



“The Mediator...”

Hebrews 7

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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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, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first

being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," 3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man [was], to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. 5 And indeed those who are of 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; 6 but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. 8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he [receives them], of whom it is witnessed that he lives. 9 Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. 11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need [was there] that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. 14 For [it is] evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. 15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. 17 For He testifies: "You [are] a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." 18 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, [there is the] bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. 20 And inasmuch as [He was] not [made priest] without an oath 21 (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 According to the order of Melchizedek'"), 22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. 23 Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. 24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 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; 27 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. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, [appoints] the Son who has been perfected forever.

7:1-11

Throughout all of scripture, God found it to be of the highest importance that the people with whom He was trying to communicate with, trying to relate to, were in fact actually understanding what He was trying to say to them, what He was trying to teach them. Thus, often, His communiqué was expressed in a picture as much as with words. Jesus often used parables in the New Testament for this purpose. And God in the Old Testament would use “one person performances” to present a greater picture or a larger meaning: Hosea marrying a prostitute, Abraham attempting to sacrifice his only son, Isaiah hanging out with no clothes on, as well as other biblical characters who lived out a greater truth or message from God through a physical manifestation of that message.

Now when we approach this issue of Melchizedek, we will again see this aspect of the “one person performance” in what is no doubt God’s attempt to present a greater picture and a grander idea. Generally

speaking, when an individual is presented in any significant way in the Bible, we usually get some background. Some history on the guy, some bloodline, some lineage, some background and some references. But when it comes to this guy Melchizedek, we get nothing. The guy just appears and is gone a few verses later. Thus, this record is essentially what we have of the guy, and one could say that this therefore was his singular calling, his destiny, all recorded in these few verses.

Now, most folks just blow right by this passage because, *frankly*, they just don't get it. The whole Melchizedek matter seems just too weird and they are sure that whatever is happening here has no bearing on them so they just move on. But there IS a message here for us, and God seems to have gone way out of His way to bring it to us.

Our text begins with his name, "Melchizedek," which translates as "king of righteousness," and "Salem," which means "king of peace." So we have this guy who is king of both righteousness and peace. Now, besides this guy Mel, I only know of one other guy who goes by those titles. Only one other individual that has business cards that read "King of Righteousness and King of Peace." So immediately we see a direction and a greater meaning than the surface of the text.

This mysterious priest Melchizedek meets Abraham as Abraham returns from battle, and Mel "blesses" him. Now, in Genesis, this blessing would have taken the form of a wine and bread. Bread as a symbol of sustenance and strength and wine as the symbol of life and joy. So Abraham, fresh from the battlefield, all worn out and battle weary, comes across the king of righteousness, the king of peace, who offers to him strength and life. Hmm...are we now starting to see the personal application?

Now in verse 2, the text says that "...Abraham gave a tenth part of all the spoils to this Melchizedek..." So what's clear here is that Abraham tithed to this guy! Abraham comes across this king of righteousness, the king of peace, who offers him strength and life, and he answers such by tithing to him, 10% of all he just took in. Now it's important to understand what tithing meant to a Hebrew. Tithing to the Hebrew wasn't, "*Well...I guess I've got to give my 10%.*" It was an action that essentially meant, "*All I have and all I own is Yours.*" It wasn't just an obligatory kind of thing, an, "*Oh, I've got to do this, so that God will bless me.*" Or a "*I have to do my duty, do my 'church thing.'*" It wasn't even a "*Hey, this 10% is Yours so that I can live guilt free with my 90%,*" but rather a statement that effectively says, "*Everything is yours, and this is the symbol of that.*" Abraham was overtly and "for the record" saying, "*What's mine is yours. All of it.*"

Frankly, we should be challenged by this. Because the truth be told, most of us have some truly non-biblical ideas about this whole tithing thing. We tend to feel it to be obligatory or perhaps liken it to our "club dues" instead of grasping the fact that everything we have and everything we own is in fact all His. Whether we believe that or not...whether we are a born again believer or not. You simply are *not* taking all your stuff with you when you leave and you *are* leaving! As believers, that fact should be more than a mere tacit acknowledgment. It should be a reality that profoundly superimposes a whole other lifestyle upon us. More than just a service or a duty, but a participation in the very activities of God. Participation in the work of the Lord in this church and elsewhere. Always bearing in mind this great truth—that it is truly all God's—and with more than just lip service but actual living in the light of that belief. A living that sees our lives not as a pathway of personal gain or the accumulation of material and worldly possessions but rather a journey of discovery. One of worship, service, and testimony of our redemption as well as our Redeemer.

Verse 3 gives us a critical element to this presentation, and that is the statement that he, Melchizedek, "remains a priest forever." We should clearly understand in the story that Melchizedek is a picture of Christ and we fill the role of Abraham. The fact that He is a "priest forever" reminds us of a truth that Christ will always and

forever stand in the place of priest, the last and full mediator between us and our Creator. A priest in Abraham's day was one who was duly authorized to minister in sacred things, particularly to offer sacrifices at the altar, and who acted as mediator between men and God. The Levites, *the tribe of Israel designated by God to serve the other tribes in this position*, had specific functions to perform, some of which were, according to Leviticus 10:10-11, declaring and enforcing a "difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean...[so that everyone would be able to] teach the children of Israel all the statutes which [God] had spoken unto them by the hand of Moses."

So the Levites were selected to teach Israel the law of God given through Moses. Then, from the tribe of Levi, God selected the family of Aaron to serve in the Tabernacle (and later in the Temple) to perform the ritual sacrifices and other duties in the Law of Moses at designated times and places (Exodus 28:1; Numbers 28:1-2).

A priest therefore would serve the people, performing ritual acts and religious rites on their behalf to a deity, most often within a sanctified site or temple of some kind. The Levitical priests of Israel had four characteristics: a priest was 1) chosen of God, 2) the property of God, 3) holy to God, and 4) he offered gifts to God, and received gifts from God in return. At the top of the hierarchy of the Levitical-Aaronic priesthood was the high priest of Israel who was chosen for that position.

Verse 4 points out that Abraham was a "patriarch." This may seem to be of little consequence unless we see clearly through the eyes of a Hebrew, ...through the eyes of the one specifically and firstly being addressed in this letter. You see, a patriarch in that day would not be the one tithing! They were the top of the heap. The others were to honor *him*, for he was "the man." But here, the story tells us that *he* did the honoring; he honored and tithed to this mysterious priest Melchizedek. Verse 5 and 6 go on to sort of tell us that we are the ones who are supposed to be doing the tithing, not the patriarch. All those who would eventually come from the *lineage* of Abraham would be instructed to give tithes to the priesthood, to the Levites. But that did not include Abraham himself.

Yet again, Abraham gave tithes to this "priest." A guy who wasn't a descendant of Abraham (thus a "jew"). Abraham was not required to do so, for the receiving priest had not come from his lineage. So now suddenly, the whole plan of the priesthood, the law, everything was cast into disarray.

What is the point of all of this? IS there a point? Let's look at verse 11 again...what is it saying? "*So if the priesthood of Levi, on which the law was based, could have achieved the perfection God intended, why did God need to establish a different priesthood, with a priest in the order of Melchizedek instead of the order of Levi and Aaron?*"

We need to see that the reader of this letter had an understanding, *a thinking*, that the priesthood was "everything," and that the law, meted out by that priesthood, was the answer to every issue. But the writer was saying, was showing them, albeit at great risk of all out rebellion no doubt, that God had a different way. He indeed had a **better** way, and that such a way actually preexisted the priesthood and the law, thus superseding and over-riding the Levitical priesthood. Further, that their patriarch, the main man of the Jewish nation, knew the truth of all of this and acknowledged such through his actions here with old Mel the priest.

So the original reader, naturally understanding all of this no doubt better than we do, would grasp the implications. Implications that profoundly affect us also, and how we look at our faith. The bottom line is this: If the order of the Levitical priesthood was able to effectually stand between us and God as a priest was called to do, then why Melchizedek? Further, *why Jesus*? Moreover, if you and I can gain right standing before God by doing everything that's right and avoiding everything that's wrong, *effectively adhering to the law*, then why

the need to send Jesus? Why send Jesus at all? Why would Jesus need to come at all, if you could just be good and get there? Why send Jesus if we could “square things with the house” by going to a mere man ...a.k.a. a “priest”...to intervene, whether that be a Jewish priest or even a Catholic one?

7:12-13

So going with the fact that all of this has essentially thrown a wrench in the whole institution of the priesthood, the writer acknowledges that therefore the law itself had changed. For nobody knows where this guy Melchizedek came from, but for sure he wasn't from the Hebrew tribe of Levi, who were alone to serve as the priests. Because at the time of Melchizedek there WAS no tribe of Levi or any other tribe for that matter!

7:14-19

Fast forward a few hundred years and along comes this Jesus who claimed to be not only the very Son of God but moreover our “high priest.” Now this...as in the case of Melchizedek, would be a problem for most Jews, and is likely still a problem today. Indeed it was traditionally accepted that the Messiah would come from the family line of Levi, thus being able to embrace the role as high priest. But Jesus was not a Levite. He was from the family of Judah. Remember? A “lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev 5:5). For the average Jew this was enough to rule Jesus out as the Messiah. But Abraham was still the Jewish “main man.” Thus if Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, honored and accepted a non-Levite in the role of priest, suddenly “all bets were off.” Jesus could indeed be the high priest, and Abraham himself had paved the way with Melchizedek.

All of this creates a slippery slope. Suddenly that which was sure is no longer. Now even the very law which so many depended... and yet depend on to make themselves right before God, is now suspect. You might be in a position to acknowledge that following the Old Testament law cannot make you right with God and that's good. However, what about the “new law” that we tend to strap ourselves and others with? The “new religious rules?” Perhaps they are good rules and serve a purpose and lend to order. But they don't set us free, and they don't change our position with God. If a drunk gets up in the morning after drinking all night and goes out for the day, and he doesn't drink but all day thinks about drinking, desires a drink, and is essentially consumed by his sin, is he free just because he followed the rules and didn't drink?

The problem with allowing the law and rules, even self-imposed rules, to start playing a part in our standing with God is that in our effort to adhere to a certain man-made standard, we tend to just hunker down and give it our best effort. But that is just discipline. Now there is nothing wrong with discipline. We need discipline in our lives! But it fails us when we try to overcome behavior without a heart being transformed. We may actually control the behavior for a time under our own strength, but we never really change. We become transformed rather to a pattern of religion, but we're never transformed by the Holy Spirit of God. Frankly, the Jesus that so transforms our hearts wherein the desire and the control of sin disappears ...is not the Jesus that a lot of us worship. Many of us are instead, with all our might, simply trying to conform to a pattern of morality that has done nothing but beat us up year after year.

7:20-24

The message of verses 20-24 may seem convoluted, but it simply says that in the Levitical priesthood, one did not become a priest by simply making an oath. An oath had ...and has... in it the idea of confirmation of permanency. Like in a wedding ceremony or becoming president. But this was not the case in the Levitical priesthood because it was not supposed to be permanent. For many reasons, such a setup could never be permanent! One reason the Levitical priesthood could not be permanent is because all the priests would eventually die. And even worse, now the records of the Jewish blood lineage, *IE - which tribe they were from*, have essentially been all but lost. Therefore no one can any longer prove they are a Levite and righteously take their place as a priest.

But Jesus, a priest forever, is alive and well. It's important that you understand that fact and believe it and live in light of it. Because if He is not really alive today, we are lost and are truly the most pitiful of people for living this way. But if He *is* alive, He is available 24-7...365. In the middle of the night. On Saturday mornings. He is always "on." He is working the "forever" shift. No earthly human priest ever could claim that they are always available.

7:25

And finally comes verse 25: Jesus, as our true high priest intercessor, is able to save forever those who come to God through Him because He lives, and lives always, bridging the gap of righteousness, communication, and sacrifice between us and our Creator. No human priest *could or can* ever do that for us. The priesthood and the law was given so we might come to a clarity of understanding. One where we come to realize the holy standard that is required to approach God and how far we fall short of that standard. The law of the Old Testament is still true today and still serves in that same capacity. The law should therefore chase us to Jesus, our high priest, because in light of all of this we should be realizing that we can't do it without Him! Clearly He is the **ONLY** road to be right with God.

7:26-28

These verses present a glaring understatement! It is "fitting"? Ya, it's more than "fitting"—it's **mandatory**. It's the only road. We have in Christ a high priest who wants to transform your soul in such a way that sin actually loses its power. He's not interested in you simply gaining control over your sin but healing you of your sins power. He's not throwing down the edict, commanding you to get control of your lies and your drinking and your personal "skeleton-in-the-closet" issues; He's the high priest who seeks to heal you of those things. So, yes, indeed. It IS "fitting" that we should have Him!

If what I'm saying is fact, then why do we need a consistent devotional life? Why attend restoration groups or even classes on Sunday mornings? Because when a person is healed of their sin and the power of it, there is a growing that must occur! Salvation and God's healing is the new seed planted in your soul, a grace that now takes root and all of these things nurture, feed and water that seed so that it will grow strong and eventually flower and produce fruit in your life. The goal isn't just to stop doing these things, but to actually produce fruit for the kingdom and manifest God's glory through our lives.

Frankly, that seed is there for many of us, but its dormant or stunted. Without the water of the Spirit, fertilizing food of the Word, and constantly working the soil of our heart to allow the roots to spread, that seed will come to nothing. Jesus our high priest is faithful, but are we?

The alternative is to just keep working and working day after day, year after year, to get control of your life. Somewhere back in days long since past, you made some sort of decision to be religious, to get involved in church and faith. You went on to spend every day since then trying to "clean up" enough to be able to feel like you are really part of this club. But you were never actually born again. You have never surrendered, really surrendered the control of your life to Christ. This is why many of those who were once here amongst us have moved on. Frustrated and often angry at their failure to attain to the mark, they turned against those around them... blamed the church and blamed God... instead of the fact that things were not right with them.

Then there are those who did indeed commit to God or at least the idea of salvation on its face value, but then that seed went on to find only hard soil, thorny ground, and problem-laced conditions, and that seed is just sitting there today, waiting for water, food, good soil, and conditions in which to grow and thrive.