

The Advent of the Great High Priest

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – the advent of the Son of God, entering his world to be the Great High Priest
2. aim – to cause us to give our eternal state fully and without hesitation into the hands of Jesus
3. passage – Hebrews 4:14-5:10 (with Genesis 14:17-20, Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7-10)

b. outline

1. The Place of the Priest (Hebrews 4:14-5:10)
2. The Prominence of the Priest (Genesis 14:17-20; Psalm 110:4)
3. The Parallels of the Priest (Hebrews 7:11-10:18)

c. opening

1. the **reasons** for a change of focus
 - a. we are celebrating the Advent season, so it seems appropriate to stop and focus on it specifically
 - b. we have just seen Jesus as the center of our unity (**Eph. 4:15f**), so a focus on him is appropriate
2. the **method** in our change of focus
 - a. we will explore the three (3) main *roles* of Jesus (**i.e.** within redemptive history) as he comes into time and space (**i.e.** his Advent) – what has the eternal Son of God come to do?
 1. he has come to be the **King of Kings**: the one who fulfills the royal role, in a way that David (who was only a type or shadow) was simply unable to do – Jesus *perfects* the role of King
 2. (**now**) he has come in the role of a **Great High Priest**, fulfilling a priestly role, in a way that his predecessors (who were only types and shadows) were unable to do – Jesus *perfects* the role of High Priest in his Advent
 3. we are connecting an *explanatory* passage of the N.T. to a *prophetic* passage of the O.T.
 - a. last week, we connected the genealogy of Jesus to the life and promises of David
 - b. this week, we will connect an aspect of the work of Jesus to another O.T. character

I. The Place of the Priest (Hebrews 4:14-5:10)

Content

a. the details of this priesthood (minimally!)

1. Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians who were struggling:
 - a. physically, being persecuted by other Jews and by the culture around them, and
 - b. spiritually, trying to understand how to “integrate” their Jewish worldview into their faith in Jesus
 - c. the letter is designed to help them not to “*neglect such a great salvation*” (**2:3**)
2. a *primary* reason to remain faithful to Jesus is that he is a “*great high priest*” (**4:14**)
 - a. given the high regard these Jews would have for the priesthood
 - b. flowing from the reality that Jesus is the Son of God: greater than angels, greater than Moses, greater than Joshua – one who *exceeds* human limitations in his various roles
 - c. and, it is in the **Incarnation** (**i.e.** the entry of the Son of God into the human condition) that he becomes qualified to act in the role of high priest (**read carefully 2:14-18**)
 - d. therefore, we can trust this Jesus to act as our high priest, to make “propitiation” to God for our sins, to *mediate* for us before God because he is *empathetic* with our human condition

b. the center of this priesthood (other than Jesus!)

1. the center of this reality is **Melchizedek** – how Jesus is related to this individual
 - a. note how this concept appeared recently in the midst of both the men and women’s Bible Studies
 - b. Melchizedek is mentioned in eight (8) verses of this book (**5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1,10,11,15,17**)
 - c. although he appears in only two (2) other places in Scripture: **Genesis 14** and **Psalm 110**

c. the purpose of this priesthood

1. Melchizedek is used as an historical character by the writer of Hebrews to show that Jesus can be a priest, and that his propitiatory work is actually the work of a Great High Priest
2. **Jesus is born to take on a priestly heritage, and possesses the pedigree (in his human state) to serve as a priest; to mediate between God and man, dying as a man himself**
 - a. the argument is based on a *specific* reality involving a man who comes as the *predecessor* of the Levitical priests, a priestly line from which Jesus himself is descended

II. The Prominence of the Priest (Genesis 14:17-20; Psalm 110:4)

Content

a. the role of Melchizedek *historically* (Genesis 14:17-20)

1. Abram is forced to rescue his nephew when Lot is taken captive by the kings that live in the Jordan valley near the (eventual!) Dead Sea – he is caught up in a civil war in the area
2. Abram uses his personally-trained military force to rescue Lot, plundering the defeated kings
3. Abram meets Melchizedek on the way home with his loot
 - a. Melchizedek is “*king of Salem*” = the leader of a nation of “*peace*” (shalom)
 - b. Melchizedek is “*priest of God Most High*” = a direct appointee of Yahweh to serve as a mediator of “*peace*” between men and God, specifically for this encounter with Abram
 - c. Melchizedek is a “*blessing*” on Abram = revealing that his victory was by the hand of God
4. Abram gives to Melchizedek a tithe, a tenth of everything that he had captured in rescuing Lot

b. the role of Melchizedek *prophetically* (Psalm 110:4)

1. one of the most-cited O.T. texts in the N.T. – a *royal* psalm dealing with the house of David (*i.e.* the Messiah) in the life of God’s people – what the Messiah will do as he comes to rule over the nations
2. the psalm links the offices of king and priest, where the Promised One will serve as both
 - a. **note:** this expands the subject of Jesus in the role of King as we discussed last week
3. but, the priesthood of the Messiah does not descend from the Levites, but from the line of Melchizedek, a different “*order*” (assumed to be a *greater* order by virtue of its *precedence*)

c. the role of Melchizedek *prominently* (in Hebrews 5, 7)

1. Jesus is assumed to be the appointee of God as a priest from the line of Melchizedek (5:1-10)
 - a. the priesthood is *always* a calling by God, never something “*taken*” (vv. 4-5)
 - b. the priesthood of Jesus in the line of Melchizedek is given from a *word of God* (v. 6; see above)
 - c. the priesthood of Jesus is based on his willing human *obedience* (vv. 7-8)
 - d. the priesthood of Jesus flows from the *perfection* established in the priesthood of Melchizedek
2. Melchizedek is “*interpreted*” to be the father of a greater (perfect) line of priests (7:1-10)
 - a. he is the “*king of righteousness*” (v. 2) = he represents true (not temporary) righteousness
 - b. he is the “*king of peace*” (v. 2) = he represents a perfect (not temporary) peace with God
 - c. he is “*without genealogy*” (v. 3) = he represents a permanent (not temporary) priesthood
 - d. he received a tithe from Abram (vv. 4-7) = he was understood to be *superior* to Abram
 - e. he received a tithe from the Levites *in Abram* (vv. 9-10) = he was superior to the Levitical priesthood because they offered (in Abram) a tithe to Melchizedek themselves
 1. **e.g.** Adam, as the *federal representative* of the human race, brought the punishment threatened upon himself upon all of his posterity (*i.e.* by imputation; see Romans 5:12-21)
 2. **i.e.** Abram, as the *federal representative* of the Levites (his ancestors), when he submitted himself to and acknowledged Melchizedek as superior, he was representing all below him

d. the role of Jesus as priest

1. Jesus is *not* qualified to be a Levitical priest, for he was from the line of Judah (7:14)
2. **Jesus is born to fulfill a priesthood established in Melchizedek by taking that order for himself, assuming the honor of a high priesthood that precedes and outranks the Levitical one**
 - a. but, the importance of this priestly order reflects Christ’s perfect **fulfillment** of the priesthood itself

III. The Parallels of the Priest (Hebrews 7:11-10:18)

Content

a. the foreshadowing of Jesus in the Levites (as a “*type*” or “*shadow*”; see 8:5)

1. the Levites were *sinful men*, who needed to offer a sacrifice for themselves before others (7:26-27)
 - a. Jesus comes as the sinless Son of God; his sacrifice is *entirely* on behalf of others
2. the Levites *died* and needed to be replaced, unable to mediate for their people forever (7:23-25)
 - a. Jesus, having been raised from the dead, lives forever to intercede for his people
3. the Levites offered a sacrifice based on a *vain covenant*, one never *intending* to save (7:22)
 - a. Jesus makes his sacrifice under a new and *eternal covenant*, established in the Godhead
4. the Levites offered a sacrifice in an *earthly temple*, one tainted by sin and destruction (8:1-2)
 - a. Jesus offers his sacrifice in the tabernacle of the Father, a place of holiness
5. the Levites offered a sacrifice *outside* of the presence of God, separated from him (9:6-12)
 - a. Jesus offers his sacrifice directly to his Father as the only begotten Son, as one welcome

6. the Levites offered a flawed sacrifice that was incapable of making full atonement (9:13-14)
 - a. Jesus offers a sacrifice that is perfect, for he is the spotless “Lamb of God” (from outside creation)
7. the Levites offered an impermanent sacrifice, needing to be repeated endlessly (read 10:11-14)
 - a. Jesus offers a singular sacrifice, one sacrifice that finishes the work of atonement (contra Mass)
 - b. note how the writer of Hebrews links this permanence to Psalm 110:1 (“footstool”)
8. **Jesus is born to be the Great High Priest, fulfilling all of the typology of Melchizedek**
 - a. **principle: our unity in Christ centers around his perfect work as our Great High Priest – his singular work has united us all together in one atonement (Hebrew 10:19-25)**

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”