

Melchizedek: A type of Christ

Hebrews 7:1-10

Hebrews 7:1. This Melchizedek was king of Salem [perhaps Jerusalem] and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him [see Genesis 14 for the complete historical account], 2. and Abraham gave him a tenth [top of the heap] of everything. First, his name [Zedek] means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." 3. Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he



remains a priest forever. 4. Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! 5. Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people--that is, their brothers--even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. 6. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7. And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. 8. In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. 9. One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, 10. Because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor (NIV, Emphasis and Interpretation added).

Chapter 7 of Hebrews is a key chapter and addresses an essential issue for the Hebrew believers—the issue of priesthood. To understand these passages of Scripture we must begin to understand how the Jewish believers viewed what the writer of Hebrews was trying to communicate. The writer was making arguments why the Jews should leave their traditions and follow after Jesus Christ. In the Book of Hebrews, the writer wants to prove that there's a greater high priest than any Jewish one.

Type or typology is a theological term used in Bible study. A type is an “an Old Testament picture of the person and work of Christ” (MacArthur). There are many pictures in the Old Testament that point to Christ. Many interpretations exist to explain who Melchizedek was. However, for the purpose of this study, Melchizedek will be examined as a type of (picture of) Christ.

Melchizedek's priesthood supersedes Aaron's in every single point.

The following notes are a summary of a sermon by Pastor/Teacher John MacArthur. To read or hear the entire sermon see the reference at the end of this article.

1. Aaron's (Levitical) priesthood was national. They were priests of Israel only. Melchizedek's priesthood was universal--it transcended Israel. To clarify this point the writer uses the term, "The most high God" (El Elyon, The universal name of God. C.f. Dt. 32:8-9; and John 1:29). Jesus "is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).
2. Levitical priests were subjects in a kingdom. However, Melchizedek was royalty—a priest on a throne. Concerning Jesus' priesthood, it was prophesied, "It is he [Jesus] who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne" (Zechariah 6:13) (c.f. Hebrews 7:26).
3. Aaron's priesthood offered no permanent righteousness and peace. Melchizedek is referred to as righteousness (Tzedek, Hebrew) and peace (Salem, shalom). Melchizedek's name and his city. Many scholars believe Salem is likely an ancient name for *Jerusalem*. Jerusalem also had the name Jebus. The Jebusites occupied Jerusalem initially; but it may have also, at the time of Melchizedek, had the name of Salem; and so Melchizedek could well have been an ancient king and priest of Jerusalem. (As a side note, see Adonizedek. According to the book of Joshua, Adonizedek was king of Jerusalem at the time of the Israelite invasion of Canaan. His name means "my lord is righteousness" in Hebrew).
4. Aaron's priesthood was bound to heredity. If you were born in the right family, you were automatically a priest. However, Melchizedek's priesthood was based on personal qualification (righteousness). He had no record of genealogy in the Genesis. His rights as priest were not based on genealogy. No genealogy was totally foreign to any Judaistic king, totally foreign to any Judaistic priest. Levitical priests based their rights of priesthood on their genealogy. Melchizedek, who was chosen, not because of his heredity, but because of his qualification and his election by God. He had no recorded beginning or ending, in order that he might appear as a perfect illustration (picture) of Jesus Christ. . This fact coincided with the fact that Jesus himself didn't belong to the tribe of Levite, but of Judah. He also did not qualify based on genealogy.
5. Those who serve under Aaron's lineage of priesthood served in a time-limited priesthood. They only existed in it from the year of about 25 to 50 years of age. Melchizedek had no record of his time of service. In the text it states, "no beginning or



end." Of Jesus it is said, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:6); "Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:20). "Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood" (Hebrews 7:24-25). In Numbers 20:22, there is a detailed record of Aaron's death; however there is no record of Melchizedek's death. In all these ways Mechizedek does not follow the pattern of the priesthood of Aaron. Nor does the one he represents--Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus' priesthood is far superior to Aaron and the Levitical line in every way. Based on his qualifications, Jesus was chosen by God to initiate and sustain forever the new covenant.

"Seeing then that we have such a great High Priest that has passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our profession. For we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:14

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References:

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<http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/1616>. Retrieved April 14, 2009.