this Melchizedek until the NT. Why? Because the purpose of his greatness is to picture Christ and HIS greatness!

Think back our truths. 1) Melchizedek blesses Abraham. Do not all God’s blessing come to us through the eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! I think of Eph. 1:3: “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.**” This is EVERY blessing. There is not ONE blessing we receive that does not come down to us IN CHRIST. But, the most important ones are found here in Eph. 1. Verse 7: “**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses . . .**” Verse 11: “**In him we have obtained an inheritance . . .**” Verse 13: “**In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit . . .**”

2) Melchizedek receives tithes from Abraham. The superior one received from the inferior one. Brothers and sisters, what do we give to our Lord! Do we give our money? Do we give our time? Do we give our efforts? Do we give our thoughts? Do we give our families? Yes, but so much more. I think of Rom. 12:1: “**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, my the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**” This life is not about us. It is about Him! And we give it all to Him! Today, is there anything you are not giving?

3) Melchizedek is called the King of righteousness. Who is the Lord Jesus? He is the “Righteous One.” Zech. 9:9 speak of Him, saying, “**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**” In Acts 7:52 Stephen says, “**And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered . . .**” Brothers and sisters, Abraham was not righteous on his own. He was a sinner by nature. The Levites were the same. But, the Lord Jesus was sinless. As God was called the “righteous One, so is the Lord Jesus!

4. Melchizedek rules over the city of peace. Jesus is called the Lord of Peace (2 Thess. 3:16). Is. 9:7 says: “**Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.**” To us Jesus says, “**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.**” John 14:27.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is both the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace. One of my favorite verses is Psalm 85:10 which says: “**Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.**” In Christ, there we find both righteousness and peace. For we are NOT righteous. We are sinners to the core. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We lack RIGHTEOUSNESS! And because of this, we do not have peace with God. For there will be no peace without righteousness. But the Bible says concerning our high

priest, he “suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God . . .” (1 Pet. 3:18). And in 2 Cor. 5:21: **“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** This is the Gospel!

5. His priesthood is eternal. Melchizedek is described as *“without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life . . .”* But notice what it says next. *“but RESEMBLING the Son of God he continues a priest forever.”* Though he was a man, he PRIESTHOOD resembles the Son of God, who IS ETERNAL. Think back to 1:1-3: **“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high . . .”**

Oh, How Great is Our High Priest!