

EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS

Message #13

Hebrews 7:1-10

The only entertainer to be given the United States Congressional Medal of Honor, which is the highest award that is given, was a Jewish man by the name of George M. Cohan, whose musicals in wartime gave hope and support to our military and our nation. Mr. Cohan loved the United States and he wrote the songs “I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy”, “You’re a Grand Old Flag” and “Over There” which became the favorite national song in WWI. In the beginning of the 20th century, if you would have asked any American, who gets top billing as the greatest entertainer in the world, the answer would have been George M. Cohan.

Suppose someone were to ask you who gets top billing as the greatest figure in the O.T., who would you name? If someone were to ask you to come up with a name of the most important person in the O.T., who would you pick? Many would pick Abraham, Moses or David. Others would pick Joshua, Solomon or Daniel. If we compared names, I doubt any would name Melchizedek. In fact, there are only four verses in the entire Old Testament that mention him (Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4). So out of four O.T. verses comes this amazing development of one of the most important persons in the entire Word of God. There is no doubt that in the mind of the writer of Hebrews, Melchizedek gets top billing.

When we come to the seventh chapter of Hebrews we come to the heart of the book. This is really what the writer of Hebrews wanted to develop all along. This was the solid food which was “hard to explain” (Heb. 5:10-11) that the writer wanted to feed these believers. This writer had longed to develop a comparison analogy between Melchizedek and Jesus Christ. He wanted to show how superior Jesus Christ truly was, and the superior Priesthood of Jesus Christ is developed here as in no other place in Scripture.

The Jews living at the time Hebrews was written had their dogmatic ideas about the priesthood. Those ideas came from their rigid O.T. law and traditional concepts. If their attitudes were to be changed about Jesus Christ, God needed to reveal powerful truth about Jesus Christ, and that powerful truth is clearly revealed right here.

If I were to ask most people what does your salvation actually mean? probably the vast majority of people would answer, **my salvation means I go to heaven**. But when we crawl through this portion of God’s Word, it becomes very evident that **what our salvation really means is that “we have access to God.”** Jesus Christ is the One who gives us that access.

Jesus Christ is the true High Priest, but not after the order of Aaron, but after Melchizedek. **The peculiar feature about Melchizedek is that he was both a king and a high priest**. So far in Hebrews, God has brought up Melchizedek’s name three times (5:6, 10; 6:20). What is interesting in Hebrews is that, for the most part, the emphasis is on Christ’s High Priest connection to Melchizedek and not so much His kingly aspect. The Jews needed to understand that Jesus Christ was both her High Priest and her King. But they especially needed to know that He was the only One who could represent them and connect them to God. **Jesus Christ was the only Person who could give a sinful nation and individual access to the Holy God.**

In order for Jesus Christ to be accepted as the great High Priest/King who can give all sinners access to God, He would have to have a Priesthood far superior to Aaron and this text proves He does. This passage here deals with the person of the priest, not the work of the priest. The primary point is this:

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SUPERIOR KING/PRIEST FOREVER WHO CAN GIVE SINNERS ACCESS TO GOD, AND HIS SUPERIOR PRIESTHOOD MAY BE UNDERSTOOD BY COMPARING IT TO MELCHIZEDEK.

As we have already said, there are two other places in the Bible where Melchizedek is mentioned and both are in the Old Testament: 1) Genesis 14:18-20; 2) Psalm 110:4. **One reason why Melchizedek is compared to Jesus Christ is because the Jews could look into their own Bible and see the truth about Melchizedek and then relate that truth to Jesus Christ. A high priest was one who represented man to God. A king was one who ruled over man for God.** Jesus Christ was both. He was High Priest and He was King.

What is worthy of mention is that the writer of Hebrews was such a student of Scripture that he could take four verses from the O.T. and, by power of the Holy Spirit, connect all of this to Jesus Christ in amazing ways.

Now this passage communicates two main thoughts:

THOUGHT #1 – The superior Priesthood of Jesus Christ is explained. **7:1-3**

The “for” which begins **verse 1**, is there to explain 6:20, in which it was stated that Jesus was a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. The fact that Jesus Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek is important because Melchizedek lived hundreds of years before Aaron was even born. So this very point shows the superiority of Jesus Christ; He preexisted before any were born. Now there are seven facts brought out about Melchizedek in these verses which are designed to reveal truth about Jesus Christ.

Fact #1 - Melchizedek was king of Salem. **7:1a**

The name “Melchizedek” comes from two Hebrew words, “melek” which means king and “tsedeq” which means righteousness. So Melchizedek is a king of a city who reigns in righteousness. Now cities in this time were like their own little autonomous countries and Melchizedek was the king of this city/state/country. He was king of Salem and most students believe this was Jerusalem. The name “Salem” means peace. He moved this city toward righteousness and peace. We may observe that there is no explanation of his background, just the statement that he was king.

Now Christ is after the order of Melchizedek because just as Melchizedek was the king of righteousness who reigned in Jerusalem, so Jesus Christ will be the righteous King of Kings who will reign in the same place. He will be the righteous King of the whole world and He will specifically reign in the same city of Melchizedek.

Fact #2 - Melchizedek was priest of the Most High God. **7:1b**

Now the next statement about Melchizedek is that not only was he king, but he also was priest. Melchizedek was no phony priest. He was a priest of the Most High God. He was legitimate. He was both a legitimate king and a legitimate priest. To be a legitimate king was one thing but to be a legitimate priest was another. One would have to have a very special appointment to be both a king and a priest.

Let's see if we can put this into our culture. To be President of the United States is one thing. To be a pastor of a church is another thing. To be both President of the United States and a pastor of a church would be very, very rare.

Now here is the point. Jesus Christ is like Melchizedek in that He is both King and Priest. He is not only the King of Kings and High Priest by appointment of the Most High God, He is the Most High God.

Fact #3 - Melchizedek met Abraham . **7:1c-2**

There is important data brought out here about this meeting between Melchizedek and Abraham, some of which we only learn here:

(Data #1) - Abraham was returning from the slaughter of the kings. **7:1c**

Abraham was coming off a time of great military success in retrieving Lot when he came face to face with Melchizedek. According to Genesis 14:18, Melchizedek brought Abraham bread and wine, which are the same elements used in the Communion Service, which represents the fact that Jesus Christ is the only means of us having access to God.

Abraham wasn't looking to meet Melchizedek, anymore than you and I were looking to meet Jesus Christ. But when Abraham did meet Melchizedek, he recognized how special and sacred this man really was. But it didn't work that way for Israel. Abraham's offspring came face-to-face with One much greater than Melchizedek and they didn't see it or get it.

(Data #2) - Abraham gave Melchizedek one tenth of everything. **7:2a**

Under Jewish law, the Jews were required to give God one tenth of everything - crops, herds, flocks, money (Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 14:22-27). Abraham recognized the unique role Melchizedek played in his relationship with God. A king-priest that was legitimate was a very rare work of God, and Abraham knew it and gave his offering directly to him.

Fact #4 - Melchizedek was a king of righteousness . **7:2b**

The name Melchizedek means king of righteousness. Christ first gives us righteousness.

Fact #5 - Melchizedek was king of peace . 7:2c

Melchizedek was the king of Salem, which means he was the king of peace. The connection between righteousness and peace is often seen in Scripture. In order for peace to reign, righteousness must reign. After Christ gives us righteousness, He gives us peace.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson pointed out that these two words “righteousness” and “peace” are specifically used by Paul when he said, “Therefore having been “justified” by faith, we have “peace” with God. It is Jesus Christ that gives us righteousness and peace.

Fact #6 - Melchizedek did not have a normal genealogy . 7:3a

Genesis was a book known for its genealogies. But when you try to find out something about Melchizedek, the record is silent. **The prepositional phrases “without father, without mother” means without any recorded genealogy .** There is no recorded father, no recorded mother, no recorded genealogy. There is no record of his birth and no record of his death.

What this means is that Melchizedek came out of nowhere and returned to nowhere. No one knew anything about his father or mother. No one knew anything about his birth or death. There is no record of the beginning of his life or the end of his life.

Why is this so important? Because in the Old Testament, if you did not have a genealogy you could not be a Levitical priest. By virtue of the fact that Melchizedek did not have this genealogy, he could not have been a Levitical priest.

Now the comparison is to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ did not have the normal pedigree of a Levite. He came on the scene with a very mysterious character. He had already existed in ages past. He was involved in creation and in all heavenly things, and then he mysteriously showed up on this earth. His priesthood is not genealogical. Jesus Christ is the eternal Priest who is God, who came from God.

Fact #7 - Melchizedek had a timeless priesthood. 7:3b

There is no record of his priesthood ever ending. No one can find any information about when he was born and when he died. Since there is no record, it is like his priesthood is still operative. Jesus Christ is our eternal King/Priest. He is the only, eternal way we have access to God forever.

THOUGHT #2 – The superior priesthood of Jesus Christ is contrasted . 7:4-10

There are two superior contrast points brought out in these verses:

Superior Contrast Point #1 - Melchizedek was superior to Abraham . 7:4-7

Melchizedek was superior to Abraham and it is proved in two ways:

(Way #1) - It is proved by the offering that Abraham gave to Melchizedek. **7:4-6a**

Abraham willingly gave one tenth of the best of everything to Melchizedek because he recognized the unique man of God he was.

Now, of course, in the O.T. Law it is commanded by God that the Levitical priests receive one tenth from the people. But Abraham gave his offering to a king/priest who did not even have any normal traceable pedigree.

I want us to carefully look at **verse 9**, which is clearly in the context of paying tithes. Now Levi came through Abraham and Abraham paid his tithes to Melchizedek, so what this says is that the Levitical priesthood paid their tithes to the Melchizedekian priesthood.

Giving tithes in the O.T. and giving offerings to the church in the N.T. is a form of worship. The writer of Hebrews zeroes in on this point. In this N.T. Church Age, one cannot possibly worship God in an award winning way without following the principles of giving to the church.

By virtue of the fact that Abraham gave his tithes to Melchizedek, it meant in Abraham's mind that this was a form of worship to God. In other words, Abraham realized in view of all God had blessed him with, that he needed to give to the one who represented God, who was Melchizedek.

If we are going to have access to God and worship God, we must link ourselves to Jesus Christ. Christ loves the Church and Christ established the Church; it is His body. The more serious we are about worshipping God, the more we will sense the need to give to the church. When you give your offerings to the church, you should view those offerings as a part of worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Way #2) - It is proved by the prayer Melchizedek offered for Abraham. **7:6b-7**

Now think about this - Melchizedek received the tithes Abraham was giving to God and then he pronounced a blessing on Abraham because he recognized his responsibility.

Now Abraham was no lightweight when it came to God. He was a man who had received direct promises from God. God blessed Abraham, and gave him victory in a variety of contexts. However, Abraham also recognized the importance of Melchizedek.

He recognized the need to have one who represented him to God. So Abraham gave him his tithes and Melchizedek pronounced a blessing on Abraham, the one who had received direct promises of God. Abraham realized that I am the lesser and Melchizedek is the greater.

It does not matter how much we have seen God do or how pious we may think we are, we need to always remember that we need Jesus Christ to represent us and give us access to God. We are the lesser and He is the greater. When we give our offerings to the church, we give to the Lord Jesus Christ and He is the One who is in a position to pronounce blessings on us.

Superior Contrast Point #2 - Melchizedek was superior to Levi . **7:8-10**

There are two ways Melchizedek was superior to Levi:

(Way #1) - He was superior in duration . **7:8**

In the case of mortal priests, they are to take in offerings and live off them and the people can see that this is exactly what they do. They give their offerings and those offerings support the priests and they are able to make a living until they die.

Jesus Christ is the one and only eternal High Priest who never dies.

Most people have collected pictures of themselves at various stages of life. We have pictures of ourselves at all of our ministries. When we look back at our first church, we were so young, and I might add, not bad looking, but, speaking for myself, not any more. The years have taken their toll. Last week when our friends were here, Dan said, man, your hair has really turned grey. I don't look the same. I am aging and if the Lord tarries, I will die.

Not Jesus Christ. He never dies. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He lives on. He looks the same and He is the same.

(Way #2) - He was superior in position . **7:9-10**

Melchizedek met Abraham while Levi was still in the loins of Abraham. Abraham was superior to Levi and Melchizedek was superior to Abraham. Levi paid his tithes to Melchizedek via Abraham. **Therefore the point of this is that the priesthood of Melchizedek is far superior to the priesthood of Levi.** Here was this Gentile king-priest being honored by all the descendants of Abraham. Jesus Christ existed before Abraham (John 8:58).

This is a marvelous picture of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the universal Priest. He is the only One who can give us access to God. He is the only One worthy of our worship. He had no beginning or no ending. He is the worthy God and we should worship Him financially, spiritually and reverently.

According to Paul in Romans, when Adam sinned, we sinned in his loins (Rom. 5:12). We need a priest who can wash our sins away. When Melchizedek went to meet Abraham, he brought him bread and wine, which represents the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only One who can save Jews and Gentiles from their sins. He is the only One who can give any of us access to God.