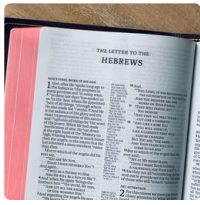


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Hebrews 7



Hebrews - Steve Gregg

In this teaching, Steve Gregg delves into Hebrews 7, where the author argues that the priesthood of Melchizedek differs from the Aaronic priesthood. Melchizedek's priesthood is based on eternal life and not hereditary succession. While commentators have differing views on who Melchizedek was, the author of Hebrews points to him as a type of Christ, with an unchangeable and non-transferable priesthood. The author's main goal is to sanctify believers and grow them in Christ's image.

Transcript

All right, before we get into chapter 7, which certainly we can use all our time readily just with that chapter, I do need to bring up something about chapter 6 because during the break after our last class, one of our students brought to my attention something that is a note in the Net Bible, which was interesting and which I've never heard any commentator mention previously, nor had I ever looked at it closely enough to know this particular detail. When the writer of Hebrews is talking about those who have fallen away, and his particular statement, it is impossible to renew them to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves afresh the Lord and expose them to an open shame, I was saying this poses a bit of a problem, not only for Calvinists, but also Arminians, because Arminians believe that you can fall away, but they also believe you can come back. And the verse seemed to be saying, not so.

And I gave you like three or so different ways that this is sometimes looked at, and left things pretty uncommitted. Here's yet another thing to add to the list, and that is that the word seeing they crucify to themselves afresh, that clause includes a lot of words that are not in the Greek. And during the break, someone brought this up, so I went and looked it up in the Greek, and it's interesting because this whole phrase, this whole clause is quite, just a few words here.

For example, the interlinear Greek text reads, picking it up in the middle of chapter 6, verse 6, it says, and falling away again to renew to repentance, crucifying again for themselves the Son of God. In other words, it doesn't say seeing they crucify, it just says crucifying again. It's impossible to renew them to repentance, crucifying again.

Now the observation apparently of the net Bible was that instead of saying it's impossible to renew because they crucify Christ again, it could mean while they are crucifying Him. That is, as long as they are continuing in a course that is essentially crucifying Christ afresh and bringing Him to open shame, it's impossible while they're in that state to renew them to repentance. In other words, they would have to have a change of heart, clearly, to come back to Christ.

And as long as they are persisting in this way that brings Christ to open shame in their lives, they can't come back while they're doing that. And so it's interesting, I was looking at it, the sparsity of the Greek words in the text leaves open the whole relationship to this crucifying Christ afresh. Most translations render it as if it's saying they can't be repented because they have done this, they've crucified Christ afresh.

But the way it's worded, it could be they can't come back while they are crucifying. Neither the word since or while or seen, those words don't correspond to anything in the Greek. But the Greek does say it's impossible to renew them to repentance, crucifying Christ while this is going on.

And so that's yet another possible explanation of a classically difficult passage in Hebrews 6. That may even be the best of all, but it's in the mix. And I leave it as I did then with a, I don't know for sure, I don't know which explanation is the best. It remains a somewhat difficult passage, but this does remove some of the difficulties that made it the more difficult.

So those are some thoughts. Now at the end of chapter 6, he has come full circle from where he began that diversion, that digression, by reminding us that Christ is a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. He first observed this in chapter 5, verse 6, by quoting Psalm 110, verse 4, where the Lord has sworn and will not repent, he says, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Now several things in this come up for discussion in chapter 7. One is that God swore this. The writer in chapter 7 is going to say, you know, unlike the Levitical priesthood, they were never installed with an oath. But God swore with an oath that the Messiah is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Also, he's a priest forever. No Aaronic priest in the Jewish order ever was a priest forever. They didn't live forever, so they couldn't.

And therefore, the writer is going to argue in chapter 7 that the Melchizedek priesthood differs from the Aaronic priesthood in that its possessor holds office by virtue not of hereditary succession from earlier priests, but by virtue of having an eternal life, an everlasting life. Because if you give a priest forever, he's going to have to live forever. And then, of course, the most important part is that this priesthood of the Messiah is not only sworn in with an oath.

He's not only in office forever, but it's a different order than had ever been known in the Bible. The Bible knew one order of priesthood of which Aaron was the head, chief priest, and his sons. Forever afterward were the priests of that order.

They were not related to Melchizedek, and Melchizedek, of course, then was not related to them. Therefore, any priesthood that is after the order of Melchizedek is entirely independent from any hereditary connection to the Jewish priesthood. It's, in fact, a non-Jewish priesthood.

There is no Jewish priesthood except of Aaron. Therefore, the Messiah has a priesthood that is not connected to the law or to Judaism. It's a universal priesthood.

And he's going to make that point in chapter 7, as we'll see, where he says in verse 12, for the priesthood being changed, now that's the premise. The priesthood has been changed. If we've got a priest after the order of Melchizedek, it's a different priesthood than Aaron.

So if the priesthood has been changed, by necessity, there has been a change of the law. The new priesthood is not connected to the law. It's not connected to Judaism.

It's not a Jewish priesthood at all. Melchizedek was not a Jew. But who was he? I mean, it's one thing to say he's not a Jew, and we can prove that, certainly, from the Old Testament, because he was contemporary with Abraham.

And there were no Jews in the days of Abraham. Abraham was the man whose lineage gave rise later to the Jewish people. But Melchizedek, who was contemporary with Abraham, could not have been descended from Abraham, could not have been a Jew.

And therefore, we've got a Gentile, one would imagine, in Melchizedek, at least a non-Jew. Or at least if he's, you know, we're going to toy with the question of who Melchizedek was. But suffice it to say that his priesthood was not connected to the law or to Judaism.

And therefore, Christ's priesthood, after that order, is not connected to the law or to Judaism. Now, the argument this author makes is very intriguing. And I'll tell you right off that Christian expositors have two essentially different views about Melchizedek.

The view I think you'll find most often in commentaries, at least in my experience, commentaries seem to say this most often, is that Melchizedek was a man contemporary with Abraham who was the king of the city of Jerusalem. Now, he is called the king of Salem in Genesis 14. And Salem can be viewed as a shortened form of the name Jerusalem.

There's a psalm or two that speak of Jerusalem and call it Salem. Jerusalem just means the city of Salem. And Salem is Shalom, peace.

So Jerusalem means the city of peace. But Melchizedek in Genesis 14 is simply called the king of Shalom. And that could be an abbreviation for Jerusalem, or not.

But most commentators seem to believe that Jerusalem is the city in question here. And Melchizedek was their king, an earthly individual, who also is said to have been the priest of the most high God, an intriguing thing, in a day when there was no priesthood that God had ever instituted, or any religion that God had instituted. Abraham lived in a time where there was no organized religion that God had ever established.

Therefore, no priesthood, altar, and things like that. Those are trappings of a religious system. Holy places, holy personnel, altars, and things like that.

In Abraham's day, people just built their own altar and offered their own sacrifices. They didn't need priests because God hadn't established them. But this man, Melchizedek, contemporary with Abraham, is a priest of the most high God.

Really? For what religious system? Well, this is mysterious. No question about that. He met Abraham when Abraham came back from rescuing Lot, from being kidnapped by... Lot had become a prisoner of war in a campaign that involved a bunch of pagan kings fighting some other pagan kings.

Abraham was on the periphery of this. It wasn't his battle. But his nephew was taken captive, and so Abraham made it his battle.

And he went and he rescued his nephew with a military campaign. It was when he was returning from that win that Melchizedek met him. He brought bread and wine out to Abraham and his servants, who were his troops.

And he blessed Abraham. He pronounced a blessing on him. And Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils of the battle.

All very intriguing because these things suggest that Abraham recognized Melchizedek, whoever he was, as some kind of superior spiritually. He let the man bless him. He gave tithes to him like you would to support a religious figure or whatever.

So we've got all this reported, actually, in a few verses in Genesis 14. No explanation. It just says, Melchizedek met him.

And it tells these things we just mentioned. And then Melchizedek's gone. We never hear of him again.

So who is he? As I said, the main view that I encounter most often is that he was an ordinary man living in Jerusalem who was a king and a priest, a godly man, obviously, and that he met Abraham. But the significant thing is that he is a type of Christ, as we would say that, say, Isaac was a type of Christ or David was a type of Christ or Joshua

was a type of Christ. Many Old Testament figures are just ordinary men, but their presence in the Old Testament evokes some kind of foreshadowing of Jesus.

But that doesn't make them anything more than human. They're just ordinary men in their own story. But they foreshadow Jesus.

And so the common view is that Melchizedek was an ordinary man who foreshadowed Jesus and that the writer of Hebrews is seeing this man as having important similarities to Jesus. Now, the Jewish view on this is similar, but they actually identify Melchizedek as a known person. The Jewish rabbis identify Melchizedek as Shem.

Shem, the son of Noah. Shem, who may have been the youngest of Noah's sons, or maybe not the youngest, but perhaps the last surviving one, anyway. And Shem, in fact, if you read the genealogical, chronological information in Genesis, would still, in fact, have been alive at this time.

Amazing. This is like 10 generations after the flood, but Shem lived to be over 500 years old and, in fact, would have been still living at this time. We do not know from Genesis where Shem took up residence.

If he had taken up residence in Jerusalem, he might well have been the king and the priest there. Although there would not be a complete system, he's the oldest living man on the earth. He's the great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather of everyone in the region.

Well, except for the Canaanites, of course, because they were from Ham. But Shem was Abraham's ancestor. And if Abraham had had an occasion to meet Shem, he certainly would have revered him as his ancient ancestor and perhaps as a godly spiritual leader in his day.

The question I have about this is, if Melchizedek was Shem, why doesn't the writer of Genesis say so? He's been talking about Shem a few chapters earlier. He calls him by his name. Why doesn't he say, Shem came out to meet Abraham and, you know, a familiar figure to the reader? That would make sense.

But instead, the writer of Genesis, who's Moses, leaves the matter very mysterious who this Melchizedek is. I believe that Shem would be a good guess, and I think the rabbis, you know, kind of hit a bullseye as far as human guesses go. I think Shem would be the most qualified man alive at the time of Abraham to be recognized by Abraham this way.

However, I think it's not necessarily correct. As I said, it would seem very strange for Moses in writing this story not to let us know that he's talking about Shem here. He certainly doesn't give any hints of that.

And that seems strange. The writer of Hebrews has a different position. In my opinion,

the writer of Hebrews does not see Melchizedek as a type of Christ.

He does not see him as Shem. And this is a view that is also held by many evangelicals, and I've been convinced of it from the earliest times of my own studies of Hebrews. And I've become more convinced of it as I look at this chapter again and again.

And that is that Melchizedek is what we call a Theophany or Christophany. We know of such. There are other indisputable cases of Jesus or God appearing in a human form prior to his incarnation, prior to his birth in Bethlehem.

We read of God appearing to Abraham in Genesis 18.1. We read of a man wrestling with Jacob, also in the book of Genesis later on. And this man, Jacob, identifies as God. Although the man, when Jacob says, what is your name? The man says, why do you ask after my name, seeing it is wonderful.

And we know that Jesus' name is wonderful, according to Isaiah 9.6. And Joshua encounters some figure who is described as the leader of the angels, the leader of the Lord's hosts, which many Christians believe is Christ, pre-incarnate. So, what we call a Theophany or Christophany, an appearance of God or Christ to man for a brief encounter. It's not a case where God has been incarnate, been born on earth, grown up as a little boy, lived out a human lifetime.

It's more that he just comes down and takes on a human form momentarily for the sake of a certain encounter. Many people think that the fourth man in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego might have been a Christophany also. But there's many questions about this.

And evangelicals often feel that every reference in the Old Testament to the angel of the Lord, not an angel, but the angel of the Lord, when you find that expression in the Old Testament. Evangelical theologians often think that's also a reference to Jesus. That is to say, it's not unusual to acknowledge that Jesus did appear in the Old Testament sometimes in a human form to have encounters with certain godly people.

Whether Melchizedek was one of those or not is another question. And it's interesting to me that most commentators who acknowledge the existence of such theophanies in the Old Testament often do not even give consideration to the fact that Melchizedek might have been one. My thought is, though, that if you take seriously what the writer of Hebrews says, you're pretty much left to that conclusion, unless some things he says are not very literal, which is maybe possible.

But the writer of Hebrews is trying to get something across and he builds a case point by point, which seems to point to one thing, and that is that Melchizedek is Jesus. But we have to remember this. When we say Jesus, we're really talking about the incarnation.

Jesus wasn't Jesus before he was born. He was God. He was the word of God.

And he was with God and was God. He came to be named Jesus when he was born. He came to be called the son of God at that point.

You don't find Jesus being referred to in prior to his incarnation as the son, he's the word. But at his birth, he's called the son. In fact, Mary was told the spirit of the Lord should come upon you.

The power of the high should overshadow you. Therefore, that thing that will be born of you will be called the son of God. Jesus was called the son of God because apparently of the nature of his incarnation, of the way his mother became pregnant, not by man, but by God.

And therefore, when we read of the son of God and especially in this chapter, in my opinion, what the writer is referring to is the specific incarnation of of the word as Jesus Christ in history. He is the son of God because the writer is going to say that Melchizedek is like the son of God. And this is one thing that puts people off from it being a theophany.

You know, it can't be Jesus because Jesus is the son of God. And Melchizedek is said to be like him, not him. But if the incarnation of Jesus, his earthly life as Jesus Christ, is that is what the writer of Hebrews is thinking of as the son of God, is this one who was born of the Virgin Mary and lived among us.

Melchizedek was like him. In what way? Like a type is like Christ or like a theophany is like Christ. An appearance of Christ.

If there are multiple appearances of Christ in the Old Testament and Melchizedek were one of them, it would be in that sense, like the incarnation, which was also an appearance of Christ as the son of God. In any case, there are open questions here. I'm going to proceed and make a case to suggest that we are actually looking at Jesus here as Melchizedek and that it makes no sense for the author of Hebrews even to write this chapter unless he is implying that.

Think about it this way. He's going to say. In verse four, now consider how great this man was to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of his voice, talk about Melchizedek.

Think for a moment how great Melchizedek was. Now, if Melchizedek is not Jesus, consider what the writer is now doing. He's gone through and said the angels, not so great.

Jesus is much greater than them. Moses, not so great. Jesus is so much greater than him.

Aaron, Joshua, you know, they might have been great men, but not really that great. Jesus is greater than them all through his argument. He's arguing that no one in the Old Testament is really that great by comparison to Jesus, the whole emphasis of his early argument is Jesus is greater.

Jesus is better. Jesus is superior. He does mention great people of the Old Testament, but not to say, look how great they were, but rather to say, look how great they weren't compared to Jesus.

And now if he takes this obscure Old Testament character, assuming he's just a man, Shem or anyone else, say, now let's spend a whole chapter talking about how great this man Melchizedek was. What a turn in the argument that is. Instead of, you know, you've got all these other great Old Testament characters, even the angels, they're not so great.

But here's this one Old Testament character, more obscure than any of them, not even related to Abraham. But he's really great. It's like, let's stop thinking about how great Jesus is for one.

Let's talk about how great this man is. You see, the whole the whole argument of the book is no one is very great compared to Jesus, especially no matter how great they were in the Old Testament, no matter how impressive they are in Jewish history. And by the way, Melchizedek was not that impressive in Jewish history.

Not like Moses, not like Joshua, not like Aaron, not like the angels. Melchizedek was an obscure character who comes and goes. And if he was indeed just the king of Jerusalem, then he's an ordinary man and might have been a good guy.

But how would he warrant a discussion like this about him when even Moses didn't receive anything close that Moses got about four verses or five verses discussing him now, this let's take a whole chapter and consider how great this man Melchizedek was, even if we knew nothing else. We'd say, well, either the writer must think Melchizedek is Jesus or the right to change his whole approach to arguing whatever his case is, because he's now let's take time from thinking how great Jesus is to think how great this man is. But if the man is Jesus, the author's on the same same page he's been on all along.

Now, I believe he does make that case, though in some strange ways. First, he summarizes everything we know about Melchizedek from Genesis 14. Hebrews 7 1. For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all first.

OK, we'll stop right there. That you know, that first verse in the first line, that's a summary of everything about him in the Old Testament. What is he? He's the king of

Salem.

OK, well, his name is Melchizedek. That first, then he's the king of Salem. He's a priest of the most high God.

Another datum. He met Abraham on this particular occasion. When he did, he blessed Abraham and Abraham gave him a tithe.

Those are essentially the total the total package of everything we know about Melchizedek. Now, what can you make from that little bit of information? Far more than you'd imagine. He starts unpacking it after the first clause of verse two.

He says first being translated king of righteousness. Well, let's just start there. We do know the guy's name.

His name means king of righteousness. Melchizedek is a word that means that king of righteousness. Now, there's not much reason to mention that unless it's important to identify who he is.

We aren't given the meanings of everybody's name in the Bible. I mean, we can find them out from looking at a Hebrew concordance, but it's not like the authors of the Scripture make a big deal about the meaning of everyone's name. In fact, very few people in the Old Testament who are named does the New Testament ever make an issue of to make an issue.

In fact, his name means king of righteousness. Seems to be saying this is a clue. Let's go further.

And then also king of Salem. Meaning king of peace, Shalom. Now, here's the here's an important thing.

Most commentators think that king of Salem means the king of Jerusalem. But there are people who says, no, it means king of peace. When it says he's the king of Shalom, it's not talking about the city of Jerusalem.

It's about peace. He's the king of righteousness, the king of peace. Now, we would need almost nothing more than that to reach some conclusions.

If if the right of Hebrew saying these are what it means, he's the king of righteousness, the king of peace. How many of those are there in the universe? You know, and now more than that. Some people say, well, maybe maybe he was the king of Jerusalem and the writer simply making a play on words and Jerusalem is a city of peace.

So obviously we could call him the king of peace, although he's really the king of the city of peace. I mean, you could go that way. The problem one of the problems with that is that Jerusalem, as far as we know, in the days of Abram was just another Canaanite city.

And the Canaanites were bad folks. The Canaanites were the ones who had to be exterminated a little later by Abram's descendants, the Canaanites controlled Jerusalem long after Joshua conquered most of the Canaanites. Jerusalem remained an impregnable fortress in some measure.

And under Jebusite control, the Jebusites were Canaanites until David's time, like 400 years after Joshua, after the conquest. One city that was not likely to have a king. Who was a prince of the most or a priest, the most high God was this Canaanite fortress, Jerusalem.

And I suspect that Melchizedek was not the king of the city of Jerusalem at all. But as the writer of Hebrews said, he's the king of peace. That's what Shalom Salem means.

Let's go further. Now, he gets a little a little out there in verse three. Because he's kind of extrapolating, but he's saying what he's he's kind of arguing from silence in the passage rather than what is actually said.

It says without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the son of God. He remains Melchizedek, remains a priest continually. This written 2000 years after his appearance to Abram.

The writer says he's still a priest, this Melchizedek. He remains even to this day a priest. Now, that means he's not a mortal Melchizedek can't be a mortal man.

And if 2000 years after the story about him, the writer says he's still a priest right now. Now. This without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days or end of life.

What do people do who think that Melchizedek is an ordinary man who simply serves as a type of Christ? Well, they say, and maybe reasonably enough, it's simply saying that we don't have any information about his background. We don't have a record of his birth or his death. We don't have a record of whose parents were of his genealogy.

Now, those things would be important to a Jew. Considering whether a person qualifies to be a priest or not, his genealogy is everything he's got to come through the line of Aaron or he's out after the exile, when Ezra was reorganizing the restored Jewish community, they had to exclude some people from the priesthood who claimed to be Levites because they couldn't establish their genealogy accurately. So they couldn't be priests.

Very important. Now, the writer could be saying, I'm going to make this point. He doesn't belong to the Jewish priesthood.

We don't even have his genealogy given. It's a non-issue, his genealogy, who his parents were, when he lived, when he died, doesn't it's that's not the issue here. But although this could mean that it doesn't say that what it actually says is he didn't have a father, a

mother, which would suggest he was not born in the ordinary sense of human life coming to this earth.

He didn't come through a womb or through a family line. He didn't even have a day when he was born or day that he died. Now, it's true.

One could argue that this just means we have no record of that information. But the author could have said that he didn't say that. In fact, what he says at the end of the sentence seems to mean that he means it literally because he says he doesn't have an end of life, but rather, like Jesus, he remains a priest continually.

This is saying more than simply that we don't know the day of his death, because it's not on record. If he remains a priest continually, then he literally didn't have an end to his life. And therefore, the statements about him, verse three, seem to be taken in the literal manner which they appear to mean.

But the biggest issue here is the fact that the writer of Hebrews argues that Melchizedek, the original one who met Abraham, is still a priest to this day. Now, we're living 2000 years after the writer of Hebrews, but he was living 2000 years after Abraham met Melchizedek. If the guy was still a priest 2000 years later, he's probably still a priest 40,000 years later.

He is an eternal priest. But let's move on. Now consider how great this man was to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils and indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, with whom the Melchizedek priesthood is now being contrasted.

The sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law that is from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham. Because they are less prestigious than Abraham. He's their ancestor.

The Levites are less prestigious than their ancestor. Abram came from his loins, but they are the recipients of tithes in Israel's religion. But he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.

Now, beyond all contradiction, the lesser man is blessed by the better. So if Abram was blessed by Melchizedek, then Abram is the lesser man and Abraham the better man. That's a given.

So he's just established that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham. And that Abraham had no problem with that, accepted that fact. And verse eight here, meaning here on Earth in the Jewish system, which was still standing at the time, this was written, he's writing to Jewish people who are in the Jewish temple system or at least had not totally abandoned it or it was still around.

Here, mortal men receive tithes, meaning the Levites. The Levitical priests received tithes in this system now. But there, where? In the story in Genesis 14, when Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, there he receives them of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

Now, this is really bizarre. He's saying in the Jewish temple, men receive tithes, the priests receive tithes from people, but these are men who die. Men who die receive them, but not so there.

The man who was sitting there doesn't die, didn't die. He's not a mortal. He says it is witnessed of him that he lives.

Now, it sounds like he's saying we have some testimony somewhere on record that Melchizedek lives. Where do we have that? It's not found in Genesis 14. It's not found even in Psalm 110.

There's really no place in the biblical record that says Melchizedek lives. So what does the author mean when he says it is testified of Melchizedek that he lives? Well, one thing is true. Christians testimony was that Jesus lives.

Jesus is risen. He lives. That's the testimony of the Christian faith.

Jesus is alive, not dead. Now, if the author is thinking that Melchizedek is Jesus, he could say, you know, it is witnessed of this man that he lives in our profession that Christ lives, we are professing that Melchizedek lives. I'm not sure if this is how he means it, but it's a bizarre statement in itself.

And it's clear that he's saying you've got a contrast here. Levitical priests who receive tithes and Melchizedek receives tithes. And the contrast is these men die.

Melchizedek, by implication, doesn't die. These are mortal men. He's not a mortal man.

You see, I don't know how you can miss that. I mean, how you can argue against that, I should say. I can see how one might miss it.

They read over it fast, but arguing against it would be more difficult. Verse nine says, even Levi, who receives tithes, notice present tense. The temple is still standing.

The tribe of Levi still received the people's tithes. Even Levi paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. So if we honor the Jewish priesthood by paying tithes to them, note that the Jewish priesthood paid tithes to Melchizedek because they were still in Abraham.

They hadn't Levi was not yet born when this story occurred. So all the Levites were in Abraham when he paid tithes to Melchizedek. So those to whom the Jews paid tithes themselves acknowledged Melchizedek superiority in their pain of tithes to him in the person of Abraham doing it.

Some abstract ideas here, but the point here is in receiving a blessing from Melchizedek and in giving tithes to Melchizedek in both ways, Abraham was without without dispute saying Melchizedek was his superior. Now, what would make him his superior is the question. That's why the Jews say it must have been Shem, because there's really no one else in Abraham's time that would have been clearly and unmistakably Abraham superior.

Abraham was the chosen man. God chose Abraham. Shem was older and his ancestor and a good man, too.

So maybe that's the guy. That's what the Jews figure out. But the writer here saying, no, I think it goes.

I think it's bigger than Shem. This is a king of righteousness is the king of peace. This man is immortal.

And he says, therefore, verse 11, if if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood, for under it, the people receive the law. What further need was there that another priest should arise according to the order of Melchizedek and not called according to the order of Aaron? Now, he's he's just thinking logically from Psalm 110, verse four. Now, the priesthood was there when David wrote that.

The Aaronic priests were the only priest David had ever heard of or any Jew had ever heard there never been any priests in Israel except the Aaronic priest. So why did why did God through David speak of another priesthood not related to Aaron of the order of Melchizedek? If the order of Aaron was good enough, if there wasn't something deficient in the Jewish priesthood, why bother talking about a replacement priesthood? And so the author is extrapolated from Psalm 110 that by the time that song was written, God was already giving hints that the Jewish priesthood was not the ultimate priesthood, that it wasn't perfect. God would have kept it around if it was perfect.

There's something that it couldn't accomplish that would replace require a replacement with another priesthood for the priesthood being changed. Of necessity, there's also a change in the law. This is important because there are many people today, Messianic, especially, who like to emphasize Jesus' statement in Matthew five.

Where he said, I think it's verse 18 and 19, if I'm not mistaken, or thereabouts, Jesus said, do not think that I came to destroy the law and the prophets. I did not come to destroy them, but to fulfill them. And some people say, see, he didn't come to destroy the law.

Therefore, I have to keep all the law. Well, no, they forget the other part. He came to fulfill them.

Well, once he's fulfilled them, what then? Are there any changes? Well, the Bible says

there are. There's a change in the priesthood. That's a change in the law.

In fact, he said if there's a change in the priesthood, it's just a change in the entire law. There's nothing more fundamental to the law than the priesthood. And if it's changed, the law has changed.

It hasn't been destroyed. It's been fulfilled, but it has changed. And that raises questions as to which things in the law have any continuing validity at all.

Some no doubt do. But what things do and don't you can't just say, well, Jesus didn't come to destroy the law. Therefore, we need to keep the Sabbath and the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Pentecost.

We have to keep all the dietary laws. And I mean, some people are actually saying that. But the law has changed.

And if it was not seen in other ways, you'd see it right here that the priesthood has changed, and God testified to that through David. Verse 13, then for he of whom these things are spoken. And this is a reference to Jesus himself.

He's referring to Psalm 110. Who is that speaking about? It says you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Well, that's Jesus, the historic Jesus.

He's that person that is spoken of in that verse. It is evident that it says he belongs to another tribe from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.

Moses and the law never gave any hint that people from the tribe of Judah could ever qualify as priests. There's a different tribe. Levi.

Jesus came from Judah, not Levi. Therefore, it's clear that Jesus could not be a priest if it was not a changed priesthood. And it is yet furthermore evident if in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest, meaning Jesus, who has come not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

The Aaronic priests were in office because of a fleshly commandment, a fleshly dissent. The law said those who come through the fleshly line of Aaron, that qualifies them. They might not be good people.

They might be bad people, but if they've got the right genealogy, they're they're in office. But not so with Jesus or Melchizedek, who may be one in the same. They hold office because of the power of an endless life.

Why? Where does he get that? Because you're a priest forever. After the order of Melchizedek, that's what David said. And if it's forever, you've got to live forever to be a priest forever.

So Melchizedek's order. People do not qualify as priests in that order through genealogy, but through having an endless life. We've already been told that Melchizedek has an endless life.

He remains a priest continually. Verse three said, he is not like the mortals here who receive tithes. He received them there of whom it was testified that he lives.

So the Melchizedek priesthood is endless. And the person who holds it must have an endless life, an eternal life. For he testifies you are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.

For on the one hand, there's the annulling of the former commandment, that is, the commandment that made the sons of Aaron priests because of the weakness and unprofitableness of it. For the law made nothing perfect. On the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope through through which we draw near to God.

He said there's something going out and something coming in. By declaring a priest after the order of Melchizedek, it eliminates the Aaronic priesthood, that Aaronic priesthood is passe, it's gone out. It has brought in something else.

It has brought in a better hope, which is related to an endless life. We've got a priest who's never going to die. We've got a priest who can forever make intercession for us as long as necessary.

He can he can always commend us to God. That's a better hope. And we draw near to God based on that better hope, he says.

Verse 20. And inasmuch as he was not made priest without an oath, for they have become priests without an oath, but he with an oath by him who said to him, the Lord has sworn and will not relent. You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

By so much more, Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. Now, as a better priesthood. He represents a better covenant.

And he said, there's just this other thing tagged on here, just like back in chapter six, where he said there are two immutable things. God's promised Abraham and his oath. He swore by himself so that by two immutable things, we might have more assurance.

You don't need to. Just one is good enough. God's promise by itself is good enough.

But just to lay it on thicker, God said, I'm going to give you my promise and something else that can't change my oath. And so here he's been saying there's things about Jesus that that make him the better priesthood. He's got an endless life.

He's resurrected from the dead. He's never going to die. Therefore, he can hold a priesthood like that of Melchizedek, which you qualify for by having an endless life.

So that's good. But there's even something else good. Another thing that kind of adds to the to the dignity of Christ's office, and that is that and this just thrown in for extra.

God swore him in the priest in the Old Testament. They didn't swear them in with an oath from God, but God swore with an oath that Christ is a priest forever. So just adds another layer of dignity onto that priesthood.

Verse 22, by so much more, Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant. I was going to get into this better covenant thing in the next chapter. Chapter eight, verses six through 13 is going to be unpacking this business of a better covenant.

He's just kind of anticipating he's not going into it right now. And he says another contrast. Verse 23.

There were many priests. That is, there was a series of priests in the Aaronic priesthood. And that's because people don't live forever.

They had to die and leave the priesthood to the next guy. And he had to die and leave the next. So there were a lot of priests over the period of their history because they didn't have an endless life, he says.

There were many priests because they were prevented by death from continuing. No one priest could continue forever because he died. But he, Jesus, because he continues forever.

Has an unchangeable priesthood. Now, this word unchangeable is in contrast with the Aaronic priesthood. There were many priests because the priesthood transferred from father to son.

From departing priest to the successor, this is a transferable priesthood passed down from one to another. That's not what this one's like. In fact, some Bibles in the margin when it says an unchangeable priesthood, they have the words meaning not transferring from one to another, not passing from one to another.

This is the contrast he's making. Aaron's sons and the priesthood they had was it was passed down generation to generation because they were prevented by death from continuing forever. He stays a priest forever so it doesn't ever get passed down.

He has a non-transferable priesthood. Now, hang on a minute. If the Melchizedek priesthood is not like the Aaronic priesthood in that it's not transferable, that is, it is not passed from one person to the next, then how could Melchizedek have had it and another man have it later? Doesn't that suggest a transfer from one to the next? How could Melchizedek have the priesthood and Jesus have it if it doesn't transfer from one to another, if both of them are forever priests, but there's only one high priest at a time? How can there be Melchizedek forever and Christ forever as the priest after the order of

Melchizedek if they're not one in the same? If it transfers from a man, Melchizedek, to a man, Jesus, then it is like the Aaronic priesthood.

If Melchizedek, in fact, did die as a mere man and later Jesus had his priesthood, how is that not like the Aaronic priesthood where one priest dies and leaves it to a successor? Isn't Jesus then simply a successor to Melchizedek? Although removed in time by considerable distance, still, he's a successor to an office that's left vacant by the dead Melchizedek, if that's the case. But if Melchizedek lives now and the person who holds Melchizedek's priesthood does so by the power of an endless life and there can only be one priest, one high priest at a time, and the Melchizedek priesthood was held by Melchizedek and by Christ, but it doesn't pass from one to another. It's kind of a mishmash of confusion, unless.

The assumption throughout is that Jesus is Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a pre pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. Now, we do remember that that in John chapter eight, Jesus said to the Jews who were his critics.

He said, Your father, Abraham, rejoiced to see my day and he saw it. Your father, Abraham, rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad. This is John 8, 56.

Then the Jews said to him, You're not yet 50 years old. And have you seen Abraham? And Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. Now, his statement, I am, of course, is a claim of deity.

But his earlier statement is that Abraham saw him and rejoiced to see him. Now, there's at least one other occasion we know for God appeared to Abraham could be what Jesus is referring to, and that's in Genesis 18, when it says Yahweh appeared to Abraham and he looked up and he saw three men in the distance and he ran out and greeted them and fixed a meal for them and gave them a hospitality. That could be it.

In which case, Melchizedek doesn't come into consideration here as the one that Abraham saw. But as far as rejoicing to see him, being glad to see him, there's certainly more evidence of Abraham's being glad to see him in Chapter 14, where he gives him a tithe and he receives a blessing from him and so forth. It's very possible that when Jesus said, Your father, Abraham, saw my day and was glad.

He's referring to this very encounter. I saw Abraham. He saw me.

I was Melchizedek when I met with him there, and that could be what Jesus is implying after saying that he has a non-transferable priesthood, one that lasts forever, and he's not prevented by death, like ordinary priests are from continuing off, as it says in verse 25, therefore, he is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him since he ever lives to make intercession for them. Aaron didn't ever live. He died and he lived for a while, but he died.

He doesn't ever live like Jesus. He lives forever. Now, what does it mean he could save to the uttermost? When I was growing up as a kid, I knew this verse.

I know this phrase. In fact, I think it was D.L. Moody that quoted. He said, you know, Jesus not only saves to the uttermost, he saves to the gutter most.

And meaning that from the uttermost pit. He can save people even from the gutter, but it doesn't say he can save from the uttermost, but to the uttermost. Our salvation is not done when we come to Christ.

That's part of it. We're justified. We'll go to heaven if we die, but there's more to salvation than that.

He wants to bring us into his image. He wants to sanctify us. He wants to grow us up in Christ.

He wants us to change from glory to glory into that same image. That's part of our salvation, too. And he wants to save us to the uttermost.

You see, the contrast here is the high priest in Jerusalem. He could offer sacrifice year after year for you, but he might die before you do. His intercession for you has got to come to an end.

Someone else has to step in. But Jesus, he doesn't he's not going to die anymore. So he does never have to stop interceding for you as long as it takes.

You're not going to outlive him as long as it takes for you to be saved all the way to the uttermost, to the to the ultimate extreme position that God intends to bring you through his intercession. This is not going to be interrupted by Jesus leaving office. He's going to be there forever.

Therefore, he can. He is also able to save to the uttermost because he ever lives to make intercession for him. Verse 26, for such a high priest was fitting for us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and has become higher than the heavens, who does not need daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifices first for his own sins and then for the people's for this.

He did once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, meaning the swearing in Psalm 110, verse four, which came after the law appoints the son who has been made, who has been perfected forever. Now, this description of Jesus in verse 26 is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.

It's interesting because we don't usually think of Jesus as separate from sinners. He was a friend of sinners. He associated with sinners.

He ate with them and so forth. He was not as separate from them as the Pharisees thought he should be. He wasn't aloof.

As far as being harmless, I don't know that they found him harmless either. I think they were very threatened by him, the Pharisees. But I think what it's trying to say is that he's different from sinners, not geographically removed from them.

He didn't live out in a monastery in a cave somewhere separate from the sinful world, he lived right among them, but he lived on a plane different from them. He was truly holy. He was in the world, but not of it, we would typically say that he could move among sinners and yet be in a world different from the world that they inhabited.

He is certainly separate from them now. Now he's up in heaven. He's physically removed from the sinful world.

But essentially saying this is a good high priest. He's a holy man. He never sinned, harmless.

He never hurt anyone, never commit a crime, violent crimes or anything like that. He's undefiled. He's not unclean.

Now, it's interesting that a priest could be defiled by a number of things coming into contact with a dead body or if he happened to be sleeping next to his wife and she started her period or if he touched any unclean thing, a leper or whatever, this would make a priest defiled. Jesus was undefiled. But that's rather ironic because he touched lepers and he was touched by a woman with an issue of blood and he touched dead bodies.

These are the things that would defile a man under the law. But Jesus touched them and didn't get defiled. Now, how would you know? Because defilement is kind of an unseen reality.

Well, God testified to it. He touched a leper and the leper got clean. Jesus didn't get leprous, Jesus didn't get defiled.

The leper got cleansed. The woman with the issue of blood, it stopped when she touched him. The dead body he touched rose from the dead.

The woman, the widow of Nain, her son. So the things that would actually defile a Jewish priest, the contact with those unclean things, Jesus touched him and he remained undefiled. No one could claim he got defiled because the man he touched wasn't a leper anymore.

The woman with the issue of blood, he touched her, but she doesn't have an issue of blood. How could you say he touched a woman with an issue of blood? She doesn't have

one. He reversed their uncleanness rather than taking on their uncleanness.

And so he remains an undefiled priest. And it says, of course, we read verse 27 that Jesus, another way he's superior to the Jewish priest, is that he doesn't have to offer sacrifices for himself first because he never sinned. He only has to offer the one sacrifice, which he did.

There's a economy of labor here. You know, the regular priest had to first offer sacrifices for himself. Then he could do something for the people.

Jesus could skip that whole first step. He didn't have to offer sacrifice for himself. He could just go directly to work offering a sacrifice of himself for the people.

And of course, the priest had to do it over and over. Jesus only had to do it once and for all, he says. And verse 28 says, for the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness.

OK, well, Jesus had weakness, too, but he didn't have moral weakness. And I think that's what's implied here, because he says the other priests had to offer sacrifices for themselves, too, meaning for their own sins. That's the kind of weakness he's talking about here.

Ordinary priests were as sinful as their neighbors, as sinful as the people they were serving. They were they had a position others didn't have, but they weren't any better. They were just ordinary sinners, too.

Not so with Jesus. The oath that made him priest has appointed him as the son who had been perfected forever. And so as a perfect man, there's no need for him to be offering sacrifices for himself.

Now, you can see when you get to chapter eight, verse one, it says, now this is the main point of the things we are saying. Some translations say this is a summary of what we've been saying. But in any case, we can say chapter eight, he's kind of finished at least one important stage of his argument, the first seven chapters.

And he can summarize it or give us the main point of it in chapter eight before he changes direction and the direction he's going to change to is talk about the covenant, the new covenant in contrast to the old covenant. Everything before this has been pretty much a contrast between Jesus and other important and dignified people, whether it's the angels or Moses or Joshua or Aaron or the Aaronic priests. The whole argument, the first seven chapters has been essentially.

Jesus versus them in terms of importance and and dignity, he's now going to do something a little different because in talking about Christ's superior priesthood, he has told us in chapter seven and verse 22 that he has become a surety of a better covenant.

And so in chapter eight, the focus changes from Jesus himself to the better covenant that he has brought in. But it's not a complete shift from looking at Jesus himself.

It is going to talk about the superior promises associated with the new covenant better than the promises of the old covenant, but then it's going to come back and talk about Jesus as entering into a better holy of holies and making a better sacrifice and being just a better high priest in all respects. That's what chapter nine is going to be about and 10. And so these things await the next sessions.

But but we come to the point where the discussion of Melchizedek kind of finishes out something that began in chapter one, and that is showing how superior Jesus is to all things Jewish. And it's it's an irony to me how many Christians are today who, having been Christians for a while, have just started to get enamored with all things Jewish, the Messianic movement and the Jewish roots movement and the Hebrew names movement and all those things. It's like the sort of mentality by many Christians are, wow, we really got to get into this Jewish stuff.

And the right of Hebrew saying you've been there and done that, you've gotten out of it and you're into something that's really a lot more interesting, a lot more exciting, a lot more important. Why would you go back to that? You know, and so we'll talk about the new covenant and its features in the next session.