

# OpenTheo

## September 16th: 1 Kings 7 & Hebrews 7

September 15, 2020



### Alastair Roberts

Solomon's palace and the furniture of the Temple. A priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglican church.net/>).

If you have enjoyed my output, please tell your friends. If you are interested in supporting my videos and podcasts and my research more generally, please consider supporting my work on Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/zugzwanged>), using my PayPal account (<https://bit.ly/2RLaUcB>), or by buying books for my research on Amazon ([https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X33O?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X33O?ref_=wl_share)).

The audio of all of my videos is available on my Soundcloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

## Transcript

1 Kings 7. Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished his entire house. He built the house of the forest of Lebanon. Its length was a hundred cubits, and its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

And it was built on four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams on the pillars. And it was covered with cedar above the chambers that were on the forty-five pillars, fifteen in each row. There were window frames in three rows, and window opposite window in three tiers.

All the doorways and windows had square frames, and window was opposite window in three tiers. And he made the hall of pillars. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth thirty cubits.

There was a porch in front with pillars, and a canopy in front of them. And he made the hall of the throne where he was to pronounce judgment, even the hall of judgment. It was finished with cedar from floor to rafters.

His own house where he was to dwell, in the other court back of the hall, was of like workmanship. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken in marriage. All these were made of costly stones, cut according to measure, sawed with saws back and front, even from the foundation to the coping, and from the outside to the great court.

The foundation was of costly stones, huge stones, stones of eight and ten cubits. And above were costly stones, cut according to measurement and cedar. The great court had three courses of cut stone all around, and a course of cedar beams.

So had the inner court of the house of the Lord, and the vestibule of the house. And King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in bronze.

And he was full of wisdom, understanding, and skill for making any work in bronze. He came to King Solomon and did all his work. He cast two pillars of bronze.

Eighteen cubits was the height of one pillar, and a line of twelve cubits measured its circumference. It was hollow, and its thickness was four fingers. The second pillar was the same.

He also made two capitals of cast bronze to set on the tops of the pillars. The height of the one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits. There were lattices of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals on the tops of the pillars, a lattice for the one capital, and a lattice for the other capital.

Likewise he made pomegranates in two rows around the one lattice work to cover the capital that was on the top of the pillar, and he did the same with the other capital. Now the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily work, four cubits. The capitals were on the two pillars and also above the rounded projection that was beside the lattice work.

There were two hundred pomegranates in two rows all around, and so were the other capital. He set up the pillars at the vestibule of the temple. He set up the pillar on the south and called its name Jakin, and he set up the pillar on the north and called its name Boaz, and on the tops of the pillars was lily work.

Thus the work of the pillars was finished. Then he made the sea of cast metal. It was round, ten cubits from brim to brim, and five cubits high, and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference.

Under its brim were gourds, for ten cubits, compassing the sea all around. The gourds were in two rows, cast with it when it was cast. It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east.

The sea was set on them, and all their rear parts were inward. Its thickness was a handbreadth, and its brim was made like the brim of a cup, like a flower of a lily. It held two thousand baths.

He also made the ten stands of bronze. Each stand was four cubits long, four cubits wide, and three cubits high. This was the construction of the stands.

They had panels, and the panels were set in the frames, and on the panels that were set in the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. On the frames, both above and below the lions and oxen, there were wreaths of beveled work. Moreover, each stand had four bronze wheels, and axles of bronze, and at the four corners were supports for a basin.

The supports were cast with wreaths at the side of each. Its opening was within a crown that projected upward one cubit. Its opening was round, as a pedestal is made, a cubit and a half deep.

At its opening there were carvings, and its panels were square, not round, and the four wheels were underneath the panels. The axles of the wheels were of one piece with the stands, and the height of a wheel was a cubit and a half. The wheels were made like a chariot wheel.

Their axles, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all cast. There were four supports at the four corners of each stand. The supports were of one piece with the stands, and on the top of the stand there was a round band half a cubit high, and on the top of the stand its stays and its panels were of one piece with it, and on the surfaces of its stays and on its panels he carved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, according to the space of each with wreaths all around.

After this manner he made the ten stands. All of them were cast alike, of the same measure and the same form, and he made ten basins of bronze. Each basin held forty baths.

Each basin measured four cubits, and there was a basin for each of the ten stands. And he set the stands five on the south side of the house and five on the north side of the house, and he set the sea at the south-east corner of the house. Hyrum also made the pots, the shovels, and the basins.

So Hyrum finished all the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of the Lord, the two pillars, the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars, and the two latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars, and the four hundred pomegranates for the two latticeworks, two rows of pomegranates

for each latticework to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars, the ten stands and the ten basins on the stands, and the one sea and the twelve oxen underneath the sea. Now the pots, the shovels, and the basins, all these vessels in the house of the Lord, which Hiram made for King Solomon, were of burnished bronze. In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan.

And Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because there were so many of them, the weight of the bronze was not ascertained. So Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of the Lord, the golden altar, the golden table for the bread of the presents, the lampstands of pure gold, five on the south side and five on the north, before the inner sanctuary, the flowers, the lamps and the tongs of gold, the cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and firepans of pure gold, and the sockets of gold for the doors of the innermost part of the house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the nave of the temple. Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the Lord was finished, and Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, the silver, the gold, and the vessels, and stored them in the treasuries of the house of the Lord.

After the seven years of building the temple in chapter 6, Solomon gives thirteen years to building his house in chapter 7 of 1 Kings. We noted the proximity of the time of the building of the house of the Lord to a sort of jubilee year after the Exodus, 490 years after they were brought out of Egypt. 1 Kings 6, verse 1 gives us this dating.

In the 480th year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the Lord. The temple was built in the first seven years. This takes us up to the 487th year after the Exodus, around the time of the 70 weeks of years after the Exodus.

Solomon's palace was then created after the Lord's temple was completed. In 1 Kings 9, verse 10 we're told, at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord and the king's house. If we add the thirteen years of the construction of Solomon's own house to the seven years for the construction of the temple, we reach a total of 500 years after the Exodus.

The jubilee cycle is completed and now a sort of an uber-sabbath dawns. What began with the first fruits of the Exodus deliverance will now arrive at its full intended harvest of glory, as with peace on all sides, the Lord takes up residence in his house of rest, with his son, the Davidic king, reigning under him. The building of Solomon's own palace is an essential part of the construction of the wider new complex of the temple.

The point of Solomon's palace is not to compete with the house of the Lord, rather it is to express the grace of the Lord in establishing the Davidic king as his son, who rules over his people before him. The king's palace and other associated royal buildings are temple-

like, in no small measure because they serve much the same purpose. The temple is the palace of the Lord, the true ruler of Israel.

The king's palace is the place from which the Davidic son of the Lord rules under him. It has similar characteristics to the temple, both in its construction and in its purpose. The hall of judgment, for instance, corresponds to the inner sanctuary, where the throne of the Lord is.

Both the palace and the temple are lined by cedar, yet the palace of Solomon the son is less glorious than that of the Lord his father, as it is not overlain with gold. The construction of the tabernacle had enlisted the skills of Bezalel and Aholiab. The building of the temple involves the skills of the Tyrian Hiram, who might make us think of the king of the same name, who is also assisting in the construction.

The Lord had gifted this Gentile for the building of his house. This is one of the many ways in which the Lord's house would be for all of the nations. Throughout scripture we see that Gentiles are more advanced than the people of Israel in their mastery of many cultural skills and technologies.

Bringing these skills into the service of the Lord is both a glorious movement of God's grace out and a glorious movement of the riches of the Gentiles in. The temple is not just a replication of the tabernacle, but it is a dramatic variation upon the theme that brings the tabernacle's elements to a higher degree of glory and adds in various new components. The temple, like the tabernacle, is a symbolic realm with a multitude of significant associations, not least those that exist with its predecessor.

There are two pillars of bronze, jakin and boaz. They can represent different things, and this is one of the things that we will discover about the temple, as in the tabernacle there are all sorts of symbolic connotations and associations and connections. It is a sort of architectural poetry, where objects constructed according to a divinely stipulated design lead you into a whole network of symbolism.

The pillars of bronze, for instance, correspond to the temple itself. Moving up the pillars you are moving up in holiness and glory. They correspond to the priest and the king.

They stand as pillars and guardians of the Lord's house. They correspond to the cherubim guarding the entrance to Eden. They also correspond to the two great cherubim guardians that are now added to the inner sanctuary, just as these pillars have been added to the outside.

With their arboreal and botanic imagery, they correspond to trees and flowers. Like other parts of the temple, they should remind us of Eden. They correspond to the body and the clothing of the priest, the movement up from the base to the head.

They correspond to the legs of the body. The temple itself is the trunk and the head of

the body, while the two great pillars are symbolically related to the legs, the two great pillars of the human body. All of this bronze work is associated with the outer court, whereas the gold work is associated with the interior of the house.

In the tabernacle the bronze laver and the bronze altar were associated, one with the land and one with the sea, the instructions for their construction, both related to the third day of creation in the sequence. Now the small bronze laver becomes a great bronze sea, and this is borne aloft on the backs of twelve oxen. The oxen are ordered in a way that corresponds to the camp of Israel, as it is described at the beginning of the Book of Numbers.

There are three facing in each direction of the compass. Out from the bronze sea come water chariots, as it were. The water chariots serve the practical purpose of giving water for washing the sacrifices.

However, they are also symbolically like waters coming down from God. Healing waters would one day descend from the Lord's temple and give life to the world. The lions and the oxen upon them are the kingly and priestly guardians of the people.

The oxen relate to the priest. If you were to sacrifice for the high priest you had to sacrifice a bull. The lion, on the other hand, might make us think of the lion of the tribe of Judah.

The tribe that is associated with kingship is associated with the lion. These chariots also represent a sort of ladder of water that someone would ascend to enter into God's presence. Like Jacob's ladder, where the angels were ascending and descending, the cherubim chariots of water are ascending and descending with the rain of God's blessing, with the elevated bronze sea being like the waters above the firmament.

We should also observe the way that this pattern is replicated inside the sanctuary, with a golden table and lampstand, but ten further tables and lampstands on each side. All of this is a sort of ladder by which people can ascend to God's heavenly throne, ascending in glory at each stage. While Hiram makes the bronze items of the courtyard, the construction of the gold items inside the temple is related to Solomon himself.

The ceremonies of the temple then are carried out in this deeply symbolic realm that connects many different levels of reality. The temple is like a new Eden. The temple is like the heavens and the earth.

The temple is also like the human body, or we might also see the temple as corresponding in some ways to Israel. It is a sort of architectural symbol of the nation and the people themselves, a symbol in which God dwells, in representation of his dwelling among his people more generally. As people performed ceremonies within the temple, it was a symbolic manifestation of the broader realities that were implicated in

their acts.

In faithfully performing the symbols, Israel was to be directed to the realities, realities that were engaged with truly within the context of these symbols. For instance, we might observe the similarities with the body. The inner sanctuary is like the heart and the mind, where the Lord must be enthroned and his law treasured and hidden.

The outer sanctuary has light and food, as the law of the Lord illumines our understanding and feeds us. The five tables and lampstands on each side might recall the sides of the body and the five fingers on each hand. Perhaps they also represent the two tables of the law, the law that is a treasure hidden in the heart, the law that gives light, the law that gives food, and then the law that flows out like water into the world.

The pillars are like the legs of the body, and the bronze sea is like the organs of generation, from which life can flow out from the body. We can already see some of this flowing out in the way that the outer sanctuary now has one great table and ten smaller tables coming out from it, and one great lampstand and ten smaller ones. Outside there is one great bronze sea that replaces the bronze labour, and now there are ten water chariots coming out from that.

A question to consider. Reading 2 Chronicles 3-4, what further details of the temple construction and furnishings stand out to you? Hebrews 7 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him. And to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything.

He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever. See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils.

And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham, and blessed him who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.

In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case by one of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is

necessarily a change in the law as well, for the one of whom these things are spoken belong to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.

For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life, for it is witnessed of him, you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. For on the one hand a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law made nothing perfect, but on the other hand a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

And it was not without an oath, for those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him, the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, you are a priest for ever. This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever.

Consequently he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a son who has been made perfect for ever. In chapter 7 the author of Hebrews moves on to discuss the character of Melchizedek. Melchizedek is relevant to his discussion, because he quoted Psalm 110 verses 1-4 earlier on.

The Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool. The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies.

Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power. In holy garments from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek. Having introduced this difficult text into the discussion, the author of Hebrews wants to consider the character of Melchizedek and what his priesthood tells us about the priesthood of Christ. Melchizedek is a strange and unexpected figure.



He only appears once, and rather abruptly, in an Old Testament narrative, at a surprising and significant juncture, yet without any real explanation in the text. We find him in Genesis chapter 14 verses 14-20. When Abram heard that his kinsmen had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hoba, north of Damascus. Then he brought back all the women and the people. After his return from the defeat of Chedulema and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Sheba, that is, the king's valley.

And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram by God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. Melchizedek is a mysterious character, and the fact that he is mentioned as he is in Psalm 110 verse 4 is probably testimony to the fact that he was already a source of interest long before the book of Hebrews was ever written. Having seen the significance of Psalm 110 verse 4, we are propelled back into Genesis chapter 14 to consider why Melchizedek might actually be raised as a figure of importance.

Even within that text, there are ways that he stands out. First of all, we notice that he is given no introduction. He appears briefly on the page of the text, and then vanishes, almost as suddenly as he had first appeared.

However, he quite clearly stands out from the character of the King of Sodom. While Abram refuses to receive anything from the King of Sodom, lest the King of Sodom say that he had made Abram rich, not only does he receive a blessing from this character, Melchizedek, the King of Salem, he also gives him a tithe of everything that he has. Elsewhere, the tithe is always given to God or to the appointed priests.

Yet here is a figure who has not descended from Abraham, who is receiving this tribute of a tenth as the priest, and is also blessing Abram. He is identified as the priest of God Most High, he is a priest of the true God, yet he is not someone who belongs to the Levitical priesthood that will later be established. Indeed, we are given no details of his genealogy or what qualifies him for his role.

By itself, this would invite much reflection. However, when we look even more at the context, further things open up. Many of the stories of Genesis, and particularly the story of Abraham, have anticipatory qualities.

They play out the story of the descendants of Abraham in advance. In chapter 12, Abraham goes into the land, there is a famine that leads him away from the land, he goes down to Egypt, there are plagues upon Pharaoh, and then he is let out with many gifts. He goes back to the land of Canaan, which was inhabited by the Canaanites at the time.

He spies out the land, the Lord declares that he will give the land to him. Having separated from his nephew Lot, Lot is then captured. Abraham wins a great victory against those who have captured Lot, and engages in a sort of conquest of the entire land.

And having done all of that, he is met by the king of Jerusalem, who comes bearing bread and wine. He is described as a priest of God Most High, and then he blesses Abraham and receives a tithe. As a figure in the story, Abraham represents his descendants.

They are going to be delivered from Egypt, they are going to spy out the land, and then they are going to win a great conquest in it. And finally, they will arrive at Jerusalem. But just at the point where we would expect Abraham, representing his descendants, including the tribe of Levi, to take centre stage, we have this other mysterious figure.

And that, I believe, is why he is seen to be so significant. The point is not that the character of Melchizedek was necessarily some miraculous figure. Rather, it's what he stands for as a figure.

Whoever he was as a historical person, he stands for so much more in the context of the text, and the way it has been told. He is clearly anticipating and standing for something very important. Yet it is very mysterious to us.

Much as we might wonder about the significance of the sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah, and the importance of the ram caught in the thicket, and other details like that, we might wonder about the character of Melchizedek. Who does he represent? What does he stand for? Why is this figure presented as someone who is greater than Abraham, who takes the centre stage at this very important moment? Of course, as he is the king of Salem, he might make us think of David, who became the king of Jerusalem. The priest-king of Jerusalem corresponds to a Davidic messiah that will arise.

And having been raised up as this character, as a king of righteousness and peace, he will bring about something that eclipses the Levitical priesthood. Consequently, although Christ does not fulfil the requirements for the Levitical priesthood, he can belong to a different type of priesthood, a different order, the order of Melchizedek. He is the one who is prefigured by this character within the story of Genesis chapter 14.

And once this foreshadowing is appreciated, so many of the mysteries and conundrums

of the story of Genesis 14 fall into place. We begin to understand what this mysterious character of Melchizedek is doing there at that juncture. We also begin to understand better Psalm 110 verse 4, why this great figure who is elevated might be described as having the priesthood of Melchizedek.

And now that we have an eternal priest according to this order, we no longer need the Levitical priesthood, which was only temporary. That priesthood was never going to bring perfection. And in contrast with that priesthood, appointment to this priesthood comes with an oath.

The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind. You are a priest forever. Because Christ is an eternal priest according to the order of Melchizedek, he is able to bring us to God in a far greater way than any of the Levitical priests could do.

Not just because they were sinful, but because their priesthood was limited. His priesthood eclipses theirs. He is so much more suited as a high priest to bring us to God.

He is one who is holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens. He is like the unblemished lamb, the one that can represent people and bring them into God's presence. He is the one who participates fully in flesh, but is not stained by its sin.

And as a result, he can represent us fully and compassionately enter into our life while still being able to act in a powerfully vicarious manner for us. As he is separated from sin, he does not need to offer sacrifices for himself first, nor indeed does he need to offer repeated sacrifices for the people. He offered himself once and for all as a complete and perfect sacrifice, one that was perfectly suited to bring people to God.

The law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of God's oath, which comes later than the law and surpasses the law, appoints this Son, the one who has been perfected forever. He is the one by whom we can be brought fully into the presence of God. A question to consider.

What role is the immortality of Christ playing in the author of Hebrew's argument?