

Looking Unto Jesus

Vision Baptist College

Looking Unto Jesus

Studies in Hebrews

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Chapter Seven – A Priest For Ever



Memory Verse – Hebrews 7:25

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Introduction

In chapter seven we return to the discussion of the superior or “better” priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter six was a parenthetical passage that served to admonish the readers to “grow up” in their faith so that they could better understand these deeper spiritual truths.

The discussion of the priesthood of Christ began in chapter five where God explains that Christ is not a priest like the Levitical priests who descend from the family of Aaron, but is a priest after the “order of Melchisedec”. Melchisedec is a mysterious character mentioned only twice in the Old Testament. We see him in the Book of Genesis coming to see Abraham after the rescue of Lot in Genesis 14:18 – 20. He is mentioned again prophetically in the Psalms:

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. (Psalm 110:4)

Chapter seven will compare Christ with this interesting character Melchisedec and will contrast Christ from the Levitical priests. In so doing the Bible will shew that Christ’s priesthood is far superior to what the Hebrews had formerly.

I After the Order of Melchisedec (vs. 1 – 10)

What do we know about Melchisedec?

A His name means king of righteousness. (v. 2)

His name is derived from two Hebrew words: *melek*, which means king; and *tsedek*, which means right.

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Jeremiah 23:5 - 6 refers to Christ and gives us one of the names for God - *Yēhovah tsidqenuw*, which means "The Lord Our Righteousness":

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

B He was the king of Salem. (vs. 1 - 2)

Salem means peace and is also an older name for the city of Jerusalem:

In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion. (Psalm 76:2)

Note - righteousness and peace work together:

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isaiah 32:17)

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."
(Psalm 85:10)

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." (James 3:17-18)

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Hebrews 12:11)

C He was the priest of the most high God. (v. 1)

He was both priest and king. This distinguishes him from the kings of Judah, for they could not serve as priests. (2 Chronicles 26:16 - 21). It is also a contrast from the Levitical priests who did not serve as kings. Note - Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King.

D His lineage is unknown, and he had no known descendants. (v. 3)

Some would say that Melchisedec is actually a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is certainly a type of Christ. The language used here merely indicates that we know nothing about where he came from and we also know nothing about

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the rest of his life and priesthood. Some believe that he is Noah's son Shem who was still alive during this time.

J. Vernon McGee stated this regarding Melchisedec:

Here Melchizedek is a picture of Christ and a type of Christ in another way. The Lord Jesus comes out of eternity, and He moves into eternity. He has no beginning and no end. He *is* the beginning. He *is* the end. You can't go beyond Him in the past, and you can't get ahead of Him in the future. He encompasses all of time and all of eternity. Now how can you find a man who pictures that? Melchizedek is in the Book of Genesis, a book that gives pedigrees—it tells us that Adam begat so-and-so, and so-and-so begat so-and-so, Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob and Esau, and you follow the genealogies on down—it is a book of the families. Yet in this book that gives the genealogies, Melchizedek just walks out onto the pages of Scripture, out of nowhere, then he walks off the pages of Scripture, and we do not see him anymore. Why did God leave out the genealogy of Melchizedek? Because Melchizedek was to be a type of the Lord Jesus in His priesthood. From the prophecy given in Psalm 110 we see that Melchizedek is a picture of Christ in that the Lord Jesus is the *eternal* God, and He is a priest because He is the Son of God, and He is a priest continually. That is, He just keeps on being a priest—there will be no change in His priesthood because He is eternal.¹

The Bible is very specific regarding genealogies. It was important that a priest be able to prove his lineage. (Ezra 2:61 – 63; Nehemiah 7:63 – 65) Yet, Melchisedec has no genealogy. He appears mysteriously and suddenly on the pages of Scripture and leaves the same way.

Consider Wiersbe's comments on Melchisedec:

Melchizedek was not an angel or some superhuman creature; nor was he an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ. He was a real man, a real king, and a real priest in a real city. But *as far as the record is concerned*, he was not born, nor did he die. In this way, he is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. Though Jesus Christ did die, Calvary was not the end; for He arose from the dead and today lives in "the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:16). Since there is no account of Melchizedek's death, as far as the record is

¹ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 552). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

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concerned, it seems that Melchizedek is still serving as a priest and king. This is another way in which he is like the eternal Son of God.²

The New American Commentary presents many of the different historical interpretations of Melchisedec:

The identity of Melchizedek has been the source of considerable discussion and debate. At least seven major views can be delineated. He has been identified by some as a divine being. There are four variations of this view that developed during the Patristic era. A second century Gnostic text identified him as Jesus himself. A sect known as the Melchizedekians arose early in the third century AD. Composed mainly of Jewish converts, it affirmed Melchizedek was a heavenly being superior to Jesus since Jesus was a mediator of men, but Melchizedek was considered a mediator of angels. In the third century, according to Epiphanius (fourth century bishop of Salamis), Melchizedek was identified as the Holy Spirit by the Coptic heresiarch Hieracas. Others understood Melchizedek to be a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.⁵⁴⁷

A second interpretation suggests Melchizedek is an angelic being, perhaps Michael the archangel. A third view, suggested by some Jewish rabbis in the time of Jerome, was that Melchizedek was Shem, the son of Noah. Philo took Melchizedek to be an actual human high priest who represented *nous* (mind) in an allegorical fashion. Carmignac suggested Melchizedek is a symbolic name for the human Davidic Messiah.⁵⁵¹ Kobelski regarded Melchizedek as a historical and a heavenly figure, but not an angel. He was superior to angels but inferior to the Son. Davila suggested he was a tutelary deity of the Davidic house along the lines of ancestral deification in West Semitic royal cults.⁵⁵³ A seventh view takes Melchizedek to be a Canaanite king-priest of Salem (Jerusalem) who was a worshipper of the true God.³

E He was honored by Abraham. (v. 2; vs. 4 – 10)

Melchisedec came out to bless Abraham and Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils from the battle. This passage points out that since Abraham honored this man, then so did Abraham's seed. The Nation of Israel looked to Abraham as their greatest patriarch, yet Abraham submitted to one who was even greater.

Note – the practice of tithing was commanded under the Old Testament Law (Leviticus 27:30 – 32) and was to be given to the Levites (Numbers 18:21 – 25). However, we see from this passage in Hebrews and from Genesis 14 that tithing

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 300). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Allen, D. L. (2010). *Hebrews* (pp. 408–410). Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group.

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commenced before the Law. (also Genesis 28:20 – 22 regarding Jacob, also before the Law) Tithing was also commended by the Lord Jesus:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Matthew 23:23)

Note also that Melchisedec met Abraham with bread and wine which foreshadow the Lord's death and shed blood. It appears that Melchisedec and Abraham observed something similar to the Lord's Supper that we observe today, only their observance foreshadowed and prophesied the death of Christ, and ours remembers it.

II After the Power of an Endless Life (vs. 11 – 28)

This portion of the chapter will contrast Christ's priesthood from those of the priests that served under the law. There are many reasons discussed here as to why Christ's priesthood is superior, but the most important truth is that Christ's priesthood is eternal.

A A change in the priesthood (vs. 11 – 17)

Three times in this chapter it is repeated that Christ is "after the order of Melchisedec". God is driving the point home to these Hebrew believers that Christ's priesthood, though different, was not only legitimate but it was also predicted in the Psalms.

Note in verse 12 that in order for there to be a change in the priesthood, there also had to be a change in the Law. The Old Testament Law provided for no priest descending from the tribe of Judah, and thus had to be disannulled. It is very interesting, however, that the New Testament priesthood of Christ was not a new concept, it was actually older and better than the Levitical priesthood.

B A cancellation of the commandment (vs. 18 – 19)

The relationship that we have with God in the New Testament was something that the Old Testament Jew could not experience. The Old had to be disannulled so that we could experience the blessings and intimacy of the New. The Old could only get us to the entranceway of the outer court, but the New brings us right into the Holy of Holies. The Old was imperfect and the New is much "better".

C A confirmation of an oath (vs. 20 – 22)

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(...The Lord swore and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)" (Hebrews 7:21)

The Lord took an oath and will not change His mind about it. There will be no further changes in the priesthood because Christ's priesthood is perfect and eternal.

D A continuing priesthood (vs. 23 – 25)

Because Christ is unchangeable and perfect, there will never be a need for a future revision in His priesthood:

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Christ "ever liveth", meaning He is always on the job 24/7, every second of every day He intercedes on our behalf.

Notice the phrase, *"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him,"* (Hebrews 7:25a), meaning those who come to God through faith in Christ are saved completely and eternally.

E An eternally consecrated priest (vs. 26 – 28)

Christ is "better" in every way when compared to the earthly, Levitical priests of the Old Testament. He never had to offer a sacrifice for His own sin, because He did not have any. He was completely "holy, harmless, and undefiled". No earthly priest could make that claim. Why would anybody want to turn back to the flawed sacrificial system, when they now had the Perfect Son of God. Christ perfectly meets all of our needs.