

Heb 5:1, 4-6, 9, 10

- 1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:
- 4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as *was* Aaron.
- 5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.
- 6 As he saith also in another *place*, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
- 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;
- 10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Heb 7:1-28

- 1 For this Melchisedec, 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 by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;
- 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.
- 4 Now consider how great this man *was*, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.
- 5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:
- 6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.
- 7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.
- 8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he *receiveth them*, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.
- 9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.
- 10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.
- 11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need *was there* that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?
- 12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.
- 13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.
- 14 For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.
- 15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,
- 16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.
- 17 For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
- 18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.
- 19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God.
- 20 And inasmuch as not without an oath *he was made priest*:
- 21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)
- 22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.
- 23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:
- 24 But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.
- 25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.
- 26 For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;
- 27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.
- 28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

A Priest Like Melchizedek: A Study of Hebrews 7

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The New Testament often quotes the Old Testament. One of the most commonly quoted verses is [Psalm 110:1](#): "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" The Gospels tell us that Jesus quoted this verse as a scripture about the Messiah.

If we read further in this psalm, we will come to verse 4, which has a thought found nowhere else in the Old Testament. This Lord is to be a priest—not a Levitical priest, but a different kind of priest. The book of Hebrews tells us that this verse of the psalm is also about Jesus. It briefly mentions this in chapter 5, and then again at the end of chapter 6, telling us that Jesus "has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." Chapter 7 explains this in more detail.

A priest without genealogy (verses 1-3)

The chapter begins with a quick summary of the story: "This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything" (see Genesis 14). First, the unusual name is explained. The Hebrew word *melek* means king, and *tsedek* means righteousness, so his name is explained as meaning "king of righteousness." And since *shalom* means peace, he was also the "king of peace." These meanings are significant because Melchizedek prefigures Jesus Christ.

Next, we are told that Melchizedek was "without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever." From the grammar, it is not clear whether Melchizedek is like the Son in every respect, or just in being a perpetual priest. Jesus had parents, a genealogy, a birth and a death, so he was different in these respects. Scripture does not say that Melchizedek was the Son of God—just that he was "like" the Son.

However, Melchizedek had no parents that are mentioned in Scripture. His position as priest did not depend on his parents or his genealogy (unlike the Levitical priests). His priesthood was a different kind, a different order. Similarly, Scripture says nothing about his birth or death (unlike the patriarchs, who are carefully chronicled). He did not create a dynasty of priests, each dying and passing the priesthood to a son. Today we might say today that he came out of nowhere, and then disappeared – neither of those expressions meant in a literal way.

Melchizedek remains known as a priest even today. "He remains a priest forever...is declared to be living" (verses 3, 8). (A similar thought may be in [Luke 20:37-38](#)—the patriarchs are among "the living.") This mysterious priest is the prototype of Jesus Christ. Psalm 110 predicted that the Lord would be a priest in the same way: not according to genealogy, but by special appointment.

This order of priests was significant in several ways:

- 1 It was more important than the Levitical priesthood,
- 2 It implied that the Levitical priesthood was temporary and
- 3 The new order was permanent.

Greater than Levi (verses 4-7)

Although little is known about Melchizedek, we can discern that he was important. Abraham gave him 10 percent of the spoils of war (verse 4). The old covenant required the Israelites to give 10 percent to the Levites, but Abraham gave 10 percent to Melchizedek even though Melchizedek was not a Levite (verses 5-6). He was getting

priestly honors before Levi was even born.

From this, the author constructs a hypothetical argument: "One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor." Levi didn't actually pay tithes to Melchizedek, but in a figure of speech he did. The point is that Abraham is greater than Levi, since Abraham is Levi's ancestor, and Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, since Abraham gave tithes to him, so Melchizedek is greater than Levi. Verses 6-7 emphasize Melchizedek's greatness: He not only received a tithe, he also blessed Abraham. "And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater." Abraham is the lesser person in this case—but the real point of comparison being made is with Levi. Since Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, he is also greater than Levi, and—most important for the book of Hebrews—his priesthood is more important than the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priests die, but Jesus has been made a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, a priesthood that is more important for our salvation.

New priesthood implies a new law (verses 11-19)

Now the author observes that "if perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?" Note here that the law was given on the basis of the priesthood. The law was designed with the Levitical priesthood in mind—the law and the priesthood went together. But neither the law nor the priests could bring people to perfection. That is why Psalm 110 spoke of another priesthood.

The descendants of Aaron would be replaced by a better priesthood, a better priest—and that has important consequences: "When the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also" (verse 12). What law is changed? The law that said only Levites could be priests. Which law said that? The old covenant. This will become stated more directly later in this chapter, and developed in the next few chapters.

But first, the author wants to make certain basic facts clear. "He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe" (verse 13). We are speaking about Jesus, of whom it is said that he is a priest after the order of Melchizedek—but Jesus was not a Levite. He belonged to the tribe of Judah, and no one from that tribe was ever a priest, and Moses did not authorize anyone from Judah to be a priest (verse 14).

"And what we have said"—that is, that the law has been changed—"is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life." Jesus was appointed as priest not by a law that focused on genealogy, but because he lives forever at God's right hand. From this fact alone, we can see that the Law of Moses is no longer in force.

"The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God." The law that restricted the priesthood to Levites was ineffective.

How much was "set aside"? Certainly, it was the regulation restricting the priesthood. But no one expected that restriction to produce perfection, anyway. There is more involved than just one regulation. It is "the law" *as a whole* that is under discussion here. The law of Moses did not have the power to make anyone perfect. The best that the old covenant could offer was not good enough. Now, instead of the law, we are given a better hope, and since we have something better than the law, we are now able to draw near to God in a way that was not possible under the law of Moses.

Guaranteed by an oath (verses 20-26)

The author then uses a small detail from Psalm 110 to emphasize the importance of Jesus' appointment as priest. God himself makes an oath to appoint Jesus as high priest (verse 20). The descendants of Aaron became priests without any oath, but Jesus became priest by a special oath.

The old covenant was given by God, but here is a new word from God—not just an oath but also a promise of permanence: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever’” ([Hebrews 7:21](#), quoting [Psalm 110:4](#)). When this new priest is appointed, the old priesthood becomes obsolete. The old regulation was set aside. A new and better hope is given to bring people to a perfection that the law could not give. “Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.” Here the word *covenant* is used for the first time in this letter, almost casually. It will be picked up again in the next three chapters for more detailed comment, but even here it is implied to be a replacement for the inferior, ineffective covenant given through Moses. The discussion is not just about one priestly regulation but a covenant, which includes many laws.

The author then contrasts the mortality of the Levitical priests with the immortality of Jesus Christ: “Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.” The fact that there were many Levitical priests is an illustration of their weakness, not of their effectiveness. The genealogy that validated them also testified to the weakness of the entire system. Each high priest held office only temporarily, and the entire priesthood itself was temporary.

In contrast, because Jesus lives forever, he will forever continue to be our High Priest, because his priesthood is effective in bringing us to perfection: “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

“Such a high priest truly meets our need,” the author says. Jesus is exactly what we need. He was human, so he knows our needs (2:14-18), and he is now in heaven, in power, so he can effectively intercede for us. We can therefore be confident that we can approach God through him (4:14-16). He gives us access to God in a way that the Levitical priests could only symbolize.

Exactly what we need (verses 26-28)

“Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.” The Old Testament priests had to make sin sacrifices every day, showing that the final solution had not yet arrived. But Jesus was so effective that once was enough. It did not have to be repeated.

The Levitical priests had to offer sacrifices for their own sins, but Jesus did not, because he had no sin. When he offered himself, it was not for himself, but for everyone else. He was the kind of sacrifice we really needed — without blemish, fit even for the holiest place in heaven. The old covenant appointed imperfect men as priests (7:28), but God promised to appoint another priest, a permanent priest — which implies someone who is perfect in himself and perfect in his work ([Psalm 110:4](#)).

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