

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

A Study of Hebrews 7:1-28

By Pastor Marcus Bates

Introduction – Review

- The apostle Paul is believed to be the author of the epistle to the Hebrews (**GC 347, 411, 413, 420-421**).
- Timothy was a close ministry associate of Paul, and is mentioned by name in the epistle (**Heb. 13:23**), similar to other epistles written by Paul (**2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2; 1:18; 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:1; Philemon 1:1**).
- Produced prior to Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70, this epistle was written to Jewish Christians, and might have also been used as an evangelistic tool to reach the Jewish people with the Gospel message.
- One of the central themes in the book of Hebrews is the "**Jesus is better than . . .**" theme; **Heb. 1:1-14** describes how Jesus is better than angelic beings; **Heb. 2:1-18** describes how Jesus is better than any human being; **Heb. 3:1-19** describes how Christ is better than Moses; He has built a better spiritual house (the church), and offers a better rest than the earthly OT Canaan – an eternal spiritual rest in heaven; **Heb. 4:1-16** describes how Christ offers a better rest, the rest of salvation, the rest of the weekly Sabbath, and a perpetual rest in the eternal kingdom of heaven; **Heb. 5:1-14** describes how Christ has a better priesthood – the order of Melchisedec (He is our High Priest and Savior who offers us salvation); **Heb. 6:1-20** describes how Christ has better promises than any human promises.

Hebrews 7 – Reflections on Hebrews 7:1-3

- Jesus Christ is a high priest after the order of Melchisedec, who was the king of Salem (Jerusalem) and the priest of God (**Gen. 14:18**); Jesus is the King of the New Jerusalem and God's High Priest!
- Abraham returned tithes to Melchisedec after being blessed by this Priest-King.
- The word "Melchisedec" means "king of Salem (Peace)" and "king of Righteousness."
- This Priest-King is without a father, without a mother, without descent, not having a start or end of days.
- Melchisedec was like Christ, who occupies a continual priesthood as the Son of God; this text seems to imply that Melchisedec is Christ.

Hebrews 7 – Reflections on Hebrews 7:4-8

- Melchisedec was a spiritual man who served God, given that Abraham returned tithe to him.
- The sons of Levi, who served as priests in the earthly temple, are commanded to receive tithes from their brethren the Israelites, despite the fact that they are descendants of Abraham.
- Yet, Melchisedec, whose lineage is not traced to Abraham, also received tithes from Abraham and blessed him, the one in whom God made special promises (i.e. that all nations of the earth will be blessed through the Messiah Jesus Christ, who came from Abraham's biological lineage).
- Melchisedec (i.e. a type of Jesus Christ, the better) blessed Abraham (the lesser).
- The Levites, who were mortal, received tithe; yet, Melchisedec, who is immortal (He is Jesus Christ), also receives tithe, who is alive forevermore, and He has not left Himself without witnesses.

Hebrews 7 – Reflections on Hebrews 7:9-17

- Levi received tithe, and yet also returned tithe through the agency of Abraham.
- Levi hadn't been born yet when Abraham returned tithes to Melchisedec.
- If perfection came through the Levitical priesthood, why would another priesthood after a different order (Melchisedec) be needed instead of the order after Aaron and his sons?
- Since the sanctuary priesthood has changed, God's law has also transferred (changed) with respect to the lineage of the priesthood in terms of who should serve in the heavenly sanctuary.
- Jesus Christ came from another Israelite tribe other than Levi, the tribe of Judah, which was not designated to serve in the earthly sanctuary.
- Yet, Christ came from Judah, a tribe that Moses did not identify as responsible for temple ministrations.

- Jesus Christ is a priest after the similitude of Melchisedec, not through the authority of a commandment based on a biological requirement, but through the authority of an endless life; this is why Christ is a high priest who serves forever after the order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 7 – Reflections on Hebrew 7:18-24

- In terms of the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ, God has annulled the OT biological requirement that priests have to come from the Israelite tribe of Levi.
- The law of God does not make anything perfect anyway; only our ultimate saving hope in Jesus Christ can make us fully complete and perfect (spiritually mature)!
- We can draw close to God through this hope; Jesus Christ became our High Priest through an eternal oath; God proclaimed through an oath by the authority of His own divine nature that Jesus Christ is our high priest after the order of Melchisedec.
- Through this oath, Jesus Christ is our surety of a better covenant of salvation; there were many earthly priests in the OT; yet, they could not continue forever because they were mortal; given that Jesus Christ is immortal, He has an unchangeable priesthood, and continually serves as our high priest forever.

Hebrews 7 – Reflections on Hebrew 7:25-28

- Because Christ serves as high priest continually and forever, He is able save everyone who comes to God through Him, as He ever lives to make intercession for responsive human beings.
- Christ became a human being, and yet He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; as a result, He does not need to offer up daily sacrifices for His own sins (He had no sins to atone for!) or the sins of the people (His one sacrifice is sufficient!).
- He offered His own sacrifice once, and this sacrifice is able and sufficient to save!
- The OT sacrificial law made mortal men high priests (i.e. the Levites); yet, the “word of the oath” (the NT), which happened after the OT sacrificial law (this law pointed to the “word of the oath”), made Christ our high priest, who is consecrated for continual service in the heavenly sanctuary forever!

Summary of Hebrews 7:1-28

- The apostle Paul seemed to suggest that Melchisedec is Jesus Christ; this Priest-King of Salem had no traceable earthly descent, and received tithe from Abraham.
- Melchisedec was not a biological member of the Israelite tribe of Levi, and yet He served as God’s priest; the same is true of Jesus Christ, who came from the tribe of Judah.
- While the Levitical priests served under the oath of the OT sacrificial law, Jesus Christ serves as our high priest under the oath of the eternal covenant of salvation that He accomplished through His own sacrifice for sin; because of His one true sacrifice for sin, Christ does not need to offer up continual sacrifices; His one infinite sacrifice is sufficient to provide salvation.
- Moreover, the Levites were mortal, sinful individuals, while Jesus Christ as a human being was sinless and perfect; this reality gives exceptional merit to His earthly life and death on the Cross in terms of His ability to offer eternal salvation to the human race and intercede for fallen human beings.
- Because Jesus Christ is immortal, His priesthood is therefore unchangeable, and He is able to continually serve as our High Priest and Intercessor, and provide salvation to everyone who turns to God through the merits of His sacrifice and intercession.
- Overall, consistent with the “**Jesus is better than**” theme, Jesus Christ offers a better sacrifice (His death on the cross), a better priesthood (the Melchisedec priesthood), and a better intercession than the OT earthly priests; His intercession is continual – He ever lives to make intercession for us!