

Our Melchizedekian Priest

Hebrew 7:1-10

Halifax: 29 January 2023

Introduction:

Last week, in Hebrews 6:13-20, we saw how God has made His salvation sure to us by first promising that “blessing I will bless you,” and then by adding to that promise a solemn oath that He will indeed bless us.

- We were told expressly that He did this because He wanted to make His salvation certain to all those who have fled to Christ for salvation.
 - He wants us to have “strong consolation.”
- Christ has gone into the very presence of God as a forerunner to prepare the way for us who will come after.
 - The chapter ended by telling us that “He has become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

I would remind you that previously, the one who wrote Hebrews started to speak about Christ being a priest after the order of Melchizedek,

- but he paused because he was concerned that those who read this letter might not be able to receive that rich truths that he was getting ready to talk about.
- He exhorted us that it will take diligent effort on our part to learn about the glories of our Saviour—that this was a matter that was harder to understand.
 - The issue was not one of mental ability, but one of sluggish commitment to Christ. You don’t have to be super intelligent to know someone well, but you have to be interested in knowing them.
 - We need to be earnest about wanting to know Christ and eager to understand all that He is to us or we will gain nothing from this section.
- I hope that you are all ready to proceed now.
 - Receiving what is graciously given in this passage demands much of you.
 - Yes indeed, the time has come to consider what it means that our Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Give careful attention now as I read our text to you, beginning in Hebrews 7:1 and reading to verse 10.

- This is the word of God.

Hebrews 7:1-10: For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,” ³ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. ⁴ Now consider how great this man *was*,

to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. ⁵ And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; ⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. ⁸ Here mortal men

receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. ⁹ Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Thanks be to God for His precious word.

This passage teaches us that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

- It is an entirely different order of priesthood—an infinitely higher order—that none but the Son of God is able to occupy.
- The purpose of this passage is to set forth to us the glory of our Jesus as the Son of God whose name is Melchizedek—that is, king of righteousness.

We will look at three things that are revealed about the glory of our Jesus here.

- First, our Jesus is revealed as the priest who actually restores us to God Most High.
- Second, our Jesus is revealed as the priest who is of eternity.
- Third, our Jesus is revealed as the priest who excels all others in greatness.

We are great sinners and we need a great priest like this.

- I really appreciate the way Dr. Ligon Duncan presents this text in a sermon he preached on it.
 - He said: “You need to know how great a Savior your Savior is and you need to know how great a priest your great high priest is, because you’ve come here today with big problems and you have big sins, and you need to know that you have a Savior and a priest who is big enough to deal with them. And that is ultimately why the author of Hebrews is writing these words.”
 - Ready yourself, then, to learn about the glories of your Saviour.
 - Be like a runner, getting ready for an important race.

I. First, our Jesus is revealed as the priest who actually restores us to the Most High God.

A. See how verse 1 describes Him as a priest of the Most High God.

- Heb 7:1: “**For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him...**”
 1. This refers to the account we read before in Genesis 14.
 - Abraham had gone to rescue his nephew Lot who had suffered with his fellow countrymen when four kings came through to rob them and take them as slaves.
 - Abraham had 318 male servants in his household who could fight, and with God’s help, he was able to conquer these kings and bring Lot and his countrymen and all of their things back to their homes.
 - But as soon as they return, they meet this priest named Melchizedek, and He is described as a priest of the Most High God.
 - Abraham acknowledges Him as a priest, giving Him a tithe of all the spoils, and He blesses Abraham, as well as provides him and the others with bread and wine.

2. The appearance of this priest is striking because this is the first time in the Holy Bible that we encounter a priest.
 - He seems to come out of nowhere.
 - There is no description of what a priest is or of how He was appointed—He just shows up when Abraham returns in victory with Lot and the others.
 - It is not that they did not know about offering sacrifices to God for sinners.
 - But in those days it was customary for every man to serve as a priest to his own household—and when he grew old, his firstborn son would take his place...
 - We have examples of Cain, Abel, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob offering sacrifices to God in behalf of their households.
 - But in no case do we have a priest who serves families outside his own household—until this mysterious priest shows up!
 - He seems to be a priest for everyone and is treated as such.
 - We have been reminded in Hebrews already that a priest is one who offers sacrifices to God for his sins and for the sins of his people.
 - Abraham was familiar with each man doing this for his household, but now, here is this Melchizedek who comes to serve as a priest to Abraham and the five kings of these cities that Abraham has rescued.
3. It is important that this Melchizedek is said to be a priest of the Most High God.
 - There was much idolatry in this area. The post-flood families of the world had drifted into it over the course of several generations.
 - Even Abraham's family had been guilty of this until God called him out.
 - But here is this priest that is serving the true God—the Most High God—El-Elyon.
 - We are surprised to see that there is such a man.

TRANS> Hebrews tells us that Jesus serves as priest under the order of Melchizedek.

B. Melchizedek's name teaches us about Jesus—that He is the King of righteousness and Peace.

1. We are told that His name Melchizedek means *king of righteousness*, and His name King of Salem means *king of peace*.
 - These names reveal to us that our Jesus, who is a priest after the order of Melchizedek is both King of righteousness and King of peace.
2. This certainly means that He is both a righteous king and a peaceable king.
 - These are admirable qualities.
 - You don't have to go far to find a corrupt king who is an oppressor and a greedy tyrant,
 - but where can you find a king who is both righteous and a peaceable man?
3. But these titles indicate more than that.

- This king is a priest.
 - It is not only that He is a godly king who is righteous and peaceful.
 - It is that He is a king who procures both righteousness and peace for those He serves as priest and for those He represents and offers sacrifices for!
- a. Righteousness is mentioned first.
- As king of righteousness, Jesus is a priest who is able to take His sinful people make them righteous before God.
 - Jeremiah 23:4-6 describes Him like this: ⁴ **“I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,”** says the LORD. ⁵ **“Behold, *the* days are coming,”** says the LORD, **“That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. ⁶ In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this *is* His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”**
 - He is called that because He makes others righteous—something that only the LORD can do.
 - As our King, He represents us and He is righteous.
 - As our priest-king, He offers His sacrifice, offers Himself, to take away our sin.
 - We, who were guilty and condemned, corrupt and in bondage to sin are by Him declared righteous.
 - He mediates God’s promised blessing—what we learned of last week—when we saw that God swore that He would bless us.
 - Melchizedek is the one through whom He brings that blessing and it includes the blessing of righteousness.
 - He is a priest who is King of righteousness, so He becomes the Lord our righteousness.
- b. Peace is mentioned next.
- When Jesus makes us righteous, that brings us peace.
 - Isaiah 32:17 makes the connection between righteousness and peace: **“The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.”**
 - Beautiful words for us in tumultuous world!
 - Romans 5:1 makes the same beautiful connection: **“Therefore, having been justified by faith [declared righteous], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
 - Peace, in the Bible, is that glorious condition of wholeness where everything is what it should be—it is the result of being blessed by God.
 - You are reconciled to Him so that you can enjoy Him. You are restored and made whole so you can live a beautiful holy life.

- Melchizedek the King of Salem brings righteousness and peace together for the people He serves.
 - Our Jesus is a priest who is a priest after the order of Melchizedek.
 - How glorious He is! The King of righteousness! The King of peace! A priest to bring about both for His people.
 - No priest but the Melchizedekian priest can do that!

TRANS> Now let's look at the second way the glory of our Jesus is revealed

II. Our Jesus is revealed as the priest of eternity.

- Melchizedekian priesthood is a priesthood of eternity—not just that it goes on forever, but that it is of eternity.
 - A. In verse 3, it is revealed that our Jesus is from eternity.
 - He is said to be: **“without father, without mother, without genealogy,”**
 1. Unlike the Levites, who had to show that they were from the tribe of Levi before they could serve, there is no mention of where Melchizedek is from.
 - We might suppose that it is merely that His parentage and pedigree is not mentioned, but Hebrews 6:3 goes on to say that He has “neither beginning of days nor end of life.”
 - There is some sense in which the priest who is after the order of Melchizedek is from everlasting to everlasting.
 - As Micah 5:2 put it: His **“goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”**
 - He is transcendent—without a beginning or an end—something that is true only of deity.
 2. Many hold that the author of Hebrews simply uses the fact that neither the birth and death nor the beginning and end of Melchizedek are mentioned to present the eternal nature of Jesus through him.
 - But if the real Melchizedek who came to Abraham is different than what the author of Hebrews says he is—if he is a man with parents but it is just that his parents are not mentioned, it seems odd for him to be used as an illustration of a priesthood that is eternal.
 - It seems much more consistent with what is revealed to say that Melchizedek is a pre-incarnate Christ...
 - When He appeared to Abraham, He as yet had no father or mother and was from eternity.
 - He was yet to be born as a man—
 - Indeed, it was necessary that He be born of flesh. That had to happen for Him to be our priest—but the one who was to do this was the divine Logos, the eternal Son of God and here He appears to Abraham as the one who was yet to become flesh and dwell among us.
 - We know that He appeared as a man on other occasions before He was actually conceived as a human...

- For example, in Genesis 18, three men come to visit Abraham, and one of them is said to be the LORD. He is the divine Logos, the Son of God who reveals God to us.
 - When Isaiah saw the LORD sitting on a throne in Isaiah 6—that glorious vision—we are told in John 12:41 that it was the glory of Christ that he saw...
 - Making preincarnate appearances is not something that the Son of God never does.
 - I do not wish to be overly dogmatic that Melchizedek is a pre-incarnate Jesus—most do not hold to this—but having studied their arguments, I am with many in the early church who believe that He is a pre-incarnate Jesus.
 - Nevertheless, all are agreed that Melchizedek at least represents the eternal nature of Christ.
- B. The conclusion of verse 3 is that being “made like the Son of God,” He “remains as priest forever.”
1. That is what is revealed to us about Jesus our priest. Eternal priesthood is an essential component of the Melchizedekian priesthood.
 - If the order of Melchizedek requires that one be eternal, and it certainly seems to, then the divine Son of God is the only one who is properly speaking a priest after the order of Melchizedek because no other priest can be said to have no beginning.
 - In that He is utterly unique, and if Melchizedek is not Christ, He is not actually a priest after the order of Melchizedek but only appears as such because his genealogy is not mentioned.
 2. That Jesus is a priest forever assures us that there has never been and that there never will be a time when He is not able to make us righteous and to give us peace.
 - He is a priest forever. He never goes off the job.
 - His work makes the blessing that God has sworn to give to His people certain.
 3. Notice how it says that Melchizedek is **made like the Son of God**.
 - The major objection to Melchizedek being the eternal Son of God is that it says Melchizedek is **made like the Son of God**.
 - It is argued that you cannot be *like* someone if you are that one.
 - However, it is actually common for those who wrote the Bible to say that something is *like* something when it *is* that thing.
 - For example, in Revelation 1:13, John says tell us what he saw: “**In the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like (ὅμοιος) the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.**” And of course the one he saw was in fact the Son of God.
 - Likewise, in Daniel 7:13, Daniel says of Christ, “**I was watching in the night visions, and behold, *One* like (ὅμοιος in the Greek translation) the Son**

of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.”

- Clearly, the one Daniel saw was *like* the Son of Man because He *was* the Son of Man.
 - Another example is in Phil 2:7. We know that Jesus came in human flesh—that He was conceived and born of a woman, yet when Philippians 2:7 speaks of this, it says that He “**made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, coming in the likeness of men.**”
 - The word *like* or *likeness* has the same root as the word *like* in our verse when it says Melchizedek was made *like* the Son of God.
4. But whether it is the Son of God or not that appeared to Abraham here, one thing is certain,
- Melchizedek is used to teach us that our priest is eternal—that He has neither a beginning nor an ending, and so remains a priest continually in our behalf.
 - How glorious it is to have the Son of God, the divine Logos, as our priest forever. Nothing can keep Him from doing His work!
 - How sure we can be that as the King of righteousness, He will always make sure that we are righteous, and that as the King of peace, He will always make sure that we are at last complete and whole.

III. The third thing that we are shown about the glory of our Jesus is His surpassing greatness.

- Verse 4 says, “**Now consider how great this man was.**”
 - Then, from verse 4 to verse 10, His surpassing greatness is revealed.
- A. His greatness is demonstrated in three ways.
1. First, in that Abraham paid tithes to him. Abraham!
 - Abraham is the man God singled out to the father of the faithful—of both the Jews and the Gentiles.
 - There are few that are greater than he.
 - Yet, here he is, paying tithes to Melchizedek as his priest.
 - At this time in redemptive history, tithes were given directly to God—they were offered as sacrifices to acknowledge that all they had was from God and was for God.
 - Yet here is Abraham, giving a tithe of all the spoils of war to Melchizedek as a priest who stood between him and God.
 - Hebrews 7:4 draws our attention to this:
 - **Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.**
 - Notice how it says that *even* the patriarch Abraham gave tithes to Him.
- But that is not all.

2. It goes on to say that under the law, the Levites were especially set apart and designated to be priests who offered sacrifices for the people—
 - and for this reason, it was commanded that tithes were to be given to them by their brethren whom they represented.
 - They did the work that the father of the home did in the time of Abraham.
 - But here Melchizedek is such a great one that Abraham himself, from whom the Levites came, pays tithes—showing that Melchizedek was the priest of all the priests that God appointed under the law!
 - Look at what it says in verse 5:5-6: **And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; ⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them [that is, Melchizedek] received tithes from Abraham.**
 - The Levites, who blessed the people, had their blessing from Abraham, but Abraham seeks his blessing from Melchizedek.
3. The third thing we see is that we are expressly told of Melchizedek that He blesses Abraham...
 - Look at verse 6-7 together: **but he whose genealogy is not derived from them [Melchizedek] received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.**
 - The greater one blesses the lesser one—Abraham and the Levites are inferior to Melchizedek because He is the one that blesses them.
 - It is pointed out how remarkable this is because Abraham is the one who had the promises.
 - He is the one who has the promise of God’s blessing—which includes the blessing of salvation—for himself and for all the nations, but here is a priest who brings that blessing that was promised to Abraham.
 - Here is the one mediator between God and man.
 - This shows clearly that Melchizedek is superior to Abraham because the greater one always blesses the lesser one.
 - And He is greater than all the Levites who were appointed to be priests of the people—because they too are at last dependent on Melchizedek to serve as the priest who makes them righteous and gives them peace and offers the sacrifice for them that alone can reconcile them to God.
 - Hebrews 7:8 calls them mortal men who receive tithes *here*, but it says that Melchizedek receives tithes *there*—when He meet Abraham—the implication being that He is not a mortal man, being from everlasting.
 - Verses 9 & 10 explain that the Levites, who came from Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek when Abraham did so...
 - **Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.**

TRANS> The point of all this is to show that our LORD Jesus, as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, is greater than Abraham who is greater than the Levites.

- Both Abraham and the Levites are dependent on Christ, the King of righteousness and peace, who lives forever as our priest.
- B. I say if only we could see His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,
1. How it would change our lives!
 - What unprecedented comfort and joy we would have!
 - What worship would erupt from our inmost being!
 - What boldness we would have to declare Him among the nations!
 2. Oh that our gracious Lord would take away our dullness that we might have the full benefit of what is revealed in our text about the glory of our Lord Jesus!
 3. But here is the glorious hope.
 - If Jesus is our priest, He will see to it that we *do* behold His glory.
 - If Jesus is our priest, He has already reconciled us to the Father so that all our sins are forgiven.
 - And He has already begun to reveal His glory to us.
 - He will not fail because He is the priest after the order of Melchizedek...
 - The King of righteousness, the King of peace, the priest who is from eternity and who is made like the Son of God.
 - We are assured that we will see Him as He is and that even now He is changing us from glory to glory as we behold the glory of God in Him.
 - Press on with hope and joy dear brothers and sisters.
 - If you have never trusted in Christ, why not cast yourself on Him right this very minute?
 - If Abraham and the Levites are dependent on Him to obtain God's blessing, how much more are you?
 - Without Him, even Abraham himself could not be blessed.

Conclusion:

- He is the only priest who is big enough and grand enough to take away our sins.
 - He is in a class by Himself.
 - He is the only Melchizedekian priest.
 - He is the eternal Son of God whom God appointed to be our priest forever.
- Put your confidence entirely in Him.