

## Hebrews 7 - Now, Back to Melchizedek

[With the final statement of chapter 6, our author returns to the subject he wanted to introduce near the end of chapter 5 (cf vv 10-11). Following his brief digression to rebuke his audience for their spiritual immaturity and lack of discernment beginning in 5:12, he picks up again with a discussion of Melchizedek. With this in mind, go back and read Hebrews 4:14-5:10 and answer the following questions.]

1. What is the main subject of Hebrews 5:1-10? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who is the primary source of discussion in Hebrews 5:1-10? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who, then, is the primary source of discussion in Hebrews 7? \_\_\_\_\_

[This final question is important as we enter into Hebrews 7. Remember, the distinction and division between chapters 6 and 7 is purely of human origin. Jesus is specifically identified through the end of chapter 4 and into chapter 5. However, His name is not again mentioned until the final verse of chapter 6. Thereafter, it is not until a reference to “our Lord” in 7:14 and His name given in 7:22 that we find Jesus mentioned in terms other than “He.” Melchizedek is used as an example in chapter 7 in the same fashion that Aaron was in chapter 5.

“According to the order of Melchizedek” - “order” from the Greek taxis (S #5010), from which we get our English taxonomy, a means of classifying similar things. Remember our note from Hebrews 5:6... Kingdom-Phylum-Class-Order...? That’s taxonomy! Melchizedek and Jesus are NOT one and the same! Rather, they share certain characteristics which will be borne out in Hebrews 7.]

4. What two titles did Melchizedek wear (Hebrews 7:1)? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What did Melchizedek do to Abraham? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What did Abraham do to Melchizedek? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What does the name “Melchizedek” mean? \_\_\_\_\_
8. The author describes Melchizedek as being “without \_\_\_\_\_, without \_\_\_\_\_, without \_\_\_\_\_...”
9. “Having neither \_\_\_\_\_ of days nor \_\_\_\_\_ of life.”
10. What aspect of Melchizedek is here under consideration (v 3, cf 6:20)? \_\_\_\_\_

[Since the priesthood is here under consideration, all descriptions of Melchizedek must also be understood in light of this aspect of his work. These descriptions of Melchizedek’s family, or lack thereof, testify to his superiority to Aaron and the Aaronic priesthood.

Adam Clarke reminds us for the reason for this particular discourse, which is the purpose of the lion's share of this epistle, to declare the superiority of Jesus. Since some would question the legitimacy of Jesus' claim to the priesthood, not being from the tribe of Levi, the author puts them in remembrance that God chooses those whom He wants to serve as priests.

While Aaron was chosen by God without respect to his ancestors (Heb 5:4), those who followed after him as High Priest did so based upon their biological ties to Aaron. But, as we shall see in verse 23, there were of necessity many priests because those serving in the place of Aaron all suffered death like their forefathers. Like Aaron, no one died to make Melchizedek high priest. But unlike Aaron, no one followed in Melchizedek's place after he himself suffered death.]

11. Now consider how \_\_\_\_\_ this \_\_\_\_\_ was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.”

[This statement expressly testifies to the humanity of Melchizedek. Moreover, the context of the statement speaks to the same. If Melchizedek was, as is claimed by many, a pre-incarnate Jesus, one should neither be astounded nor amazed that Abraham paid tithes to him. But, given the greatness of Abraham, especially in the mind of the Jews, the author says that Melchizedek was a greater MAN than Abraham. And not only thus, but was also greater than Levi himself, from whom all priests descended, including Aaron.]

12. “Those who are of the sons of \_\_\_\_\_, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the \_\_\_\_\_ according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though \_\_\_\_\_ have come from the loins of \_\_\_\_\_; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.”

[The author is affirming the equality, under Moses' Law, of the people (“regular” Jews) and “the sons of Levi,” even though the people pay tithes to Levi. This equality comes from the fact that ALL Jews are the descendants of Abraham, thus all are equal heirs. But the author again holds up Melchizedek as being greater than Abraham and, by extension, greater than Levi and all the other Jews who are Abraham's descendants.]

13. “Even \_\_\_\_\_, who \_\_\_\_\_ tithes, \_\_\_\_\_ tithes through \_\_\_\_\_, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.”

[Since Abraham had no children when he met Melchizedek, and Levi was still 3 generations away, the actions of Abraham are pictured as being performed by his great grandson, Levi.

Beginning in verse 11, the author moves to the need for a changing of the law to permit Jesus to serve as a priest.]

14. For if \_\_\_\_\_ were through the \_\_\_\_\_ priesthood,... what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of \_\_\_\_\_, and not be called according to the order of \_\_\_\_\_?

[The author has now begun the first of a series of arguments showing the limitations and faults inherent in the Law of Moses as opposed to the Law of Christ or the Christian system of faith. This argument begins with the shortcomings of the Aaronic priesthood. This problem was, or should have been, already apparent as the high priesthood had been hijacked by the Herods, disregarding the office's lifetime appointment ("being high priest that year" - John 11:49, 51) and creating confusion in the minds of the people. This confusion is seen in Jesus' arrest, as Jesus was first taken to Annas (John 18:13), then later taken to Caiaphas (Matt 26:57).

15. "For the priesthood being \_\_\_\_\_, of necessity there is also a change of the \_\_\_\_\_. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to \_\_\_\_\_ tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our \_\_\_\_\_ arose from \_\_\_\_\_, of which tribe Moses spoke \_\_\_\_\_ concerning priesthood."

[Consider the many ramifications of this text. First, God gave the Law of Moses. Therefore, He would not, in fact, could not, ignore the teaching of the law, not even to make His Son a priest. God respected the law He gave.

Second, though the birth of Jacob's sons was more than 1500 years in the past, the Jews' meticulous record keeping permitted them to know that Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. No such records can be found today due to Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. There's not a so-called or self-proclaimed Jew alive today who can tell you his tribe.

Third, the silence of God in the matter of Judah and the priesthood was prohibitive, but only because God had spoken to the priesthood as belonging to another tribe, specifically, Levi. When God specified Levi as the priestly tribe, He did not have to specifically forbid any other tribe from serving in that role.

This principle of silence is sorely needed in the religious world and in the church today. In our present culture, many are clamoring for the legitimacy and acceptance of homosexuality, particularly homosexual marriage. The claim is often heard, "Jesus never said anything about homosexuality," or, "Jesus never forbid homosexuality." While it is true that Jesus never spoke directly to the matter of homosexuality, He did speak to the matter of marriage in Matthew 19:4-6. In speaking to the matter directly, and in confirming what has been true since man was created (Gen 1-2), Jesus didn't have to say anything else, nor did He have to specifically forbid any other unions. What He approved and authorized is sufficient to prohibit anything else.

The same foolish argument is used in the church today in an attempt to justify instrumental music, "praise teams," and the like, e.g., "The New Testament doesn't forbid it."

What the New Testament approves and authorizes is congregational singing (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). The lack of New Testament commentary on the matter of instrumental music in worship is not sufficient to authorize it, because the New Testament has spoken directly to the kind of music God requires in worship. Had God simply said to “make music,” we would have been at liberty to do whatever we pleased that met that criteria. But that’s not what God commanded.]

16. “For on the one hand there is an \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ commandment because of its \_\_\_\_\_ and unprofitableness, for the \_\_\_\_\_ made \_\_\_\_\_ perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a \_\_\_\_\_ hope, through which we draw near to God.”

[The word translated “annulling” appears as “rejected” in Mark 7:9, 30 and John 12:48. It appears as “bring to nothing” in 1 Corinthians 1:19 and “annuls” in Galatians 3:15. In this particular case, the idea of cancellation is intended. Moses’ Law was not destroyed (cf Matt 5:17), but it’s force was negated by the institution and ratification of the New Covenant.

Again we take note of two references to the weakness of the Mosaic Law: 1) It made nothing perfect; and 2) The New Law brings with it a better hope.]

17. “And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an \_\_\_\_\_... by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a \_\_\_\_\_ covenant.”

[This marks the third time the word “better” appears in this chapter. Two are in direct reference to the new covenant of Jesus (v 19, 22) and the other indirectly spoken of His priesthood (v 7).

The parenthetical statement and quotation of verse 21 simply speaks to the fact that the Levitical priests were arbitrarily chosen and continued by reason of birth and the law of Moses. There was no confirmation of their priesthood. On the other hand, the priesthood of Jesus was confirmed with an oath, which oath is again cited from Psalm 110:4. This marks the third time the author has quoted this verse since he took up the matter of the priesthood (cf 5:6, 7:17, 7:21).]

18. Why were the earthly priests prevented from continuing their service? \_\_\_\_\_

19. Why is the priesthood of Jesus unchangeable? \_\_\_\_\_

20. What is two blessings are we are said to receive as a result of Jesus’ unchangeable priesthood?

\_\_\_\_\_

- a. What is meant by the phrase “save to the uttermost?” \_\_\_\_\_

- b. How would this compare or be contrasted to the salvation of the Mosaic Law? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

21. What five attributes does the author attribute to Jesus the High Priest? \_\_\_\_\_

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[“For such a High Priest was fitting for us” (“became us”) seems odd in our modern vernacular. It seems as if Christ is being set up as being worthy of what we deserve, but such would be blasphemous. The author is saying that Christ meets and exceeds every criteria one might desire in a high priest.

In our introductory look at this epistle, we examined a potential date for the writing of Hebrews. I believe it was written in the mid 60s A.D. just before the destruction of Jerusalem. According to Josephus, 83 men served as high priest in Israel from Aaron until Jerusalem’s destruction (Antiquities, 20.10.1). The last of these was a man by the name of Phanas (ibid), also identified as Pinchas, who was appointed by the Zealots (a highly nationalistic Jewish seditionist group). This man was not qualified to serve by birth, though we already know the Jews had abandoned the Divine mandates for the office. Of Pinchas, Josephus wrote that he was “such a clown that he scarcely knew what the high priesthood meant. At any rate they dragged their reluctant victim out of the country and, dressing him up for his assumed part, as on the stage, put the sacred vestments upon him and instructed him how to act in keeping with the occasion” (as quoted in Josephus, the Jews and History, edited by Louis H Feldman).

The description of Jesus in Hebrews 7:26 may be an indirect slap at the then present high priest. Jesus was everything that Phanas/Pinchas was not.]

22. “For such a high priest was fitting for us... who does not need \_\_\_\_\_, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for \_\_\_\_\_ sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up \_\_\_\_\_.”

[There should be no confusion concerning the idea of the high priest offering sacrifices each day for his own sins. The context here is not that the high priest sinned every day, but that Jesus never sinned, thus never once offered sacrifice for himself. Because Jesus never sinned, He was the only acceptable sacrifice for the sins of humanity. The offering of Himself “once for all” has reference to the perfection and finality of the death of Christ which, unlike the sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood, would never need to be repeated.]

23. “For the law appoints as high priests men who have \_\_\_\_\_, but the word of the \_\_\_\_\_, which came after the \_\_\_\_\_, appoints the \_\_\_\_\_ who has been perfected forever.”

[The weakness of the law is again exposed through its priesthood, which law is now contrasted with “the word of the oath,” whose high priesthood is eternal, unchanging and complete.]