

7. A High Priest, Who Sat Down at the Right Hand of the Throne of the Majesty in Heaven

Chapter 6 ended by establishing our hope that as Jesus entered the inner sanctuary, heaven, so might we. This is the anchor, firm and secure. Having entered the inner sanctuary, Jesus became a high priest forever. That priesthood is in the order of Melchizedek. The chapter concludes with Heb 6:19-20, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

The preceding verses of chapter 6, taught that there are two unchangeable truths: the nature of God's purpose is unchangeable, and it is impossible for God to lie. The authenticity of Jesus priesthood stands on these two immutable truths. This passage prepares the reader for the discussion that follows about how Christ is a superior high priest.

Melchizedek Was King of Salem and Priest of God Most High

Heb 7:1-3: 7:1 This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, 2 and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name 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.

The Old Testament records the meeting between Melchizedek and Abraham in Gen 14:18-20:

18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying,

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.

20 And blessed be God Most High,
who delivered your enemies into your hand."

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

The names of Melchizedek reflect his extraordinary nature—king of righteousness and king of peace. That he appears here without the trappings of Jewish genealogies places him symbolically like the son of God with no beginning of days and end of life. Symbolically, the priest and priesthood remain forever, firmly planted in the unchangeable nature of the purpose of God. (Hebrews 6:17.) Some mistakenly take Melchizedek to be Christ; however, the metaphoric use of *like the son of God* eliminates this idea. That Abraham paid homage and that Melchizedek blessed shows Melchizedek's superiority to Abraham.

Melchizedek, a Priest Superior to Levi

Heb 7:4-10: 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.

Now Melchizedek was great, but just how great was he? The writer asks and answers this question. The fact that Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of the plunder shows his superiority to Abraham; and since Levi descended from Abraham, Melchizedek was greater than Levi was. The logic of the writer is straightforward and we need not repeat it.

A Better Hope by Which We Draw Near to God

Heb 7:11-19: 11 If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come – one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? 12 For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. 13 He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. 15 And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, 16 one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is declared:

*"You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek."*

18 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless 19(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

The long rhetorical question constitutes all of verse 11. Perfection could not be attained through the Levitical priesthood, which was the basis of the Law of Moses. Another priest in the order of Melchizedek was necessary. Verse 12 states the key construct of this argument: "For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law." The Lord was not of the tribe of Levi, but the tribe of Judah. Neither Moses, nor his law, said anything about a priest in the tribe of Judah. The facts are made the more certain, since a priest in the order of Melchizedek appeared. The priesthood of Jesus rested on the power of his indestructible life. The Law of Moses was set aside because it was weak and useless, and made nothing perfect. A better hope—eternal life in Jesus—is the hope by which we draw near to God.

Jesus, a High Priest Who Lives Forever

Heb 7:20-25: 20 And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, 21 but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him:

*"The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind:
'You are a priest forever.'"*

22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

God made Jesus a high priest with an oath upon himself; and the unchangeable truth to that oath was that God made Jesus a priest forever. In this way, Jesus became a guarantee of a better covenant than the Law of Moses. All other priests die, but Jesus lives forever with his priesthood being permanent. For those who come to God through him, he saves completely. He lives on to intercede for them.

Jesus, the Son, Made Perfect Forever

Heb 7:26-28: 26 Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Hebrews 8: 1-2 summarizes the point of this last paragraph of chapter 7. In fact, it summarizes the entire discussion of Jesus as high priest. Heb 8:1 reads, "The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man."