The Supremacy of The Son of God

Studies in Hebrews

26) Superior High Priest (part 2) Heb. 7:1-10

**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.

**Outlines:**

A. Christ is **Superior to the Prophets** (1:1-3)

B. Christ is **Superior to the Angels** (1:4–2:18)

C. Christ is **Superior to Moses** (3:1–4:16)

            D. Christ is **Superior to Aaron** (5:1-10:18)

1. **Superior High Priest** (5:1-7-28)

a. The Priesthood of Aaron vs Christ (5:1-10)

Third Warning: Don’t Degenerate (5:11–6:20)

b. Christ is a superior high priest in comparison to Aaron’s (7:1-28)

1) Because Christ’s priesthood in like that of Melchizedek 1-10

- Melchizedek is a type of Christ 1-3

- Melchizedek greater than Aaron 4-10

2) Christ’s priesthood of a different order 11-19

3) Superior because of the divine oath 20-22

4) Superior because of its permanence 23-25

5) Superior because of who Jesus is 26-28

2. **Superior Priesthood** (8:1-10:18)

The only time Melchizedek was mentioned in the scripture was in **Genesis 14:18-20**. In Gen 14:1-17 we read how Abraham rescued Lot after he was taken captive when 4 kings attacked Sodom and Gamorah. After Abraham’s victory, we read “**Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a tithe of all.”**

Melchizedek united in his person the dual honors of royalty and priesthood.629 Melchizedek is the 1st priest mentioned in the scriptures.

The city-state of Salem has traditionally been identified as Jerusalem (Ps 76:2). This identification, however, is debated. Hebrews shows no concern to equate Salem with Jerusalem but simply records the statement of fact631.

V1-2:

Melchizedek = מַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק Malkiy-Tsedeq = "my king is Sedek”  is “the king of righteousness.”

king of Salem = “the king of peace.”

**V3 “without father, without mother, without genealogy”**

This is not to be understood in a literal sense. The meaning here is that Melchizedek came out of nowhere. The point of the author of Hebrews here is that The Holy Spirit didn’t record his genealogy on purpose so he could be a type of the priesthood of Christ

**“having neither beginning of days nor end of life,”**

That is not to be understood in a literal sense that Melchizedek eternally exists. The meaning here is that Melchizedek appeared out of nowhere in the scriptures, and we don’t see his end documented anywhere in the scriptures. The Holy Spirit didn’t record his beginning or his end on purpose so he could be a type of the eternal priesthood of Christ. That is why the author of Hebrews continued to say that Melchizedek “was made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.”

**“made like the Son of God”**

The perfect passive participle ἀφωμοιωμένος is an example of a “divine passive” (“having been made [by God] to resemble”); the term presupposes God’s appointment of Melchizedek as an illustration of the higher priesthood that the writer finds in the OT record634.

**“remains a priest continually”**

The formulation of v 3*d* demonstrates the impact of Ps 110:4 upon the interpretation of Gen 14:18–20. The expression εἰς τὸ διηνεκές, “continually without interruption,” is a refinement of the phrase εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, “forever,” in Ps 110:4. It indicates how precisely the writer understood the ascription of eternity predicated on the priest “like Melchizedek.”635

In v 4-10, the author of Hebrews argued for the supremacy of the priesthood of Melchizedek over that of Aaron as follows:

1- Because Melchizedek received a tithe from Abraham while Levi received a tithe from their brethren.

v4-5 **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.**

The term ὁ πατριάρχης, “the patriarch,” which is placed at the end of the sentence for emphasis, serves to underscore the stature of Abraham as the progenitor of Israel (Acts 7:8–9). But Abraham is exalted in v 4 only to emphasize the exalted status of Melchizedek even more.637

The term ἀκροθινίων spoils, denoting the best or choicest of the spoils, appears to have been chosen to sharpen the impression of Melchizedek’s exalted stature.638

“from their brethren.” The implication of this comparison is that since the Levitical priests and those from whom they exacted the tithe were descendants of Abraham, Melchizedek must be superior to the Levitical priests because he exacted the tithe from Abraham himself639.

2- Because Levi functioned according to the law but Melchizedek didn’t

v5-6 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.**

This is a 2-fold argument:

1. The sons of Levi were **appointed** by the law, But Melchizedek didn’t.

In contrast to the legal priests, for whom paternal descent from Aaron (Exod 28:1; Num 3:10; 18:1) and maternal descent from a pure Israelite (Lev 21:7; Ezek 44:2) was mandatory, Melchizedek exercised a priestly role on the basis of divine appointment and innate worth. The description of Melchizedek in v 6*a* describes him as without legal qualification which sets the stage for the messianic priest as one who was descended from the tribe of Judah.640

1. The sons of Levi **collected** tithe according to the law, but Melchizedek didn’t.

By contrast, Melchizedek is identified as “one not tracing his descent from them” (v 6*a*) who did not require the law to authorize his reception of a tithe641

3- Because Melchizedek blessed Abraham:

v 6-7, **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.**

“Blessed him who has the promises.” The clause amplifies the simple statement in v 1*b* that Melchizedek blessed Abraham by identifying the patriarch as the one “who had the promises.” In the immediate context, a contrast is implied between Abraham, who received the divine promise (v 6*b*), and the Levitical priests, who possessed the law (v 5). The theologically significant term ἐπαγγελία, “promise,” in Hebrews has the connotation of effectiveness and certainty: what God has promised, he will accomplish (6:13–18; 10:23). The expression νόμος, “law,” on the other hand, has the connotation of ineffectiveness (7:19*a*, 28*a*). In this manner the contrast between Melchizedek and the Levitical priests is heightened because they collected tithes according to the law, but Melchizedek blessed Abraham, who had himself received the divine promise that God would surely bless him (6:13–14)642

4- Because the OT Aaron of his descendants were mortal, but Melchizedek is eternal:

v8 **Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives**

In v8 the emphasis has shifted from the question of qualification (v 3*a*, 5–6*a*) to that of the relative duration of their respective ministries. Those who are appointed to priestly service by the law are subject to death and so have a series of successors. On the other hand, the priesthood of Melchizedek is eternal because the scriptures “witnessed that he lives.” In this context, this declaration must refer back to v 3, which the writer considered to be exegetically established on the basis of Ps 110:4 and Gen 14:18–20. Scripture announces of Melchizedek only his living and the administration of a priesthood that is free from temporal limitation.644

5- Because even Levi tithed to Melchizedek:

vv 9-10 **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.**

v9 the writer clearly recognized his statement that Levi had paid a tithe to Melchizedek was not literally true, because at the moment in primal history when Abraham met Melchizedek Levi was as yet unborn. Nevertheless, the statement that Levi had himself paid the tithe was true in an important sense, indicated by the expression διʼ Ἀβραάμ, “through Abraham,” which immediately follows. The corporate solidarity that bound Israel to the patriarch implied that Levi was fully represented in Abraham’s action. Therefore, Levi’s status relative to Melchizedek was affected by Abraham’s relationship to that personage. Consequently, the superiority of Melchizedek over the Levitical priesthood is not merely theoretical but has a basis in history.645