
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Hebrews

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Hebrews 7:1-10: *Melchizedek the Forerunner!*

General idea: Melchizedek was a great king, a king of peace and justice who loved and honored God. He held honor from godly others as he pointed to God; he was God's priest and led the people of Salem, a place of peace. Abraham honored him by giving reverence and tithes to him after winning a battle. These were the days before a Jewish priesthood and the Tabernacle and Melchizedek were shadows of what was to come. He was the focal point for others to know about and worship the One True God, and for the Jews, the Levitical priesthood would take it over under Aaron and then Christ, who will take that over with our New Covenant. Abraham took one tenth of his plunder and gave it to Melchizedek. He is an obscurity; we do not know much about him other than he was a great man of character showing and pointing others to the purpose and traits of Judaism, to know, serve, and share all about God. He also was the forerunner as in "type" of Person the Messiah would be, a Priest and King of Peace—a Son of God. Melchizedek was affirmed by Abraham and set the tone for faith and life for the Patriarch and his legacy to us today. The priests of Israel took over Melchizedek's role, as does Christ today. He is important because he lives on in quality and blessings; He pointed to Christ as The Ultimate King, Priest, and Mediator, and Christ used him as His seal of ordination.

Contexts and Background:

This passage is a summary of Genesis 14:17-24; it also continues to show us the importance of our spiritual growth set in the context of the power of God and His Word. Melchizedek was a great priest and king and a prototype to Jesus Christ. He is an archetype to how Christ is our Divine Mediator and Guide. He is like Christ in his traits, role, and manner. As Melchizedek's priesthood was greater than Abraham, so is Christ's greater than all that came before Him. The Levites superseded Melchizedek and Christ supersedes the Levitical Priesthood and He also becomes the Temple. This is set in the context of our trusting confidence of rest in, dependence on, and obedience to Christ—of believing and then trusting in Him, then obeying His precepts so we can have faith and confidence in that faith. In addition, a continual warning is at hand against apostasy, so we take our responsibility of being a Christian seriously! Because we are full of sin, we are unable, on our own, to heed His call or receive His rest. So, we must get the point that we are to progress on to maturity and go deeper with God (Gen. 14; Psalm 110; Heb. 5:6).

Commentary; Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *This Melchizedek.* Meaning a king of peace and righteousness, he is the “antecedent type” meaning he prefigured the traits and virtues of Jesus Christ. He held offices of both king and priest—very rare. He blessed Abraham and pointed to the priesthood and Christ to come. (Gen. 14:18-20; Psalm 76:2; also stated in *Josephus, Philo* and the *Dead Sea Scrolls* as “Melek the King,” as well as an *Egyptian Execration text*, while no more info other than what we already have in the Bible, is a wonderful collaboration and apologetic). For more, see Hebrews 5:1-10 study.
- *Salem.* Meaning the land of peace, which eventually becomes Jerusalem under David.
- *King of peace... king of righteousness.* These are Messianic titles depicting what He will be like. Also a foreshadowing to the character of Christ, Jesus is the One who saves us; through Him we have redemption, life, and purpose. This is also a legacy about passing on virtue to ones progeny and descendants (see Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16).
- *Without genealogy / parents / descent.* Meaning his ancestry is not known or cannot be traced. The high priest without a pedigree is the opposite of a Jewish high priest who must be descended from Aaron. Nothing is known of Melchizedek; this is a Jewish literary device of comparison to make a point of his mystery and significance. For the Jews, genealogy was most important to show one’s worthiness to be a priest or have a role in the synagogue or temple. Here is the grand exception that points to Christ who was not a Levite nor used His genealogy to gain favor or position (Gen. 14:18-20).
- *Without beginning.* Meaning that the dates of his birth and death are not known, an essential aspect to becoming a priest in Judaism—the birth part for the living and the death part for the follower. This does not mean eternal or a pre-incarnation of Christ; if it were, the text would make this clear. Rather, this was a literal Jewish device to show the mystique and importance of Melchizedek. Some commentaries have suggested he was an angel, but the context says otherwise (Heb. 1:5-14; 10:12-14).
- *Like the Son of God.* Meaning the timelessness of his priesthood and the typology to Christ, referring to how Melchizedek points to Christ, a comparison to make a point. Also, it is a foreshadowing to show Christ-likeness. In the OT, an anointed king was called a *Son of God* (2 Sam. 7: 11-15; Psalm 2:7; 45:6; 89:27). The term expresses the special relationship Melchizedek had with God, that the Jews will have, and that we as Christians now have and will have. This is a promise and a privilege too, that points first to David’s throne and then to Christ Himself. In pagan literature, *Son of God* usually referred to a king’s son or a special person appointed as his representative. Perhaps this was also a responsibility of Melchizedek, as the *son of God* was to receive the throne and rule in God’s name as His

authorized representative—a prelude to the Levitical or “Aaronic” system (Matt. 1:1; Mark 1:11; Heb. 1:5). To an extent, all of Israel were called the *sons of God*, referring to the promise He had given them, which Jesus fulfilled as the history of redemption came to culmination as all points converged at the cross (Ex. 4:22; Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15). This title, in the rest of the New Testament, refers to Jesus’ unique position with God the Father while He was on the earth (Matt. 3:17; 11:27; 17:5; 21:38). Jesus Christ fulfilled this promise, as He became this title’s ultimate satisfaction! Many commentators have stated that this was a “Christophany,” a pre-manifestation or “pre-incarnate” of Christ before His incarnation (coming to earth); however the contrast and context clearly indicates this is not the case, such as this phrase “like the Son of God” not *the son of God*. Melchizedek is clearly a “pre-figuration” of Christ, meaning an antecedent type or one who points to Him.

- *He remains a priest forever.* This prepares for Christ’s ordination. Whereas the Levites inherited their role, Christ is chosen by the Father and is ordained into it. In ancient Jewish interruptive principles, if someone’s death is not listed, such as with Cain, it is presumed they are still living in some way. In reality, this is not necessary literally, as Cain and Melchizedek were still living on earth, existing in legacy and influence. For example, the character and influence of Moses is still in existence; nothing is known of his physical lineage. The non-mention of Cain’s death indicates his lasting folly (Psalm 72:2; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 6:13; Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 1:30).
- *A tenth / tithe.* An ancient custom was to give a percentage of your winnings, profits, or plunder to the ruling authority to show respect and also to protect what you have so they do not come after it. Here, it is also a sign of reverence. Tithing became a mandate to show God reverence and fund the Jewish Temple, priests, and nation. Today, tithing is a way to show our gratitude to God by supporting our local church and ministries. Genesis 14 is the first occurrence in the Bible for a tithe, which becomes the template for tithing in the Old Testament and today.
- *Descendants of Levi.* Melchizedek’s priesthood points to Christ, referring to how and to whom the Old Testament tithe was collected. Levi was Abraham’s great grandson and the leader of the Tribe of Levis who became the priestly tribe. They served as priests and various officials, but could not own land. Melchizedek pre-dates this order and in a way is superior because Abraham tithed to him and not to himself or his descendants (Num. 18:21-26; 2 Chron. 31:4-6; Neh. 10:37-38; 13:5-15).
- *Blessed him who had the promises.* In ancient cultures, the tithe always goes from the lesser to the greater as blessed is always greater than the one the blessing goes to, such as a father blesses his son, the priest blesses the people, and so forth.

- *The lesser person is blessed by the greater.* The point is Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, and Abraham is greater than Levi. Because Melchizedek blesses Abraham and thus Abraham inherits the priesthood from Melchizedek, his promise is sealed, and begins its fulfillment as Christ is pointed to as our Eternal High Priest (Heb. 5:6).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Melchizedek points to our eternal inheritance that we do not deserve, yet do receive by the grace of our Lord and Savior. Our salvation is something we can never receive by our own efforts, power, wisdom, or time; it is purely and solely a gift that is given because Christ intercedes on our behalf. Even though Jesus never succumbed to temptation, He deals ever so mercifully and gently with us who do; this is a great attribute of His grace and an attribute we are called to extend to others too. Of course, this must be done with discernment and with proper boundaries, and in the Fruit of the Spirit.

Melchizedek is an example of faith and the stewardship of what we have, which always comes from somewhere where we did not make or refine it. God is the Great Maker and Refiner; we give to Him and His representative as a show of gratitude and devotion. He is a mystery, as we do not know where he came from or where he went; all we know about is his character that resounds through time and history to us today. Character is what ripples with such a strong effect; it is needed and it is timeless. The question is, does it flow from you? Do you look for it in others and encourage them to let it flow too? If you want a safe and content place to know and worship God or to raise a family in a hostile world, God's Word and our character of response is ever so needed and called for.

Christ and the Bible are greater than us. When we "get this," we can hand over our lives in utter surrender. Thus, we are called to study the Bible more seriously and thoroughly to be biblically informed, and to use it not just as a reference and guide, but also for our inspiration and life principles. The Bible points us to the One who we are to know, receive, and worship. The Word of God is essential but it is not the "all in all;" the crucial missing component is our trusting rest in Christ. At the same time, it is the Bible that gives us this information, but our trust is not on it as a form of worship—rather as our headquarters of knowledge and principles. The Bible, by itself, gives us a picture of faith but it is not the object of faith.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?

5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How do you honor Christ? How should you?
2. How and why did Abraham honor Melchizedek? How do you? What about with your time, talents, and treasures?
3. Melchizedek was a great man of character, showing and pointing others to the purpose and traits of Christ. How do you do this at school, work, and in life outside of church friends? Why is this important? How does your spiritual growth come into play here?
4. What do you need to do to become unlimited with character, showing others, even without opening your mouth, the purpose and Person of Christ and the Christian life?
5. How are dependence and obedience essential to honoring and growing in Christ? How can you make it more so in your daily endeavors?
6. How can you have more confidence in God, so to be used by Him to lead others to Christ?
7. Does the leadership of your church realize and model the importance of spiritual growth? How can it do so better? What will be your role?
8. How do you demonstrate being authentic? How does your confidence in God help you see Him use and lead you?
9. How does a purposeless and wasteful life say *I do not trust in Christ*? How does living for yourself gain you little and even judgment?
10. We have to take God's just anger and our faith seriously and see the peril of a lack of true spirituality. Why? How?
11. How does Christ-likeness help you develop character? How will this ripple through your circumstances and life to make you stronger?

12. Why is character needed and timeless? Does it flow from you? Do you look for it in others and encourage them to let it flow too? How can you further develop it?

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