

# A Priest After The Order of Melchizedek

Hebrews 7

The Jews only thought of one priesthood: *the Levitical priesthood*. They considered *their* religious practices the only ones authorised by God Himself largely because God had given them the priesthood rather than to any other religion. We can easily imagine how they must have ridiculed the Christian 'sect' for not having any 'priesthood'. But the writer to the Hebrews now enlarges upon a point he fleetingly referred to in Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20 which establishes that Christianity *does* have a priesthood- but not the familiar Levitical priesthood.

1. What made Melchizedek different to any other priest? (Note Heb. 7:2-3)

The writer to the Hebrews successfully made the point to struggling Jewish Christians that the accusations made by their Jewish brothers about Christianity's lack of a priesthood were not true. He is about to use some very deep spiritual insight to make this point. These concepts are among the most profound of any in Scripture. It involves the concept of 'headship' (how one person can represent an entire group\ of people). He uses this very deep concept to show that rather than Christianity's priesthood being inferior to Jewish Levitical priesthood, it was indeed *superior* to it!

2. According Hebrews 7:3 who did Melchizedek represent?

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3. This is a profound point in Hebrews 7:4-5. When Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, whom did he represent? (Hebrews 7:9-10)

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4. How does this show that the Melchizedek Priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood?

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Levitical priesthood is more correctly known as the 'Aaronic' priesthood because only Levites who were descendents of Aaron could be priests. Tithing was (and is) an acknowledgement of superiority and honour. Within Israel, all Israelites paid tithes to the tribe of Levi (Heb. 7:5); then all Levites paid tithes to the descendents of Aaron (priests). When Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek he was in effect representing the Aaronic Priests and submitting them to Melchizedek's superiority.

This also makes the point that tithing was not done away with when the New Covenant was introduced. Since Abraham tithed over 400 years before Moses gave Israel the Law, it shows that tithing is a principle which supersedes the Old Covenant. This is confirmed by what Malachi said in Malachi 3:8-10 since these words came after Israel had abandoned their Covenant with God.

## Blessing

Melchizedek blessed Abraham! The writer to the Hebrews is showing that Melchizedek was superior not only to the Levitical priests, but to Abraham himself.

5. What is Abraham described as having in Hebrews 7:6?

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6. What did this consist of according to Genesis 12:2-3, and described in Genesis 24:1; 35?

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7. Some people claim that the blessing of Abraham exclusively belongs to his natural descendants. But according to Galatians 3:29 who are the heirs of the promise made to Abraham?

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The implication here is possibly that these Jewish Christians may have been told that they were no longer blessed since they had abandoned Judaism to become Christians. But since Christians received the ministry of a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham, they were in no way deprived of blessing.

Hebrews 7:8 seems to suggest that Melchizedek didn't die. This has caused some to speculate that Melchizedek was actually a 'theophany' (a divine appearance) of Christ. But the Scriptures merely state that there is no record of Melchizedek having a mother or father, birth or death (Heb. 7:3). The writer to the Hebrews makes the point that in this way, Melchizedek's priesthood foreshadows the priesthood of Christ.

8. In what ways is Melchizedek like Christ? (Note Heb. 7)

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## Christ As Our Priest

Psalm 110 (the most cited Psalm in the New Testament) prophesied that the Messiah would be a Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews also says that it was well known that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah (since He was to be a descendant of David, Hebrews 7:14). Since the Scriptures prophesied that the Messiah would also be a Priest, it is logical that the Scriptures were also endorsing that when the Messiah came there would be a new covenant established.

<b>OLD COVENANT</b>	<b>NEW COVENANT</b>
Levitical Priesthood	Melchizedek Priesthood (vs. 11)
The Law written on stone (vs 18)	The law written on hearts (8:10)
Animal Sacrifices	The Death of Christ
Temple	Church (people)

9. The Levitical Priests merely performed religious duties on behalf of Israel. But in what ways does our Priest go further than this? (Hebrews 7:25, 27)

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Knowing that Christ is our High Priest of a better covenant may not mean too much to us today, but to struggling Jewish Christians who were being told by Jewish persecutors that since the Temple and Jewish Priesthood remained, God obviously had not abandoned the Old Covenant. But the writer to the Hebrews has shown powerfully that this was not so.

*Amen.*