

Hebrews Chapter Seven

In the seventh chapter Jesus is shown to be better than Aaron and the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priesthood was always subject to change because of the death of the priests. The priests were not perfect. In Hebrews 9:7 we find that even the High Priest had to offer sacrifice for his own sin. The priesthood of Jesus is different (according to the order of Melchizedek, not Aaron). The priesthood of Levi was changeable, that of Melchizedek was unchangeable. The priesthood of Levi was begun without an oath of God; the priesthood of Christ was consecrated by an oath of God. Jesus is a priest according to the power of an endless life (verse 16) and He has been perfected forever (verse 28).

The king of righteousness (verses 1-10)

In this chapter we find the most extensive discussion of Melchizedek in the entire Bible. From verse one we find that he was king of Salem (Peace) and also a priest of the most high God. He is reported to have met Abraham and to have blessed him. This account is found in Genesis 14:17-20.

In verse two the focus shifts from Melchizedek to Abraham. He is shown to have paid a tithe to Melchizedek. The focus shifts back to Melchizedek in verses three and four. Melchizedek is described as a person without father or mother, without genealogy. The reason for this description is that Melchizedek seems to appear and then disappear from history, appearing only in this one incident, the blessing of Abraham.

In fact, the only places in the entire Bible where Melchizedek is mentioned are Genesis 14, Psalm 110:4, and the book of Hebrews. While Abraham is mentioned numerous times in scripture Melchizedek simply appears and then disappears. It is as if

he had no father or mother. He is described as being made like the Son of God. He is not described as the Son of God, only that he was made like Him. He is also said to be a priest continually and that he was a great man.

The Levitical priesthood is considered in verse five. Those of the tribe of Levi, particularly the priests, are to receive tithes from the other tribes of Israel. Instructions concerning the paying of these tithes are found in Leviticus 2:3; Numbers 3:48; Numbers 5: 9-10, and Numbers 18:8-9, 12, and 21. In Joshua 21:1-3 we find that the tribe of Levi did not receive land when Canaan was divided, but instead received cities and the common lands surrounding them as their inheritance.

In verses six through eight the focus shifts back to Melchizedek. He is described as not being a relative or descendant of Abraham. In fact, Abraham is called the lesser when compared to Melchizedek, and yet, Melchizedek blessed Abraham. This comparison would have been enlightening to Jewish readers who looked to Abraham as the very foundation of their nation. The fact that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek was meant to show that the priesthood patterned after him was superior to the Levitical priesthood.

In verses nine and ten the focus shifts back to Levi who is described as having paid tithes to Melchizedek. While Levi had not even been born when Melchizedek blessed Abraham, the fact that Levi's father paid tithes to him shows that Melchizedek was superior, and that the priesthood founded after the order of Melchizedek was greater than the priesthood founded through Aaron and the sons of Levi.

The need for a new priesthood (verses 11-19)

The Levitical priesthood was not perfect. Since it was not perfect it needed to be changed. If the priesthood was changed then the law had to be changed as well. This is the argument of the writer.

In verse thirteen we find, “For He of whom these things are spoken...” which is a reference to Jesus. Jesus was a descendant through Mary of Judah, not a descendant of Levi. As such He could not serve as a priest under the Law of Moses. So, Jesus is said to have been made a priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Like Melchizedek, Jesus could be said to be without father, mother or genealogy (in the earthly sense). Jesus has neither beginning of days or end of life. He is eternal. As verse sixteen tells us He came not according to the flesh, but according to the power of an endless life. He is described as a priest forever in verse seventeen which is quoted from Psalm 110:4.

In verse eighteen we find that the former commandment (the Law of Moses) has been annulled. When something is annulled it is taken out of the way; it no longer has any force. The reasons for the annulling of the Law of Moses were because of weakness and because of unprofitableness. Jesus makes reference to this in Mark 2:22 when He speaks of new wine needing new wineskins. There was no possibility that the new law could be contained within the old. The law must be changed. In fact, Paul speaks of the law being done away with in Colossians 2:14. The Law of Moses could not make anyone or anything perfect. Only through the sacrifice of Christ can we be made perfect. As the writer states in verse nineteen, a better hope has been brought in by which we can draw near to God.

Jesus is greater than Aaron (verses 20-28)

Jesus is better than Aaron because the priesthood of Jesus was secured by an oath of God. Verse twenty-one contains a quote from Psalm 110:4 which shows that God swore on behalf of the priesthood of Jesus. Jesus is also described as the surety of God, or as a guarantee. While the priests of the Law of Moses died Jesus continues forever!

Jesus is able to save us to the uttermost. The Law of Moses could not do this. It is incredible that anyone would want to say that we are under the Law of Moses today. Why would anyone want to replace the Law of Christ which is able to save us to the uttermost with something that was taken out of the way because of weakness and unprofitableness? As verse twenty-five instructs us we can be saved by coming to God through Him (Jesus) not through coming to God through Moses. Jesus always lives to make intercession for us while the priests of the Law of Moses died.

In verses twenty-six through twenty-eight we find mentioned some of the characteristics of Jesus, which prove Him to be superior to anything under the Law of Moses. Among these are: Jesus is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, higher than the heavens, without a need for sacrifice, and that Jesus has been perfected forever.

Jesus has no need of sacrifice for sin because He was sinless. He also offered Himself upon the cross once for all. This directly contradicts the teaching of some that the sacrifice of Jesus is repeated through what is known as transubstantiation. According to this doctrine, when the fruit of the vine and the bread are consecrated they change and actually become the body and blood of the Lord and that the sacrifice of Jesus' body is repeated. But, the writer of the book of Hebrews says that Jesus offered Himself once for all. In later chapters this idea will be reviewed again.