Melchisedec Priesthood

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Introduction:

1. Prepare for this review by reading Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalm 110:4 with understanding.
2. God inspired Paul to write Hebrews to show the superiority of Jesus to all O.T. worship.
    1. In order to save Jewish believers from backsliding, he exalted the N.T. over the O.T.
    2. A fundamental and very important aspect of O.T. worship was the Levitical priesthood.
    3. By Levitical priesthood, we mean priests from the tribe of Levi, starting with Aaron.
    4. Paul mentioned Jesus as a priest repeatedly thus far, but this will be a detailed contrast.
3. This chapter returns us to the theme of Jesus Christ's priesthood Paul left in chapter five.
    1. There is a definite interruption for rebuke and warning from Hebrews 5:11 to 6:20.
    2. The interruption concludes by transitional reference to Christ's priesthood (6:20).
    3. Following the interrupting rebuke for ignorance, Paul will present stronger meat.
4. His priesthood so far has been primarily an equivalent comparison to Levitical priests.
    1. The comparisons have thus far included (a) compassion on men due to humanity – Heb 2:10-18; 4:14 – 5:3; (b) a proper call – 5:4-6; and (c) intercessory success – 5:7-10.
    2. The priesthood of Jesus is a theme of Hebrews – no other epistle calls Jesus "priest."
    3. The two great elements of Old Testament religion were the priesthood and the Law.
    4. Paul deals extensively in the book of Hebrews with the sacrificial aspects of salvation.
5. Do you want to learn some deep stuff about Melchisedec that the unlearned cannot grasp?
    1. Paul had to rebuke the Hebrews before proceeding for their slow growth in knowledge.
    2. Men have made Melchisedec to be Shem, a Christophany of the pre-incarnate Jesus, Jesus Himself, a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, an angel, and many Mormon ideas.
    3. The main issue of this chapter is Jesus Christ's superior and perpetual priesthood, so there will be some appeals to Melchisedec that seem obscure and difficult, but are not.
6. Listen to learn how great a priest Melchisedec was to fully appreciate your great high priest!

RESUME OF MELCHISEDEC (7:1-3)

1. Melchisedec was both King of righteousness and King of Salem (Jerusalem), or peace.
    1. "King of righteousness" is the interpretation of his Hebrew name: Malkiy-Tsedeq.
    2. "King of Salem" was his title as the ruler of Salem, or Jerusalem (Psalm 76:2).
2. Melchisedec was also the priest of the most high God, or a priest of Jehovah God.
    1. Moses by inspiration takes note of this fact in the history given by him (Genesis 14:18).
    2. Abraham was not the only one in the world that knew and served the living and true God.

3. Melchisedec was king and priest, and so is the Lord Jesus Christ (I Timothy 6:15; Heb 4:14).
    1. The inspired records of both Moses and Paul quickly tell us about this combination.
    2. Jesus was King of Righteousness (Jer 23:5-6) and also King of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).
4. Pay attention and note historical events merely mentioned here but exploited by Paul shortly.
    1. It is noted by Paul here, but explained in detail later, that Melchisedec blessed Abraham.
    2. Abraham gave a tithe, or ten percent, of all the spoils that he took of the confederacy.
5. How can Melchisedec properly be without mother, father, descent, beginning, or end?
    1. This is easily the most difficult clause of the chapter, though stated differently just ahead.
    2. Where does it say any of this in Moses' historical record (Gen 14:18-20)? It does not say!
    3. His priesthood is the issue. Note chapter context and here, "abideth a priest continually."
    4. Note how Paul wrote there is no Levitical accounting for Melchisedec's descent (7:6).
    5. Note how Paul wrote there is a witness that he lives forever (Heb 7:8; 5:6 cp Ps 110:4).
    6. God's revelation, God's law, does not record a mother, father, family, beginning, or end.
    7. Genealogies were absolutely essential to priests under Moses' law (Ezra 2:62; Neh 7:64).
    8. The genealogical records of the Jews' religion have no account of such for Melchisedec.
    9. By the lack of Mosaic records and by God's oath in Psalm 110:4, he is a perpetual priest!
    10. He is only a type or similitude of a perpetual priest (Heb 7:15; 5:11; 8:5). Believe it.
6. Melchisedec, as a dark type, is here presented made like the Son. Compare 5:11 and 8:5.
    1. He is not the Son of God; He is not really like the Son of God in any literal or real way.
    2. He is a similitude, sign, shadow, type, or illustration of the Son in his priesthood (7:15).

MELCHISEDEC AND ABRAHAM (7:4-7)

1. Paul began his inspired analysis of Melchisedec's priesthood by exalting him over Abraham.
    1. This is inspired wisdom for Jewish believers! You cannot compare higher than Abraham!
    2. If Paul can show Melchisedec greater than Abraham, then Jesus is greater than any Jew!
2. Abraham was a great patriarchal priest in his own right, but Melchisedec was Abram's priest!
    1. Note the altars Abraham made and the offerings he offered (Gen 12:7-8; 13:4,18; 22:13).
    2. Note how God appeared to him and answered his prayers (Gen 17:1; 20:17; Exodus 6:3).
    3. Yet Melchisedec led worship, blessed Abraham, blessed God, and received tithes. Wow!
3. Abraham gave tithes of all spoils to Melchisedec – I mean even the great patriarch of Israel.
    1. The Levitical commandment to receive tithes was a very high honor of one's brethren.
    2. Levi's priests also came from Abraham, but God ordained them to take tithes of brethren.
    3. Melchisedec, who was not in the lineage of Levi, was paid tithes by the great Abraham!
4. Melchisedec blessed Abraham, which proved he was greater than Abraham another way!
    1. Abraham had all the great promises of God – land, innumerable seed, enemies, nations.
    2. Abraham was the most blessed man on earth … but a greater man gave him a blessing.

3. There is no contradicting this point – the one giving blessings is greater than the receiver.
4. In order to give blessings, you must be closer to God and a greater priest than a receiver.
5. Blessings were a function of God's priests (Num 6:22-27) and prove priestly superiority.

MELCHISEDEC AND LEVI (7:8-10)

1. The comparison has been Melchisedec to Abraham, but now it shifts to Levi and Aaron.
    1. After the great patriarch Abraham, the priests of Israel were of very great significance.
    2. They had Urim and Thummim, cursed adulteresses, the earth opened to protect them, a king got facial leprosy for challenging them, they could sanctify the entire nation, etc.
2. Observe how Paul makes another short, subtle reference to the immortality of Melchisedec.
3. It is witnessed that Melchisedec liveth, since God's word records no death of him (Ps 110:4).
4. Levi, father of the Levitical priesthood, paid tithes in God's sight to Melchisedec in Abram.
    1. If Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec, he is clearly much greater than Levitical high priests.
    2. This example of wisdom shows how God sees men seminally in their fathers, like Adam.

MELCHISEDEC AND THE LAW (7:11-14)

1. The law of Moses was very important to Israel and required all priests to come from Levi.
    1. The way they got the law at Mt. Sinai was one of the most dramatic events of the O.T.
    2. The way God described the law for Israel exalted it (Deut 4:6; 6:24-25; 10:13; 32:47).
    3. It was their only means of ceremonial sanctification and closely tied to eternal salvation.
2. If the Levitical order of priests was sufficient, God would not appoint a new order of priests.
    1. Since the Levitical priesthood was from Moses' law, another priest requires another law.
    2. Any other order of priests than those from Levi and Aaron prove the law to be abrogated.
3. Proof that Moses' law had indeed changed was that Jesus' descent was from Judah, not Levi.
    1. The words, "he of whom these things are spoken," introduce Jesus another time (7:3).
    2. There is no allowance or example in all Moses' law of any priest from the tribe of Judah.
    3. It is evident Jesus came from Judah by His mother and father (Matt 1:1-16; Luk 3:23-38).
    4. It is evident that such an overthrow of Moses' law requires a changing of the law itself, which subject Paul spent much time in the book of Hebrews to prove by various means.
4. Here we see the argument from silence is not valid: neither add to nor detract from scripture.
    1. God did not condemn Judah directly, but He ordained them of Levi, which rejects Judah.
    2. Another example of this inspired reasoning is used by Jesus and seen in Matthew 12:3-4.

MELCHISEDEC AND BASIS (7:15-19)

1. Due to Melchisedec's endless life, "it is yet far more evident" of a big change in Moses' law.
    1. The carnal commandment of the law refers to the basis/nature of Old Testament religion.
    2. The law was earthly, physical, material, sensual, external, temporal, fleshly, and visible.

3. Consider the uses of “carnal” in Rom 8:7-8; 15:27; I Corinthians 9:11; and Hebrews 9:10.
4. The New Testament is heavenly, spiritual, eternal, and internal. Consider John 4:23-24.

2. Paul based his argument of perpetuity on one word of Ps 110:4, for ever. Every word of God!
3. The command of Moses’ law for the Levitical priesthood is disannulled due to inferiority.
    1. While true of the entire ceremonial, temporary law, it primarily refers to priesthood here.
    2. Annul. To put an end or stop to (a state of things); to abolish, cancel, do away with. To destroy the force or validity of; to declare invalid or of none effect.
    3. Disannul. To cancel and do away with; to make null and void, abolish, annul.
    4. Dis. Attached to annul, it is an intensive “out and out, utterly, exceedingly.
    5. Consider the use of this verb relative to Abraham’s promise and the Law (Gal 3:15,17).
4. The Law of Moses was weak and unprofitable because it could not make anything perfect.
    1. Paul here introduced more clearly a law change that he will expand upon further, later.
    2. The Law was weak in its priests, sacrifices, requirements, promises, power, results, etc.
5. Jesus Christ makes men perfect, by which hope – of the gospel – we draw nigh unto God.
    1. The promise made to Abraham gave great hope in Jesus (Heb 6:13-20; Gal 3:16,29).
    2. The law was designed to curb transgression and point out hope in Jesus Christ (Gal 3).

MELCHISEDEC AND ORDINATION (7:20-22)

1. The greater the authority involved in constituting an office, the greater that office is valued.
    1. Moses’ law put the priests into office simply by God‘s commandment (Exodus 40:1-16).
    2. Jesus was called to the Melchisedec priesthood by God’s swearing and oath (Ps 110:4).
2. Remember the importance of swearing – it puts an end to any doubt or strife (Hebrews 6:16).
3. If God adds an oath to His word, He gives assurance by two immutable things (He 6:17-18).
4. Paul based his argument here on a single word of Psalm 110:4, sworn. Every word of God!

MELCHISEDEC AND LONGEVITY (7:23-25)

1. A priest or mediator that dies greatly hurts his intercession: his ability and efforts are lost.
2. There were many priests due to the power of death (Rom 6:23; Num 4:3; I Chron 6:1-15).
3. Jesus Christ saves to the uttermost – much more a description of endurance than of degree.
    1. The basis or reason for salvation described to the uttermost is in “seeing he ever liveth.”
    2. The power of an endless life is the basis for Jesus Christ’s superior priesthood (7:16).
    3. The call of Jesus Christ to the priesthood included this salvation in the word “forever.”
    4. There is one mediator between God and men, not a consecutive multitude (I Tim 2:5).
    5. We must never forget or neglect the present intercessory life of Jesus (Rom 5:10; 8:34).

MELCHISEDEC AND IMPECCABILITY (7:26-28)

1. The high priest that has been described thus far is most appropriate and fitting for our case.
    1. Become. Agree or accord with; suit, befit, grace. Congruous, appropriate, fitting.
    2. Consider other uses of this verb with the same sense in Titus 2:1 and Hebrews 2:10.
2. Jesus is a great high priest for He is HOLY (Acts 2:27; 3:14; 4:27; II Cor 5:21; I Peter 2:22).
3. Jesus is a great high priest for He is HARMLESS (Isaiah 53:7; Matt 26:52-54; I Peter 2:23).
4. Jesus is a great high priest for He is UNDEFILED (Isaiah 53:9; Luke 23:22; Hebrews 4:15).
5. Jesus is a priest for He is SEPARATE FROM SINNERS (Luke 1:35; Rom 5:12; Rev 5:1-10).
6. Jesus is a priest for He is HIGHER THAN THE HEAVENS (Eph 1:20-23; Heb 4:14; 9:24).
7. Because Jesus Christ's priesthood is so superior to that of Aaron, His work is also different.
    1. He does not need to daily and continually offer sacrifices (Exodus 29:38-42; Heb 10:1).
    2. He does not need to offer sacrifices for his own sins (Leviticus l6; Hebrews 5:3; 9:7).
    3. He offered one sacrifice one time for sins (Heb 9:12,26,28; 10:10,12,14; I Peter 3:18).
8. The law made sinners priests, but the oath of God made the Holy Son a great high priest.
    1. The law, and rightly so, made men priests that have their own infirmity (Hebrews 5:1-2).
    2. The priests by the law were subject to the infirmity of their own sins (Hebrews 5:3; 7:27).
    3. The priests by the law were subject to the infirmity of their certain deaths (Heb 7:8,23).
9. The oath, which came 500 years after the law of Moses, made Jesus a holy priest forever.
    1. Jesus, victorious over death, is able to be a great high priest for evermore (Heb 7:24).
    2. Jesus, victorious over sin, is made a consecrated – holy – priest before God (Heb 7:26).
    3. Jesus was called to be High Priest by the prophetic oath of God (Psalm 110:4; Heb 7:21).

Conclusion:

1. Do you truly know the real king/priest – Jesus, the Son of God? Do you love your Lord and Saviour?
2. Your life, your essence, your character, your destiny, your value depend on loving and serving Him.
3. The Lord's Table is where you remember what a high priest you have and His sacrifice for you.

For Further Study:

1. Consider these website documents or sermons about Jesus Christ.
2. Consider these additional sermons about Jesus Christ our Lord.