

LESSON 7

THE AMAZING MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD

Having already introduced Melchizedek (5:6, 10; 6:20), the author entered into a detailed discussion of the similarities between Melchizedek and Christ. The emphasis, however, is on Christ, not Melchizedek.

The author was helping readers to overcome their spiritual lethargy by entering into this “meat” concept regarding Jesus their Lord. The rebuke of 5:11—6:8 should have urged them to give careful attention to the theme of Christ’s High Priesthood. The writer needed both accounts—the background of Genesis 14 and the messianic link in Psalm 110:4—to make his comparison complete.

Abraham was inferior to Melchizedek, who served as the precursor for Christ’s Priesthood. This truth clearly shows Christ’s superiority over Abraham, as well as Levi and Aaron. It appears that the readers of Hebrews had not previously heard of Christ’s divine high priesthood from any inspired spokesman or writer. Notice the phrasing in 8:1. They had evidently not connected the Jesus they knew with the Messiah mentioned in Psalm 110. However, the two priesthoods—Melchizedek’s and Christ’s—are closely tied by their characteristics of righteousness and peace, as well as their unending nature.

ABRAHAM AND MELCHIZEDEK (7:1–10)

A reasonable argument could be made that Abraham was himself a priest in that he offered sacrifices regularly and was on speaking terms with God. Nevertheless, Abraham counted Melchizedek greater than himself. Under the New Testament, Christians are priests in the kingdom of Christ. Even though we are priests, we all need the help of our great mediator, Christ.

1. In what ways is Melchizedek a “type” of Christ?
2. How does the background information on the Patriarchal Age inform us about how God works and how He changes His methods?

3. How did the writer of Hebrews attempt to explain Jesus' not being part of the Levitic, or priestly, tribe?
4. When did Abraham encounter Melchizedek?
5. What is the relationship between Melchizedek and the Aaronic priesthood?

**THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST
IN THE LINE OF MELCHIZEDEK (7:11–22)**

Hebrews 7:11–22 may have been written as a response to the objection that Jesus could not be a priest because He had the wrong ancestry. Directed by divine inspiration, the writer of Hebrews used a passage which prophesied that a new Priesthood would be part of a new covenant: Psalm 110:4. First-century readers may have thought that the new Priesthood could exist alongside the old; they may not have understood until Hebrews was written that the old priesthood would be replaced by the Priesthood of Christ.

6. How was “perfection” accomplished by the Melchizedek/Jesus priesthood when it could not be accomplished by the Levitic priesthood?
7. How were Jesus' priestly credentials established?
8. If the old covenant and priesthood focused on the physical, what is the focus of the new covenant and the new Priesthood?
9. What is the “chief characteristic” of Hebrews?

**THE PERFECT AND PERMANENT
PRIESTLY WORK OF CHRIST (7:23–28)**

In the great priesthood passage in 7:22–28, three portraits of Christ are given. We have already seen that He is our “guarantee of a better covenant” (v. 22). We also see that He is our eternal Priest and our effective sacrifice (vv. 26, 27).

10. What are some qualities of Christ's Priesthood?
11. In what ways is Christ as High Priest different from a mortal high priest?