

Hebrews 7:1-14 – Jesus and the Order of Melchizedek

Jesus is superior to the Old Testament prophets, the angels, Moses and Joshua. Jesus is also a better priest. In chapter 7, the author of Hebrews takes up the topic of Jesus as our eternal high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was mentioned in the Old Testament in Genesis 14:18-20 and in Psalm 110:4. The only mention of Melchizedek in the New Testament is in Hebrews chapters 5-7. The author gleaned a lot of information from Genesis 14:18-20.

Read Hebrews 7:1-3.

7:1-10 is based on Genesis 14:18-20. What is the context of this passage? The first thing that strikes us is that Melchizedek was both a king and a priest. He was king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. These offices were separate under Old Testament law. Where in the Old Testament did we see hints that the Messiah would also be a priest? See Zechariah 3:8, 6:11-13, 13:1, Psalm 110. From verse 1, what two things did Melchizedek do? (7:1)

How did Abraham respond to Melchizedek? What does the name Melchizedek mean? What does the name Salem mean? Besides the first two verses here, Salem is mentioned in Genesis 14:18 and Psalm 76:2 where it is mentioned in parallel with Zion. If Salem is an alternate name for Jerusalem, what would be the additional significance of Melchizedek being the king of Salem? Peace and righteousness are also two characteristics of the Messiah. See Isaiah 9:6-7. (7:2)

Verse 3 is very interesting since it declares that Melchizedek was without father and mother and without a genealogy. He did not have a beginning or end of life. These statements could be taken in a couple of ways. Some believe that he was an angel or a special creature. The other way to take it is that there is no record of his father, mother, genealogy, birth or death. Genesis has a number of genealogy lists but Melchizedek was not in any of them. He appeared suddenly and disappeared suddenly. His name appeared only one other time in the Old Testament and that was in Psalm 110:4. How do you understand the beginning of verse 3? Melchizedek is obviously a type of Christ. From the end of verse 3, how did Melchizedek resemble the Son of God? (7:3)

Read Hebrews 7:4-10.

Verses 4-10 focus on the tithe which Abraham gave to Melchizedek, the blessing which Melchizedek gave to Abraham and the implications of these actions. The main implication of these actions was that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. That would be a shocking statement to Jews who prided themselves in being children of Abraham. Obviously Melchizedek was not descended from Abraham since Abraham was without a child when they met. See Gen. 15:2. (7:4)

Verse 5 talks about the tithe which the priests collected. The priests were descended from Levi but were also descended from Aaron. Who did the priests collect the tithe from? Why did the priests collect the tithe? (7:5)

Verse 6 stated what we already noted in verse 4. Melchizedek was not descended from Abraham, Levi, or Aaron. We also noted that Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek and Melchizedek blessed Abraham. How was Abraham described? From verse 7, what was the significance that Melchizedek blessed Abraham and not the other way around? (7:6-7)

Verse 8 compared the priests who received tithes under the Mosaic law with Melchizedek who received a tithe from Abraham. How were they different? (7:8)

Verse 9 begins with a word that is used only once in the NT. BDAG says it is used “to qualify speech that might sound too assertive so to speak” and so can mean “one might almost say”. What assertion was made about Melchizedek receiving a tithe from Abraham? Based on the blessing, Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. What do these verses say about the priesthood of Melchizedek versus the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants? (7:9-10)

Read Hebrews 7:11-14.

When God declared that the Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, in Psalm 110:4, what did that imply about the Levitical / Aaronic priesthood? (7:11)

According to verse 12, when the priesthood changed from the order of Aaron to the order of Melchizedek, there was also a change in the law. What law or laws changed? (7:12)

One law that changed was the law about who could be the high priest. The Mosaic law said that the high priest had to be descended from Aaron. According to the new law, our great high priest is not descended from Aaron but is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Therefore it did not matter that Jesus was descended from Judah and not Levi. He is a different kind of priest. It doesn't matter that no one from the tribe of Judah had ever previously served as a priest. What is the main point of verses 11-14? (7:13-14)