

Hebrews: Melchizedek, Part 2 (Hebrews 7:1–14).

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (1/15/2017)

Introduction

1. We noted in the last message that Paul’s development of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism involved the revelation of a new truth—Jesus was to assume the office of High Priest.
 - a. This truth was hinted at in the Old Testament (Psa. 110:4) but not understood.
 - b. “*It is the glory of God to conceal things*” (Prov. 25:1). This concealing affects two things: (1) it teaches His creatures to be *dependent* and *discerning*, and (2) it allows God the right to reveal things in His own time. “*But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day*” (Prov. 4:18).
2. The OT is foundational, the great truths of the gospel being contained in its prophecies, promises, and institutions but remaining largely incomprehensible until God’s time to expose them (1 Pet. 10–12; Eph. 3:8–10; Psa. 78:2 *cf* 1 John 2:8).
3. This principle applies to the revelation that Jesus is, like Melchizedek, a king and High Priest of the Most High God.
4. The amazing and yet uncomprehended truth revealed here is that Melchizedek himself was regarded as greater than Abraham.

I. “But This Man”

1. It was Paul’s object in this section (7:1–21) to demonstrate that the priesthood of *Melchizedek* was greater than the priesthood of Levi.
 - a. In order to prove this fact, Paul, from Genesis 14, shows that Melchizedek was greater than even the patriarch Abraham.
 - b. This is an amazing fact wholly unrecognized before the gospel (v. 4).
2. The great patriarch of Israel, Abraham, submitted to the authority of this Gentile priest of God, the evidence being that Abraham paid tithes to him.
 - a. Tithing is a disputed practice in the modern church because it is seen as outmoded in the gospel age.
 - 1) The argument is that tithing was Israel’s method of taxation but voluntary giving in the NT is to be the gracious means of supporting the gospel ministry.
 - 2) It is also argued that tithing is simply not taught in the NT.
 - b. This lesson on Melchizedek destroys that thinking.
 - 1) Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek *before* the law of Moses was given. Tithing is not a legal practice.
 - 2) The lesson demonstrated in Melchizedek’s receiving tithes from Abraham is that tithing is a principle of *recognition*, not obedience.
 - 3) NT giving assumes the principle as part of the believer’s full surrender to Christ’s lordship (Luke 9:23–27). Giving all makes the tenth a moot issue.
 - c. David makes a very potent declaration in Psalm 66:18: “*If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*”

- 1) *Iniquity* is the principle of independence from God and His rules—that which characterizes everything that one refuses to surrender to Christ.
- 2) Many Christians do not understand why they have so many struggles and cannot seem to get ahead in their Christian life—why they are not blessed.

How does this issue of iniquity apply to Abraham's paying tithes to Melchizedek? We will see this shortly.

2. Abraham recognized that Melchizedek was the Lord's priest, and he submitted to his authority by giving him the tithe of the spoils (v. 4).
 - a. Melchizedek proves that God had something greater than what the Levitical priesthood represented because Levi, in the lineage of Abraham, also paid tithes in Abraham (vv. 9, 10).
 - b. It is this greater position of Melchizedek that points to the greater authority of Jesus Christ.
3. A second fact of Melchizedek's being greater than the patriarch Abraham was that Melchizedek, as a priest of the Most High God, *blessed* him (vv. 6, 7).
 - a. The order of things is very important here: Abraham first recognized Melchizedek's place as demonstrated in his giving him tithes; then Melchizedek blessed Abraham.
 - b. If you desire to be blessed by the One of whom Melchizedek is but a shadow, recognize the lordship of Christ by full submission and obedience to Him.

II. Attaining Perfection

1. Paul applies the principle of Melchizedek in vv. 11–14.
 - a. The goal of the gospel is a *perfect* people (v. 11).
 - 1) *Teleiosis* (see the similar words in 2:10; 5:9, 14; 6:1; 7:11, 19, 28) carries the idea of reaching the goal or *fulfillment* as was promised. It also involves those requirements necessary to be near to God (v. 19; Phil. 1:6).
 - 2) This fulfillment could not be accomplished through the Levitical system (v. 11).
 - 3) The Levitical system was only temporary until Christ and the perfect system came in (Gal. 3:24).
 - b. This inability to reach the goal under the Levitical system pointed to a better system—a priest who came from the order of Melchizedek.
 - 1) Because Melchizedek was greater than Abraham from whom the Levitical system came, Jesus, from the order of Melchizedek, was also superior.
 - 2) Thus, that priesthood which is able to perfect the saints requires a change in the law as well (v. 12).
2. Beware, however, of misunderstanding Paul.
 - a. Many grace teachers argue that the law is done away in Christ; but it was only those temporary features of the ordinances that were replaced by Christ.
 - 1) There are various uses of the term *law*: (1) it can mean the Scriptures, particularly the Torah; (2) It is used of the Levitical system with its ordinances and practices; or (3) It can refer to God's rules and commandments.

- 2) The gospel alone enables the believer to live according to God's standards, which are not temporary and do not change (John 14:15; Matt. 5:19; 19:17; 1 Cor. 7:19; 1 John 2:3, 4; 3:22–24; 5:2, 3).
- b. Paul wrote Galatians to instruct the Gentiles against the Judaizers who were requiring them to follow the *law*—the Levitical system, particularly in reference to circumcision. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) settled that issue.
 - 1) Certainly, we recognize the value and necessity of the written OT in the Law, Prophets, and Writings.
 - 2) We also understand the abiding importance of keeping God's commandments.
3. The only change in the law is what Paul describes as having to do with the Levitical system and its ordinances.

As Paul will continue to expound, the gospel has ushered in a new system under a new and superior High Priest, Jesus, after the order of Melchizedek.