

HEBREWS CHAPTER 7

The theme of the Book of Hebrews is "The NEW covenant in Jesus is better than the OLD covenant in the Law." Jesus is above all else. He is better than all of the O.T. stuff. He's better than the angels ("superior to angels," 1:4); He's better than Moses ("worthy of more glory than Moses," 3:3); He's a better than Aaron, than the O.T. Levitical priesthood (Ch 5). Jesus is like Aaron in that He was appointed by God. But, unlike Aaron, Jesus was "made perfect" and "became the source of eternal salvation to all who believe him" (5:9). The writer of Hebrews interrupts his argument to address an issue that's heavy on his heart, which is the salvation of his Jewish brothers and sisters. We looked at that section (5:11-6:12). Last week we saw in Ch 6 that God does not lie. He keeps His promises. If God said it, you can count on it. Now as we get into Ch 7 the writer of Hebrews is going to resume his argument (began in Ch 5) that Jesus is a better high priest than Aaron.

What is this up here on the board? It is NOT the GC. It is only a picture of the GC. The real thing is much more impressive. When you read the Bible it will present pictures, types of something much bigger. The pictures are always lesser than the real thing. In today's lesson the writer of Hebrews uses an obscure O.T. character as a picture of Jesus, the Messiah Priest King. He introduces this man as a type of Christ, a picture of Jesus. This man is NOT Jesus. He is only a picture of Jesus. There are aspects of this man that are like Jesus.

READ Hebrews 6:19-20

The image that the writer conjures up here is that of the Levitical high priest entering the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. He enters into the presence of God on behalf of the people and he sprinkles blood of an animal on the mercy seat. He is making atonement for their sins. Just, like that O.T. high priest, Jesus acts on our behalf. He's already atoned for our sins with His own blood (death on the cross). Now He intercedes for us in the very presence of the Father. Jesus is our eternal high priest ("a high

priest forever"). For the third time the writer quotes from Psalm 110:4, a messianic psalm: "...a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." And so it is that we are introduced to this little known O.T. character named Mel-.

Which Old Testament character does the writer of Hebrews present as a picture of Jesus Christ? Melchizedek. We're going to look at him now to see why parallels are drawn between him and Jesus. Please keep in mind that Mel- is only a picture of Jesus. He's not Jesus.

Mel- is mentioned in Genesis 14:17-20. Mel- is an actual historical person who lived at the same time as Abraham (called Abram in this passage – his name gets changed to Abraham later). So then, this priest named Mel- pre-dates Aaron by some 500 years.

In Gen 14 Abraham returns from battling several rogue kings –these are the bad guys. They had raided and plundered cities in the Trans-Jordan area of what we now call Israel. This included the city of Sodom. That's where Lot, Abraham's nephew, and his family lived. They along with many citizens of Sodom had been captured and carried off by these bad guys. When Abraham (living up in Hebron) received the news he assembled an army of men and they pursued these bad guys. They caught up with them around Damascus, Syria, well to the north. They defeated them soundly there. In this passage Abraham returns home as a hero. With him are all the people and the goods that had been taken, including Lot and his family. Mission accomplished. Abraham is met by the king of Salem, Mel-. We're told that not only is Mel- a king but he is also a priest – a priest of God Most High. The events recorded here take place before there's a covenant nation of Israel. Later on the covenant name for God will become "Yahweh," I AM. But that is still future. The name used for God prior to the Mosaic Covenant is "God Most High." This is the name that will continue to be used by the nations, non-Jews, when speaking of the one true and living God. So Mel- is a follower of the same God that Abraham follows. He is a priest of God Most High. Mel- blesses Abraham and God. In return Abraham offers to Mel- a tenth part of the spoils he had taken.

A tithe is a tenth (Hebrew word *maasar*). The next time this word is used will be in Leviticus.

READ Hebrews 7:1-3

Here the writer of Hebrews gives us a little more insight into Mel-. His name means "king of righteousness" and he is the king of Salem, which means "peace." So Mel- is presented as both a king of righteousness and a king of peace. His genealogy is not presented anywhere in Scripture which means that it's not important. The point here is that Mel- was chosen by God to be a priest based on qualifications other than his lineage. His death is not recorded in the Bible. So Mel- will always and forever be seen in the light of this one snapshot we get of him in Genesis 14. In that sense he continues on as a priest forever. This is the picture.

So when Jesus is mentioned as "a high priest forever after the order of Mel- (8 times Psalm 110:4 is quoted in Hebrews Chaps 5, 6 and 7), the psalmist and the writer of Hebrews are comparing the priesthood of Jesus, of the Messiah to the priesthood of Aaron, to the Levitical priesthood of the O.T. Law. We noted their similarities in Heb Ch 5 – human, chosen by God, offer sacrifices. But now the focus is on the contrasts using Mel- as a picture of Jesus, a type of Christ. Aaron's priesthood dealt only with the nation of Israel. Jesus' priesthood is universal. Like Mel-, Jesus's priesthood is beyond just Israel. Jesus, unlike Aaron and like Mel-, is a priest king. Jesus, unlike Aaron and like Mel-, is a king of righteousness and a king of peace. The Apostle Paul says that the righteousness of God comes thru faith in Jesus (Romans 3:22). "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God thru our Lord Jesus Christ" (Roman 5:1).

Jesus, unlike Aaron and like Mel-, was chosen to be a priest by God for reasons outside of his human lineage. Jesus wasn't from the priestly family of Aaron or the tribe of Levi. His human lineage is out of the tribe of Judah. Aaron's priesthood ended with his death (Num 33). The Levitical system ended with the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. On the other hand, Jesus's priesthood lasts forever.

The priesthood of Jesus does not follow the same pattern of Aaron's priesthood. It's different. It's better. This is a huge point for Jews to grasp. If there existed another priesthood, another system by which people could gain access to God prior to the old covenant of the Law – and one DID exist as we see in Genesis 14 – then it follows that there could be a priesthood, a system whereby we could be brought near to God after the old covenant. The author's point in Hebrews is that there IS another covenant and it IS newer and better. This new covenant has been ratified in blood like the old covenant, the blood of Jesus Christ.

READ Hebrews 7:4

Abraham gave a tenth, a tithe to Mel-. It wasn't a gift to Mel-. In reality it was a gift to God. Mel- served as God's human representative. He ministered as a priest of God Most High. He's a priest, an intermediary (go-between) between God and man. So Abraham's gift was a gift to God. Abraham offers a tithe, a tenth to Mel- out of reverence to his exalted position as priest of God Most High. *[Example: writing a tithe check]*.

READ Hebrews 7:5-6a

We give because our God is so great! It was not a requirement of the Law for Abraham to give (no Law yet). He gave a tenth out of the gratitude of his own heart to God. In an act of worship Abraham gives his offering to God and he does it thru Mel-.

READ Hebrews 7:6b-7

Mel- blessed Abraham who had God's promises. Mel- was somehow aware of the promises God had made to Abraham in Genesis 12 (to make of Abraham a great nation, to bless the nations of the earth thru his descendants). From the Genesis 14 passage we also see that Mel- recognized it was God who was the Power behind Abraham's victory over those bad guys. So then, v 7 the superior (Mel-) blesses the inferior (Abe).

READ Hebrews 7:8

The writer drives home the point that the priesthood of Mel- (and of Jesus) is superior to the Levitical priesthood. The Jewish priests were mortal men performing their assigned duties out of obedience. Mel- in this meeting with Abraham gives testimony to the living God.

READ Hebrews 7:9-10

The writer of Hebrews makes an interesting observation. Since Levi will eventually come thru the lineage of Abraham (his great grandson), he sees that, in this early encounter Levi, still centuries away from being born, as the one paying the tithe thru his great grandfather Abraham. Of course later under the Law the Levites will be the ones receiving the tithes. This is all very interesting, but what's the main point? Let's read on...

READ Hebrews 7:11

The Mosaic Law, that whole Levitical system was not the end all and be all. It was not permanent nor was it ever intended to be permanent. It had flaws. "Perfection" here is a reference to salvation (being in perfect standing with God). The old covenant did not save anyone. So, it had to be replaced with a new and better covenant, a better system by which we can have our sins forgiven and receive access to God. There were several reasons. One is mentioned in v 11, which is that the old covenant could not save. We will come back to Q4 later (v 18-19).

READ Hebrews 7:12-14

So there is a change being made. The old covenant is set aside. No longer are we under the O.T. Law. The new covenant has a new priesthood, the Jesus priesthood. But Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi. He was from the tribe of Judah.

So at this point a good Jew might ask this question: "If we are no longer under the Law, how can we come to God?" Jesus answered that in John 14:6 when he said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except thru Me." So the way to God is thru Jesus.

READ Hebrews 7:15-17

"Another priest," is another of a different kind. He is not similar. He is not a new and improved version of the original. He is completely different. His priesthood will be an eternal, permanent priesthood. "In the likeness of Mel-," refers to all those contrasts we've noted already. His priesthood is more like Mel-'s than Aaron's.

How did Jesus become a priest? Not by who his earthly father was – He was not from the priestly tribe of Levi. He became a priest by, v 16, "the power of an indestructible life." Jesus lived a holy and perfect life while He was here on earth. He lives today and forever as the resurrected and exalted Savior, the Son of God. His qualifications are what He did and Who He is. The Levitical priesthood was all about the physical, externals. Jesus's priesthood focuses on the spiritual, matters of the heart, eternal things.

READ Hebrews 7:18-19

God set aside the old and brought in something new. The old system was "weak" and "useless" [*strong language*]. The Law was not a bad thing. It was a good thing. It revealed our sin and it covered that sin. But that had to be done over and over again. The new and better covenant that Jesus brings (subject of Hebrews) removes our sin completely and it was done once for all.

READ Hebrews 7:19

Thru faith in Jesus we are brought nearer to God under the new covenant than the people of Israel ever brought under the old covenant. We have been given a better hope!

READ Hebrews 7:20-22

The Jewish practice was to seal their promises with an oath to God. "I'm really serious about my promise to you. I WILL keep it and God will hold me accountable." This is what God did with the priesthood of Jesus. He guaranteed His promise with an oath sworn by Himself (6:13-17). God

promised that the new priesthood in Jesus (after the order of Mel-), will last forever. God will not change His mind about that. He's not going to come up with something different later on. Not only has God sworn an oath, but the Guarantor of His promise is Jesus Himself. God the Father swears an oath by His own name, guarantees it with His own Son, and seals it for the day of redemptions thru His Holy Spirit. This promise is absolutely certain!

READ Hebrews 7:23-24

The O.T. priests were human beings and they all died. When one died they were replaced by another. This went on for centuries. But Jesus continues as a priest forever. How many of you have ever had the experience of being under the leadership of a boss, a pastor, a teacher or someone that you really liked a lot only to have that person either die or leave their position? Jesus never dies. He's not going anywhere.

READ Hebrews 7:25

Jesus saves us from our sins, guilt, Satan, death, wrath and hell. When we "draw near to God thru Him" that is salvation. We come to God thru Jesus Christ. When we do that Jesus promises never to leave us or forsake us (Heb 13:5). Our salvation is secure in Jesus Christ who "always lives to make intercession for us!" Our salvation is forever.

READ Hebrew 7:26-28

Our High Priest, Jesus, is perfect and sinless. Unlike those other priests who had to make sacrifices for their own sins before they could offer up sacrifices for the people, Jesus doesn't have to do that. Unlike the earthly high priests Jesus is holy, innocent, unstained by sin, and exalted above the heavens. God the Father has appointed His own Son, Jesus to be our perfect high priest forever. His offering for sin, for OUR sins, was done once for all when He offered up Himself on the cross. From the cross, Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Jesus is a better high priest than

Aaron and His priesthood is better and more complete than the O.T. priesthood.

I close with this illustration. There was a young single woman who had lots of bills and she was really in over her head. She wondered, "How am I going to meet my debts? I just don't have any money, and my financial situation is really hopeless." Well, she's a lovely young lady, and one day a nice young man who had a successful career crossed her path and he fell very deeply in love with this young lady. After dating for a while he says to her one night, "Will you marry me?" Of course she is happy, but tells him, "Oh, I'll have to be honest with you about something I haven't told you. After I tell you this, you might not want to marry me. Here it is, uh, I am in deep, deep debt, up to my ears."

He replies to her, "That's not a problem. When we get married I will pay all your debts. I love you so much." Well, that is wonderful news! He gives her a ring and they're engaged. For the next six months or so of their engagement he keeps reassuring this young lady, "I'm going to pay your debts." And she keeps saying, "Oh, that's wonderful." But every night when she goes home she's still in debt. She thinks to herself, "It's nice to have the promise, something to look forward to, but it would be better to have my debts paid." She doesn't really have any peace of mind yet. She's still in deep financial debt. All she has at this point is a promise, a hope.

Finally they get married. And, as promised, he pays all of his new wife's debts. Not only that, but he reveals to her his 7-figure salary and gives her a joint checking account. And now not only does the young lady have her debts paid, but she lives in the riches of the one she loves.

How much better the new covenant in Jesus Christ is than that old legalistic covenant of the Law. Before, all we ever had was the promise that it was going to come, but no real freedom. Now that we are finally married to Jesus, we have it all! Our sin debt is paid in full and we live as joint heirs with Jesus! Pretty amazing, pretty awesome, right?