

Christ's Priesthood and Our Uncomfortable Maturity

Hebrews 7:1 - 3

Nutshell: Aaron's priesthood was "elementary" school, Gal 4:2. It was meant to "graduate" to Christ. There are discomforts that come with maturing past elementary level.

I. Context: The certainty and hope of God's promises in Christ.

II. Text

Heb 7:1 For this **Melchisedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High**, the *one* meeting Abraham returning from the striking of the kings, **and blessing him**;

Heb 7:2 to whom also Abraham **apportioned a tenth from all** (first, indeed, being interpreted, King of Righteousness; and after that, also King of Salem, which is, King of Peace;

Heb 7:3 no father, no mother, no genealogical record; also without beginning of days nor having end of life, but having been made a likeness of the Son of God, *he* remains a priest in perpetuity).

Literal Standard Version with modifications

Blue text represents phrases that the Literal Version takes as direct quotes from Gen 14:17-20

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. Paul wrote an inspired book to a Jewish audience; 2 Pet 3:15-16; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 3:1. Hebrews is the only possibility.

1. The "us" of Heb 2:3 only puts the author outside the original 12
2. Peter speaks of the Apostles in the 3rd person as well, 1 Pet 1:12

B. Outline of Hebrews:

The Preeminence of the Son

Authority: God has at last spoken In **Son** (*Ἰερωφῆτ*), ← follow this font

His express image, 1:1-3a

Theme: **The SON** purified us from sin (Priest), then sat in authority (**King**), **1:3b**

I. Supreme **over** the angels, Inheritor by ordeal, 1:4-14

- Therefore hear Him, 2:1-4
- II. Supreme **as** man, 2:5-9
Psalm 8- Since man must inherit, 2:5-8a
 but man failed, 2:8b, **Christ** became man, 2:9a
Theme reprise: crowned with glory and honor (King), 2:9b
 to taste the death of “each one” of His own (Priest), 2:9c
 to bond with them and help them, 2:10-18
 freeing them from bondage to Satan and fear, 2:14-15
- III. A better stewardship than Moses, 3:1-6
 Therefore **THINK HARD ON HIM**, unhardening our hearts,
Ps 95- for Moses’ folk didn’t inherit God’s **rest**, 3:7-19;
 consequently, **EXHORT ONE ANOTHER DAILY**, 3:13
- IV. A better **Rest** than Joshua, 4:1-11
 ♦ Therefore, fear (4:1a), lest we also miss **God’s rest**
Ps 95- David invited his generation into that same **rest** of
 Creation, a type of Salvation, 4:1b-8
Christ’s Salvation has become the final *Sabbatismos*, 4:9-
 10, which we must **EXERT** ourselves to enter, 4:11
 For the Word penetrates, exposing us before God, 4:12-13
Theme reprise: Having the highest high priest (**Priest**), the
Son of God (King),
 Let us hold to our confession of Him (*Prophet*), 4:14
 especially since He felt all our temptations +, 4:15
- V. A better **priesthood than Aaron**, 4:14 - 10:18
- VI. Exhortations based on Christ Supreme, 10:19-13:21
 VII. Concluding remarks, 13:22-25
- C. “**Let us approach**” (Προσερχώμεθα) in **4:16 and 10:22** tells
 us that Jesus’ priesthood is so we will approach God.
Prayerlessness, then, dismisses Jesus’ priesthood.
- D. 5:1-10, OT priests from Aaron; Christ from *Melchizedek*
 1. 5:11-14, The Hebrews were **too babyish** to learn of *M*
 2. 6:1-2, Reaffirm the 6 **FUNDAMENTALS** (3 pairs): (hand-
 laying a fundamental) *or* risk being beyond repentance,
 6:4-6, like cultivated land that only yields thorns, v 7-8.
- E. But there are signs of life among you! 6:9-11
 1. *Don’t be lazy*. Imitate overcomers; e.g., Abe. God’s oath
 to Abe is for *our* stability too! 6:12-18,
 2. Our hope in God’s promise being an unfailing anchor for
 our souls, sunk into Heaven’s Holy of Holies, v 19
 3. Where Christ has gone as our as our forerunner/

predecessor, ensuring that we *SHALL* follow, v 20

Kid-speak: Last time we said that Jesus took His work on the cross to Heaven with Him so that WHO go to be with Him? Us!

F. *In Hebrews 7:1, we meet Melchizedek, a historically odd character, but CENTRAL to the establishment of Christ's new, permanent, non-Aaronic priesthood.*

Outline: Hebrews 7:1

- I. The Shift Implicit in Melchizedek
- II. Melchizedek in the Old Testament
- III. Melchizedek as “Solid Food”
- IV. Melchizedek's Kingdom of Salem
 - A. An earthly city?
 - B. Or the condition/ state of peace?
- V. Where All This is Going
 - G. Heb 7:1, “For this Melchisedek”
 1. Now Paul gets back to the deeper doctrine he intended to share, 5:11
 2. 5:6 contains Paul's first mention of Melchizedek
 - a. There it comes after 5:5's Messianic quote from *Psalms* 2
 - b. Paul needs no basic shift in their theology from the *Psalms* 2 quote
 - ☆ c. But after he mentions Melchizedek in 5:6, he comes back to it in Heb 5:10-11, indicating they *did need* a basic shift in their theology based on **Melchizedek**.

Kid-speak: Who is Paul going to use to teach us about Jesus now? Melchizedek.

3. Had this shift already occurred in the mainly Gentile churches?
 - a. That is, did they already understand (perhaps implicitly) the CHANGE OF PRIESTHOOD from Aaron to Christ?
 - b. Is that why Paul doesn't address Melchizedek in any of his other books?
 - c. Or did the Spirit consider Hebrews to be sufficient

- coverage? Jews in any church could read Hebrews.
4. Why don't the authors to mainly Jews (James, Peter, John, Jude) mention Melchizedek?
 - a. Is the Melchizedekian "shift" implicit in their epistles?
 - b. E.g., 1 Jn 2:2, Christ's propitiation is not just for the *Jews* ("our sins"), but the *Gentiles* also ("the whole of the world"; see Rom 11:12 on "world" = Gentiles.)
 5. Answer: a shift to Christ's priesthood IS certainly implicit in Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation
 - a. For how can Christ do priestly work, atoning for sin (as is assumed in Acts - Revelation) *without* a fundamental shift, since He was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi?
 - b. Jewish converts implicitly accepted this shift when they believed into Jesus
 6. But that is the nature of **conversion** versus our continued **sanctification**
 - a. When we first believe (conversion), we believe "the whole ball of wax" without knowing all the particulars
 - b. The Christian life (our sanctification), then, necessarily involves (is mainly?) the *unpacking/ in-packing* of all those particulars one by one

Kid-speak: Are all Christians supposed to learn about Melchizedek? Yes. Is stuff about Melchizedek a little harder to learn than some other things in the Bible? Yes.

- ✧ 7. Regrettably but unavoidably, when some unpack this or that *particular*, they show that they *never really accepted* the true, *original* ball of wax
 - a. "Oh, but Jesus can't be a real human"
 - b. "Oh, but Jesus can't be really God"
 - c. "Oh, Aaron can't simply be replaced"
8. And, unavoidably, many of these 'partway converts' continue to insist that their *warped* version of Christianity IS the original 'whole ball of wax', 1 Cor 11:19
 - a. Which is why we have whole segments of Christendom that are apostate
 - b. Not meaning that every individual within those segments are apostate; but they *are* in danger, like the Hebrews

H. "For"

1. What is “for” there for? What had Paul just said?
 2. That our hope in Christ is solid, an ⚔ ANCHOR **holding us** *where He is*, “behind the veil” of heaven’s Temple, 6:19
 - a. But which can only be so IF He is, as Paul asserts in the next verse, “a high priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek,” 6:20
 - b. Enter the doctrine of Melchizedek
 3. Remember, Paul indicated that he was *going to need to get to this doctrine*, Heb 5:10-11, but they were insufficiently formed and informed to take it in, 5:11
 - a. Heb 5:12 - 6:20 is his crash course (not exactly, but partly), preparing them for it
 - b. Because they **MUST** be taught the doctrine/ teaching/ reality of Melchizedek. It’s not an optional add-on.
- I. “This Melchizedek” (spelling per the Greek)
1. Who is a little mysterious and needs explaining
 - a. Jewish teaching on Melchizedek was ambiguous
 - b. But their understanding of Messiah in general was imperfect as well
 2. Melchizedek pops up in Genesis 14:18-20, meeting Abe
 - a. He pops up again in Psalm 110:4
 - b. That’s it! A total of 42 Hebrew words.
 3. But he’s not at odds with anything in the OT

Kid-speak: Where is Melchizedek in the Old Testament?
Genesis 14 and Psalm 110.

4. This is one of the “solid food” items (5:14) that their immaturity prevented them from ingesting, being only used to doctrinal “milk,” 5:13
 - (a. Is church culture today structured (whether intentionally or not) to stay on a milk diet?
 - b. As we can see in Hebrews, that is an open invitation to damnable doctrine.)
 - c. Paul intimated that they should have *already* covered this ground on their own, 5:12, able to repeat it to others
 - d. But their teachers had failed them
5. Everything they had and all they needed on Melchizedek was from Genesis 14 and Psalm 110
 - a. Both of which Paul is about to expound
 - b. Fitting it into the totality of Bible doctrine. This is not an

- ‘outlier’, just a teaching needing close, special attention.
- c. (How many doctrines with the same, relatively sparse amount of data do we already accept?)
- 6. Since Paul will delve into the *meaning* of Melchizedek’s name in v 2 (“king of righteousness), we’ll save it for there
- J. “King of Salem”
 1. So Melchizedek was a **king**
 - a. “King” is first mentioned in Gen 14:1
 - b. Hence, Melchizedek, appearing in Gen 14, is in at the ‘ground floor’ of kingly records in Scriptures
 - c. Long before the first Israelite king, Saul, 1 Samuel
 2. Our first question about Melchizedek, then, is why he was a king if God preferred judges, 1 Sam 8:7
 - a. An early point in favor of Melchizedek being the preincarnate (“before birth”) Christ, not a human king
 - b. Though not a conclusive point in itself
 3. Melchizedek’s domain of “Salem” is only mentioned here and (presumably) Ps 76:2

Kid-speak: What country was Melchizedek king of? Salem.

4. But “salem” is also a regular Hebrew word for “peace/complete”
 - a. Every English translation I have has “Salem,” capitalized in both Gen 14:18 and Ps 76:2
 - ✍ b. But the LXX in Ps 76:2 (3) has εἰρήνη (“peace”), not capitalized, while “Zion” (Σιων) is capitalized. Hmm!
5. Paul *translates* this title as “king of peace” in 7:2, possibly indicating that he takes “Salem” as a *place*, not of the condition/ state of “peace”
 - a. And he pairs that with the *explanation* of Melchizedek’s name, “king of righteousness”
 - b. But the explanation would also fit if Melch. were Christ
6. Salem is commonly identified as Jerusalem
 - a. But Jerusalem was currently a JEBUSITE territory, whose native name was evidently Jebusi/ Jebus, Josh 18:28
 - b. Scripture writers normally called it Jerusalem even when it was actually Jebusi, since Jerusalem was what their readers knew it as
 - c. We first meet the Jebusites back in Gen 10:16 as one of the pagan, Canaanite peoples

- d. Therefore, it seems unlikely to me that Salem is the same as Jerusalem, since Salem’s leader was a king-priest of the true God, *not* a pagan
- 7. Jerome (c. A.D. 375) thought he knew where Salem was, *not* being Jerusalem
- K. However, Ps 76:2 is the other verse with “Salem” in it
 - 1. There, Salem is paired with “Zion”
 - a. “Jerusalem” and “Zion” are in the same v 46x. When they are differentiated, “Zion” seems to be mountain and “Jerusalem” the city, e.g., 2 Kings 19:31, Isa 10:32
 - b. But most of these verses seem to *equate* Zion and Jerusalem, since Jerusalem is the city built *on* Mount Zion
 - 2. Therefore, is Ps 76:2 equating Salem with Zion, thereby identifying Salem as Jerusalem?
 - ☞ a. *OR* is Salem in Ps 76:2 a reference back to Gen 14:18, where Melchizedek represents *God’s workings outside the ‘mainstream’ of His work through Abraham*
 - b. That is, Salem in Ps 76:2 recalls the king (and hence kingdom) ‘independently’ worshiping the true God, laying Salem alongside Zion, just as Judah and Israel are *complementary* but not *identical* in Ps 76:1
 - c. That makes sense for Ps 72, which is a call for *all* rulers and kingdoms to fear God
 - d. ↑ This is looking at Melchizedek as a flesh-and-blood king
 - 3. As opposed to him being the preincarnate Son of God. But Salem’s independence works even better with Melchizedek

Kid-speak: “Salem” means “peace,” so was it a real city, or was Melchizedek the King of Peace? (If you figure it out, *tell me!*)

- 4. Broadly, **Salem** in Ps 76:2 may also be a way of identifying God’s dwelling place as ‘*elsewhere*’ (just as Melchizedek is a pretty ‘elsewhere’ dude, as we shall continue to see),
 - a. complementing God’s *presence* in **Zion**;
 - b. that is, God’s transcendence (*elsewhere*) vs. His immanence (*presence*)
- L. We’re well into the weeds now. Don’t lose track:
 - 1. This is to explain the prophesied ending of *Aaron’s* line of priests in the arrival of *Melchizedek’s* priestly line: Christ
 - a. Melchizedek’s line either consists of TWO: himself *and* Christ; that is, himself *then* Christ,

- b. or ONE, himself who *is* Christ (or TWO, preincarnate and incarnate)
 - ☞ 2. This was a seismic change in God’s workings
 - a. Very orderly and well-prepared,
 - b. but still seismic and upsetting to the Jews, Lk 5:39, as Jesus indicated it would be
 - 3. AND upsetting to any in Christendom who have adopted Aaronic symbols as continued realities
- IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, “Uphold the strengthless”) God did *a lot of planning* to have a Priest who would care about us 24/7. It must be OK to go that Priest!
- V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong? How have I lost righteousness?**
Have I matured enough to eat the solid food of Melchizedek?
- VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):
How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?
God, here we are at Melchizedek. If I can’t quite swallow it, at least keep me from spitting it out, please.
- VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How do I take this on the road?**
Jesus, You’re everything that Aaron’s priesthood looked forward to and more. Thank You for loving me and giving Yourself for me.

Vision: On Melchizedek being a human king vs. the preincarnate Christ, he’s still an OT **type**. What’s written is true of Christ incarnate either way, so we shouldn’t get anything badly wrong either way.

On our uncomfortable maturity, Melchizedek represents one of the Bible’s “solid food” teachings, but it is non-optional, just as growing up physically is non-optional for a baby. Paul is clearly worried that some of the Hebrews were stillborn. They looked alive but proved to be otherwise.

Building on the fundamentals was one test. Melchizedek is the next one.