



Chapter Seven

Melchizedek having first been introduced in this book back in chapter five, we see that our author placed him to the side in order to give an exhortation to diligence, steadfastness, and a warning regarding the end of slothfulness. Then we saw his return in verse 20 of chapter six and now he will be discussed at great length in this chapter. The author desires to discuss the priesthood of Jesus in the order of Melchizedek. He has to establish two thoughts here...First that Jesus has a priesthood and that Jesus' priesthood is better than that of the Levitical priesthood.

Remember the entire theme of this book is Jesus is better, Christianity is better than Judaism, and that the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant. Anytime there is a discussion of the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old Covenant one must deal with the issue of the priesthood. The entire Old Testament Law and sacrificial system was founded on the Levitical priesthood.

7:1 We do not know much about Melchizedek. I do know that I would not suggest as a name for one of your children. They would not be an easy call for dinner. It may seem odd that someone who consumes so much space in the book of

Hebrews but yet be referenced so little in the Old Testament.

Melchizedek was the topic of much speculation among the Jewish circles, including the Essene community of the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls. He is mentioned in scripture, however only in Psalm 110, Genesis 14, and this book of Hebrews. Melchizedek was a king-priest, contemporary of Abraham, and a servant of God. According to Psalm 76:2, Salem and Jerusalem are probably two names for the same city, the former being more of ancient times. We might remember an Old Testament king of Jerusalem by the name of Adoni-zedek from Joshua 10:1, he had the same element in his name as Melchizedek, which also indicates an identification of Salem with Jerusalem. It is in line with known facts that Melchizedek was an actual king-priest of the city-state captured by David from the Jebusites and known to us as Jerusalem 2 Samuel 5.

Hebrews 7:1 (1) For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

Melchizedek is priest of the most high God, and this point interests our writer. How did

Melchizedek come to know about God Most High?

Although the Hebrew term parallels the name of a Canaanite god, there is no reason to think that Melchizedek served any deity other than Jehovah. The Most High God is identified in Genesis as the God of Abraham; the Greek Old Testament lies behind the phrase in our present passage; Old and New Testament writers alike present Melchizedek as a servant of Jehovah.

When Abraham came in contact with Melchizedek, we know that he knew he was the King of Salem and a Priest of the Most High God. Abraham recognized that Melchizedek served the same God that he did because they both referred to Him by the same name: Most High God (El Elyon).

Abraham gave the priest-king Melchizedek 10% of all the spoils that he gained when he rescued Lot. The writer does not tell us much and does not enter into speculation about who he is, but rather uses him as an example of a new priesthood that was now in place.

Many speculations have been made about who Melchizedek was.

1. Some say he was just a man (Josephus). Josephus says he was a Canaanite chief who founded the city of Salem (Jerusalem) and built a temple there.
2. Some say he was angel (early church writers Jerome and Origen).
3. Some specifically state he was Michael (arch-angel).
4. Some say he was Shem (Martin Luther), Job, or Enoch. This would assume that Abraham was just giving honor to one of his ancestors. Shem actually would have lived 150 years as a contemporary of Abraham. Abraham was born 352 years after the flood. Shem died in the year 502 post-flood. If we were to make Melchizedek be Shem or another descendant, then the typology of him being a type of Christ without genealogy is ruined.
5. Some say he was Christ (a Christophany or an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ in the Old Testament). Christophanies are never permanent, but rather are temporary.
6. He is referred to as a man in 7:4. He was a literal king of a literal city. In Genesis 18 the appearance is plainly called "the Lord". Some, such as the Melchizedekian's of the 3rd century said he was superior to Jesus. Much more would have been told about

Melchizedek and his priesthood had the Hebrews not been dull of hearing. **Hebrews 5:10-11** (10) being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. (11) Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. Melchizedek was a real person who the Hebrews writer says is a type of Christ.

Genesis 14:17-20 records that Melchizedek met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings of the East who had taken Lot captive in the course of a plundering campaign. That text also says that Melchizedek blessed Abraham, a point our author will focus on later.

The new priesthood is by way of the order of Melchizedek. Jesus could not be of the Levitical priesthood, intentionally designed, so, the Hebrews writer has to show that the new priesthood replacing the new one is better and more effective. We will learn that it is better in at least four ways.

1. Melchizedek is a type of Christ
2. Melchizedek was greater than Abraham
3. Melchizedek's priesthood was eternal

4. Melchizedek's priesthood brings about a perfection that Aaron's priesthood was unable to provide.

Just because it is not recorded does not mean that God did not reveal to Melchizedek something of a priesthood. Remember in the example of Cain and Abel offering sacrifices before the Lord. One sacrifice was found acceptable and the other was not. How did Cain and Abel know about offering sacrifices? How did they know what was acceptable to God and what wouldn't be? God had to reveal it to them, and it was just not recorded in scripture. **Hebrews 11:4** By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

7:2 In this portion of text Abraham gives a tenth part or a tithe of all the spoils that came from the rescue of his nephew Lot to Melchizedek. This is the first time that a tithe is mentioned in scriptures. In ancient history the tithe was sometimes political. It could be a tax imposed by a ruler. The tithe could also be something religious. It is clear that Abraham was intending to give praise to God through his tithe. There is

the question as to why Abraham would tithe to Melchizedek. Part of the answer is that Melchizedek was a priest. God would later institute the tithe be brought to support the priests and their work in the Temple. Not only is Melchizedek a priest, but he is also a king. One of the goals of any priest is to ensure that worshippers have a right relationship with God or in other words have righteousness. Like Melchizedek was a king so Christ is also a king concerned with our righteousness through His death. **Romans 3:21-26** (21) But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (22) even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; (23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; (25) whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; (26) for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Now the analyzation of Melchizedek's name its separate components. This practice, maybe strand to us in the Western culture and logic, was not an uncommon method of reasoning when Hebrews was written and now it has the approval of the Holy Spirit. The name Melchizedek is made up of two Hebrew words; melek means "king" and tsedek means "righteousness." Together they mean king of righteousness, which by interpretation. Melchizedek was. He is also called King of Salem, and since Salem stands for the Hebrew shalom or "peace," Melchizedek is here called king of peace. Peace is not just the absence of war, but also the presence of positive blessing from God.

Hebrews 7:2 (2) to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

It is important to notice that before he is king of peace, he is king of righteousness. Peace with God cannot come before righteousness. Jesus our High Priest wants to ensure that we too have righteousness and peace with God. Jesus as our priest is the only acceptable place to go to get to God.

Righteousness and peace appear together quite frequently in the Old Testament text. To the Hebrew, “righteousness” meant the faithful performing of all duties proper to a relationship. In a spiritual sense that meant faithfulness to God first of all, because of His covenant mercies to Israel, the faithfulness to fellow-Jews who were recipients of the same covenant blessings.

In Isaiah 5:7, God is searching in His people for righteousness but finds instead a cry. The cry speaks of perverted justice, cruelty, and a general absence of the life described by righteousness.

When the people lived righteously, “peace” was the result. Again the term has first a spiritual significance of peace with God, and then a peace with one’s fellows under God’s covenant care and rule. There could be no peace apart from righteousness, and righteousness was expected to result in peace. **Isaiah 32:17** **And the work of righteousness will be peace, And the service of righteousness, quietness, and confidence forever.**

Melchizedek of Salem incorporated both these concepts in his name and office, and even in this foreshadowing the Lord who is our

Righteousness and our Peace. **1 Corinthians 1:30** But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, **Ephesians 2:14** For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. We are blessed with Jesus Christ as our mediator, as our High Priest and He is our victor as our King.

7:3 There are five areas that Melchizedek is said to be without, father, mother, genealogy, beginning of days, and end of life. Melchizedek had no ancestor in the priesthood. Unlike the Jewish priests who had to establish their genealogy back to Aaron to qualify for service, this man neither received his office by hereditary right nor passed it on to a physical descendant. This was important when connecting Jesus' priesthood because He could not function as a Levitical priest on the basis of His genealogy. He was from the tribe of Judah.

So far as we are told in scripture, he was without father or mother, not that he was other than human, but that he did not belong to any line of priests. Again, not that he did not have parents but we are not told of them in scripture. This type

of language used with the ancients just indicated that the identity of the parents were unknown. We need to remember that the writer is comparing the Levitical and Melchizedek priesthoods. Melchizedek's likeness to Jesus is not in his lack of a family tree, but rather in his priestly function.

Hebrews 7:3 (3) Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

Without descent is better translated "without genealogy." Neither beginning of days nor end of life means that Melchizedek's priesthood is not recorded as to origin or end. He is a lone figure who suddenly appears on the stage of history for a brief moment, then suddenly and mysteriously removes from the scene. Not that he was eternal but that his birth and death are nowhere mentioned in scripture. No one can say of this strange man, "here is the beginning of his priestly service" or "here is the end of his priesthood."

Because God opened the curtain in the middle of Melchizedek's priestly service and closed it in the same place, Melchizedek is made like unto

the Son of God, who is also alone in a unique priesthood. Continually is not the phrase usually translated “forever,” but may be translated “for the duration,” “perpetually,” or “without interruption.” This term will appear later in this chapter.

Here is how Melchizedek is like (a type of) the Son of God (Jesus).

1. He is a king of righteousness
2. He is a king of peace
3. He received tithes
4. He blessed the one who gave the tithes
5. He served bread and drink (the Lord’s Supper)
6. He remains as a priest forever
7. He has not ancestors in the priestly office (Jesus was of Judah)
8. He has no successors in the priestly office
9. He is a priest of a different order than Aaron
10. He is a king and a priest

Zechariah 6:13 "Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of

peace will be between the two offices." This is such a wonderful and poignant prophecy. The two offices one could be set apart for, were that of king and that of priest. Only Melchizedek and Jesus filled both. This is why Jesus is "better" than the Old Testament priesthood.

7:4 It will be discussed how great Melchizedek was. In the first place we see Abraham the chief patriarch himself pay tithes to Melchizedek. This was a tithe of the best of the spoils, this literally means "off the top of the heap," the choicest tenth. This concept comes from the ancient practice of taking all the spoils of battle (which Abram was just in to save Lot) and put them in a pile. But before those spoils would be distributed to the soldiers, a portion would be taken and given to the gods.

Hebrews 7:4 (4) Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.

These spoils were not given to pagan gods, but rather the God Most High through the great man, Melchizedek. The strength of the argument of how great Melchizedek was is based on the readers view of how great Abraham was. Abraham was a great man in his own right and is

even called a “friend of God.” If it can be shown that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham, then it would be easy to show the superiority of Jesus and His priesthood. Why is Melchizedek so great? There are two main reasons. First, Abraham gave tithes to him. Secondly, he blessed Abraham. By proving Melchizedek’s greatness over Abraham, it will prove his greatness over the Levitical priests.

7:5 The sons of Levi or the Levitical priests, who receive the office they hold, take tithes because of a commandment and a law. They also take tithes from their own brethren, who are descendants of Abraham. This is to further clarify that the lesser always gave to the greater. **Numbers 18:21** To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting. The right to collect tithes implies a certain authority over that person. This proved the Levites were superior as far as their office to the other tribes, since they collected from the other tribes. The Levites had not inherent superiority over the other tribes since they were brothers and all descendants of Abraham. It was the law that commanded that God’s chosen people pay tithes to the priests.

Hebrews 7:5 (5) And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.

Melchizedek was not of the same line as Abraham. Abraham was given no command to tithe to Melchizedek. Abraham understood Melchizedek to be so great, as a Servant of the God Most High that he paid a tithe to him. We do see that there is a big difference between the nature of the gifts in verses 4 and 5. In verse 4 it says that Abraham “gave” a tithe, whereas in verse 5 it says the Israelite “collected” a tithe. The word “collect” here means to take a payment or debt for someone. The point is that the Israelites tithed to the Levites because God told them to. God put the Levites into a position of authority not based on their merit or inherent greatness. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek because he wanted to and because of his obvious greatness. What a wonderful illustration this is for us as Christians today. Do we give because we have to or do we give because we want to? I believe God requires both, but as we see one comes with and receives a blessing.

7:6-7 Melchizedek is one whose descent is not

from them, who had no commandments or law requiring Abraham to pay him tithes, and who had not received his priesthood by virtue of a lineage. Yet he received tithes, and that not from just any passing stranger, but from Abraham! Abraham recognized Melchizedek as superior to him that is why he paid tithes to him. To this add the fact that Melchizedek then blessed Abraham, the Abraham who had the promises from God. The main promise was that of the Messiah.

Hebrews 7:6-7 (6) But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. (7) But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.

We also find it indisputable that the less is blessed in this sense by the better. If Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek, it follows that Melchizedek was a “better” man in terms of rank and office than the patriarch. Both men acknowledged this relative position: Abraham, by paying tithes to Melchizedek; Melchizedek by blessing Abraham. It is hard for us to understand but it would have been clear to the Jewish mind that Melchizedek was superior because of Abraham receiving this blessing.

7:8 By comparison, note also that here in the Levitical priesthood men that die receive tithes.

1 Chronicles 6:49-53 (49) But Aaron and his sons offered on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense, for all the work of the most holy place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. (50) These are the sons of Aaron: Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, (51) Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, (52) Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, (53) Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son. But there in Melchizedek's case one received them who had no successor.

Hebrews 7:8 (8) In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.

The contrast here is between life and death. The first phrase speaks of people who are human and because of that face death. Those "mortal men" refer to the Levites. In this instance men who are mortal receive a tithe from men who are mortal as well. In the Levitical system priests were constantly dying and being replaced by others. He says "in that case" in reference to Melchizedek, the priest lives. There is no succession of priests with Jesus because His

priesthood is permanent. Remember, Jesus was made a priest forever. Later we will see that Jesus became priest based not on His ancestry, but His indestructible life, 7:16.

7:9-10 To cap it all, and to be perfectly truthful about it, even though Levi not physically present, who also receives tithes under the law from his Jewish brethren, there paid tithes instead, in Abraham. Just as he can say that Levi received tithes, so he can say as well that Levi paid tithes. Levi was forefather of the priestly tribe; therefore Melchizedek's priesthood was greater than Aaron's.

Hebrews 7:9-10 (9) And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, (10) for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Our author has dealt with Melchizedek's characteristics as a person in verses 1-3 and in relation to the Levitical priests in verses 4-10. Now he turns to his primary point, an exaltation of the priesthood of Christ in comparison with the Old Testament Jewish priesthood. Verses 11-14 will show that the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek is permanent, so is the law which rests upon it. This is in contrast with the

priesthood of Aaron, for it changed, necessitating a change in the law related to it. The point being made is that the priesthood of Melchizedek is greater than Aaron's because of Levi, his great grandfather paid a tithe to Melchizedek.

7:11 Why the order of Melchizedek and not of Aaron? If perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, there would have been no further need for another priest after another order. The priesthood of Jesus is superior to the Levitical priesthood. There were certain imperfections in the Levitical priesthood which made it necessary to replace it. An institution is perfect when it accomplishes the purpose for which it was instituted. The Aaronic priesthood did not do that.

Hebrews 7:11 (11) Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?

The purpose of a priesthood is to bring men to God, to atone for their sins. The way that people become acceptable to God is to have their sins

completely forgiven. The Old Testament priesthood could not completely forgive sins. The author will show clearly in the following chapters that the Levitical sacrifices and priesthood could not do this, either perfectly or permanently. We are not perfect in and of ourselves, but we are made perfect by the transfer of guilt onto our sacrifice, Jesus, who was innocent and perfect, once and for all. In the present passage, then, he refers to this imperfection in the Old Testament priestly order. He also shows that it had to be replaced by a perfect order which could fulfill these purposes. **Hebrews 10:1-4** (1) For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. (2) Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? (3) But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins year by year. (4) For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. The Levitical priesthood is representative of the sacrificial system and the Old Covenant way of relating to God. The question to be asked to the Jews that wanted to return is this, Are you going back to a priesthood and system that never did

accomplish perfection or a completeness for the worshippers?

This passage really is about two different paradigms relating to God. One, is the Levitical Priesthood and Old Covenant Law which never could fully deal with the problem of sin. Secondly, the priesthood of Jesus which totally removes sin and brings into a right relationship with God. Through Him we have justification, sanctification, and redemption. God made a prediction that one day there would be a new priesthood, as we have read in Psalm 110:4. The phrase “another priest” is actually better translated “a priest of a different kind.” The fact that God made us aware of the change of priesthood implied that the first one was not doing as good as the next one will do. God was not content with what the first one did.

The point is that the priesthood did not accomplish all that God desired when it came to making mankind acceptable to Himself. If the Levitical priesthood was able to get the job done that would have settled it and there would not have been a need for a new priesthood. The Levitical priesthood could not bring an eternal relationship between God and man, so a new one was needed to make it happen. Paul writes

to those in Galatia about the Law. **Galatians 3:21** Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. If the Law and the Levitical priesthood could perfectly accomplish what God ultimately desired, it would never need to be replaced. However, God promised David a new priesthood which proves the Old was insufficient.

We are accustomed to thinking of the priesthood as dependent on the law. Our author says the opposite. The law depended on the priesthood. This suggests that in God's ordering of affairs, the priesthood was of first importance, and then the law. Law pointed men to the reality of sin and to the fact that they were sinners. This recognition called for the priesthood as the divine ordinance and institution for the removal of sins. But the imperfection of the Old Testament priesthood pointed them even further to the future when the Son of God would come as great high priest and Lamb of God, completely removing all sins forever by one offering of Himself. The priesthood, then, was the basis and grounds for the law. One of the most difficult New Testament concepts to understand is the distinction between the Old and New Covenants

(Testaments). Both covenants were instituted with the shedding of blood, you remember Jesus when He shared the last supper, said, “this is the blood of the New Covenant.”

7:12 When the foundation is removed the building collapses. There can be no legal code unless there is provision for those who break it. In the case of Israel, the priesthood is changed, to one which is perfect. With this then a new law is given based on that perfect priesthood and relating to it.

Hebrews 7:12 (12) For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.

The word “changed” is a word that can mean “change” or “transfer.” A better word yet might be the phrase “replaced by something better.” The old priesthood of Aaron is replaced by the new priesthood by order of Melchizedek. The writer adds if the priesthood is changed then the law must be changed too. What this is saying is that the law must work with the priesthood it is designed for.

The Law of Moses was only to be temporary. Remember even Moses spoke about a prophet

that would come like him. **Acts 7:37** "This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.' Moses was making it clear that when the Messiah came that His words would be far better and supersede anything that he even said. **John 1:17** For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. We also can see where Paul did not even see himself as being bound under the Old Testament Law. **1 Corinthians 9:20** To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; The writer will continue throughout the course of this chapter that beyond a shadow of a doubt the Old Testament priesthood and law have been replaced by a new and better one. Just because the New Covenant is better does not mean that the Old Testament is not God's Word and that it is of no value or use. We simply are not bound by the Old Testament Law. **Galatians 3:24-25** (24) Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. (25) But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

It is better because the messenger of the new is better than the messenger who gave the Old. Since the priesthood has been replaced, it must stand to reason that the Law that priesthood was based on changed as well. The new law, perfectly suited to its priesthood is as far superior in nature as well as content to the old, as the new priesthood of Christ is superior to the priesthood of Aaron's sons.

7:13-14 The one of whom these things are spoken of is the Lord Jesus Christ. He belongs to a different tribe than that of Levi. Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah. A tribe in which no man ever served as a priest.

Hebrews 7:13-14 (13) For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. (14) For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.

“These things” speak of the change of priesthood that has been talked about. If Jesus was going to serve as priest, He could not do it as a Levitical priest because He descend from Judah. **2 Chronicles 26:16-20** (16) But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted

corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. (17) Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men. (18) They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God." (19) But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense. (20) Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the LORD had smitten him.

The writer here refers to Jesus as "our Lord," usually the reference "Lord" is in reference to God the Father. **Hebrews 13:20** Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, This shows plainly the deity of Jesus.

So how is it evident that Jesus descended from Judah? It is evident on the basis of His genealogies in Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3 that our Lord descended from the tribe of Judah, a tribe from which the Law of Moses said absolutely nothing so far as priesthood is concerned. Messianic prophecies said He would come from Judah. Jews that are still waiting for the Messiah believe He will be from the tribe of Judah. The big problem they have is that all family or genealogy records were destroyed in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

A note of interest at least to me, is the phrase "He descended" which means "sprang up," how a plant springs up. That then gives reminder to the prophecies of the Messiah. **Isaiah 11:1** Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. **Jeremiah 23:5** Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. **Jeremiah 33:15** In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. **Zechariah 6:12** Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He

will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD.

The Mosaic Law cannot be applicable if Jesus is serving as priest, unless the Law is being disobeyed or it is no longer binding. The priesthood has therefore been changed, and the next verse will show as evidence still another proof of this.

7:15-16 The priesthood has been changed, not only in tribe, but in the quality and sort of its priests. A priest has arisen now who is another in quality and kind. He is a different type of priest, not resembling the Levitical priests at all, but after the likeness of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:15-16 (15) And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, (16) who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.

Jesus is that “other” priest like Melchizedek. Not that He would appear in the future but that He already has appeared. Christ has become a priest twice-different in nature from the sons of Aaron. His priesthood rests not on the law of a carnal commandment but on the power of an

endless life. The Old Testament priests were priests by virtue of a law, outside and apart from themselves or their personal fitness. That law did not attempt to select on the basis of moral or spiritual qualities, but simply according the physical ancestors. They were no different from their fellow Israelites except from different tribes. They were not superior in their life or quality. The only difference was their physical descent. It was thus a carnal commandment, having to do only with physical restrictions and requirements.

Christ has been made priest, not on the basis of ancestry, but because His life possesses an inherent power that fits Him for the position He is to occupy. The term power here does not signify authority, but might, and speaks of a characteristic of Christ Himself, inherent in His righteous person. This was the power or might of an endless, eternal, or indestructible life. Being endless, eternal, and indestructible make Him God. **1 Timothy 6:16** who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. The indestructible life was proved by His resurrection. **Acts 2:24** But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its

power.

Notice the contrast that is made with each word comparing the basis by which someone became part of the Levitical priesthood to the basis for Jesus' priesthood.

Law → Power

The Levites became a priest based on Law. Jesus did on the basis of inherent power

Physical → Indestructible

The Levites became a priest based on the physical. Jesus became a priest based on that which is indestructible

Requirement → Life

The Levites became a priest based on the requirements of the law. Jesus became priest on the basis of His life.

We serve a High Priest who does not die and cannot be overthrown. Because our High Priest's life is indestructible, we can have assurance. Because our High Priest's life is indestructible, we have victory over death ourselves. Because our High Priest's life is indestructible, we can draw near to God through Him.

Because He was not a sinner, though He was

fully tempted, the Son of God could not be held by Satan in death. He possessed the strength or dynamic of a life that, literally, “could not break down.” A perfect life has no weak spot; sin is the weakness which brings down all other men, including the Old Testament priests. Christ’s priesthood and service are firmly grounded in the inherent power of a life that will never end rather than law which was fulfilled. The writer will return back to this wonderful thought as we get to verse 25.

7:17 To this agrees the scripture introduced much earlier of that of **Psalm 110:4** which says, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Hebrews 7:17 (17) For it is attested of Him, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK."

This passage has been targeted since chapter 5. This time he wants to talk about the “forever” aspect of the priesthood. Jesus’ priesthood does not come to an end the way the earthly priests all did, but it lasts forever, until the end of the age.

7:18 The familiar Greek construction “on the one hand/on the other hand” is used in verses 18 and 19. On the one hand there is a disannulling or placing aside or removing of the previous or former commandment regulating priests. This setting aside was necessary because of the inherent weakness and unprofitableness of that system which could not bring perfection, which was based on a carnal requirement and which was manned by imperfect priests.

Hebrews 7:18 (18) For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness

The “former commandment” speaks of the Law of Moses and the Old Covenant which includes the rules for the Levitical priesthood. This is a much stronger word used here than was used in verse 12, which taught that it was replaced by something better. This word for “setting aside” means to “cancel,” “annul,” or “declared void.” The same word is used later in this book to talk about what Jesus has done with sin. **Hebrews 9:26** Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It is important that we see the New

Covenant's presence set aside the power of the Old Covenant. The only way that Jesus could serve as a priest was for the Mosaic law to no longer be valid. A person could not go back and keep the Law of Moses and reject the Levitical priesthood or keep the Law and accept Jesus' priesthood.

We are given two reasons why the Law was "set aside." First was because of its weakness. Weakness means without strength. This speaks of its weakness to make perfect or bring them into close fellowship with God. We will see more of the inability of the Law to cleanse the conscience. **Hebrews 9:9** which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience. We also will see the inability of the sacrifices to take away sin. **Hebrews 10:4** For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Second was because of its uselessness. In other words, it is "unprofitable." It is useless in comparison to what Jesus offers.

7:19 The law made nothing perfect for it rested on a priesthood which could not perfect. **Romans 8:3** For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending

his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: **Galatians 2:21** I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. **Galatians 3:21** Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. “The law made beginnings, taught rudiments, gave initial impulses, hinted, foreshadowed, but brought nothing to perfection, it did not in itself provide for man’s perfect entrance into God’s fellowship.

One of the biggest differences posed is the inability of the Law to sanctify. Through Jesus not only can we be totally justified and forgiven, but our hearts can be transformed.

Hebrews 7:19 (19) (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Perfection did come, however, in Christ’s work and in the better hope which He introduced and confirmed. Better is a key word in Hebrews, and the serious student will profit from a study of its many occurrences in this epistle. The hope

spoken of here has already been discussed to some extent.

The blessed feature of this hope, and the ultimate basis of comparison between all that belonged to the inadequate Old system and all that pertains to the perfect New, is that by it we draw nigh unto God. The verb translated draw nigh is the same one used in the Greek Old Testament at when, at the giving of the Law, God specifically commanded the people not to draw near to God. **Exodus 19:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.** They could not draw near to God under that system because their lives were unholy and their sins were ever-present. Under the covenant of the Son, men in themselves are no better, but they can draw near to God by virtue of Christ's life which is holy and His blood which atones for their sins. Such a blessed thought this is for meditation and such a holy basis for living! The point of emphasis is that through Jesus we can draw nearer to God than they could before. The idea of drawing near to a holy God was unique to their minds and here we are invited to eternally draw near to God and approach His throne. You cannot find a promise like that in the Old Testament.

7:20-22 The next three verses are all tied together in the Greek and in English, by the phrases “and inasmuch as” and “so much.” Jesus is surety of a better testament than theirs. Jesus is guarantor to man from God that God has accepted a perfect sacrifice on man’s behalf. And Jesus lives forever to make intercession for them that come to God by Him.

We will see in verse 20 a double negative which makes for a strong positive. He is saying that the promise was made with an oath, having already mentioned some of what is being said is that Jesus’ new priesthood was established by God on an oath that it will not ever come to an end. The Old Testament priests took on their position without an oath, but Christ’s appointment was by the oath of Jehovah. Some translations will use the word repent in verse 21. This is not as to repent for having committed sin, for God cannot sin. This repent means to “change the mind.” Since there will be no mind change, Christ will be a priest forever.

Hebrews 7:20-22 (20) And inasmuch as it was not without an oath (21) (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS

MIND, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER'); (22) so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

In verse 22, the word “become” is in the perfect tense, which means it was completed in the past but the results are continuous. This continuousness is talking about the word “guarantee” here carries with it the idea of making down payments. It is as if a bondsmen who pledges his name and property that a certain thing may be done. This may surprise you but this is the first time we find the word “testament” or “covenant” in this fine book. In scripture this word frequently had the force of a one-sided disposition or will involving two parties, rather than a two-sided agreement or bargain between equals. God’s covenant is given to man by God; man accepts or rejects it, but he may not change it. We will continue to see the word “covenant” throughout the rest of the book and we will further study what a covenant really means. The word will be used at least another 21 times in this book.

Here we also see our key word again, better. Why is it a better covenant?

1. Because it is founded on a better and

more effective priesthood.

2. It offers justification, sanctification, and redemption
3. Because there is assurance of salvation
4. There is an invitation to draw near to God
5. We are made acceptable to Him because of Jesus
6. We have a permanent sacrifice for sins by way of Jesus
7. Salvation is available to all people and not just to the Jews
8. The rites and rituals are less

Jesus as our priest assures that all the promises of this new covenant will be fulfilled by God.

7:23-24 There were many priests that served under the Old Testament with one taking the place of another because no single man could continue forever. Historian, Josephus says that there were 83 High Priests that served from the time of Aaron until the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. Our writer gives no such number, he simple states that they all died.

Hebrews 7:23-24 (23) The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, (24) but Jesus, on the other hand, because He

continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.

Jesus however has an unchangeable priesthood because He continues forever. He will never die. He will never need a successor. His priesthood is authenticated by God's oath. Plainly, His is an unerring and immovable priesthood and priestly service. It is perfect in every sense of the word. Whenever we need a priest or an intercessor for us Jesus is always there.

7:25 Christ is able to save to the uttermost. This may be taken either with regard to time in that He saves forever or in extent in which He saves completely. This salvation is for those who come to God through Jesus. Salvation is offered by God to all men as long as man continues to seek God through Jesus. Many begin their journey but then stop short of the eternal goal.

Hebrews 7:25 (25) Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Christ made just one sacrifice, and on the basis of that sacrifice He ever lives to make intercession for His people. In terms of His

death, He was the sin-offering. In the terms of His resurrection and present work, He is high priest. The priest of the Old Testament did not merely kill the sacrifice; he then presented its blood, standing for its life, as an appeal to God for forgiveness and blessing. In both particulars he had an imperfect priesthood. The sacrifice was amoral and could not take away sin; the priest was mortal and had to be replaced.

Christ, however, offered a perfect sacrifice, His own sinless life, was then raised, as a sign of God's acceptance of that life given in death and will never die again. Unlike the Old Testament priests and their sacrifices, Christ died once, but forever makes intercession for His people.

The one who is in Christ rests his salvation, forgiveness, and hope of blessing on the vicarious death and perfect obedience of Jesus his high priest. Because Jesus died, though sinless, He was able to be sin-bearer, "taking away the sins of the world." Because He offered God a sinless life, the Father is pleased with one Man, thought with no other on his own merit and is justly able to dispense full blessings. Yet because the Christian is on with Christ, His death counts for him and His life does as well. God can, therefore, forgive the one "in Christ" on the basis of Christ's blood and can also give him every

blessing and favor on the basis of Christ's life so long as he clings to Him in faith.

7:26 A high priest as Christ is just what man needs. He became for us, that is to say that He was fitted for our needs. Man needs a priest who is holy, since man himself is not. The word translated holy here also includes the idea of compassion and tender mercy. Man's priest must be undefiled and separate from sinners, but every Aaronic priest was weak and sinful. Our priest needs to be higher than the heavens, living forever to intercede on our behalf.

Hebrews 7:26 (26) For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

There are five traits mentioned in this verse that emphasize the type of character of Jesus as our High Priest. Three of those traits are adjectives describing His character. Two of those traits are describing His current position. He will further prove that Jesus is superior to any other priest by pointing out that He was sinless. In fact, it is His sinlessness or holiness that is the central aspect of this verse. The emphasis here is on Jesus' holiness. The word "holy" here is different

from the same word used earlier in chapter 3:1. This word “holy” here speaks of one who always responds rightly to God’s commandments. Holiness denotes one who is not just outwardly righteous, but also whose heart is inwardly pure. That needs to be the holiness we strive for. Many can put on an outward act, the way the Pharisees did, but to have a sincerely pure heart cannot be done by acting.

The writer will give some descriptions of that holiness.

1. Innocent – One who does no wrong or evil. To be harmless.
2. undefiled – Morally unstained. Purity that goes beyond ceremonial cleanness. Priests would wash 5 times and perform 10 purifications before served on the Day of Atonement.
3. Set apart from sinners – History tells that a high priest would separate himself from normal life for seven days prior to the Day of Atonement.
4. Exalted above the Heavens – Literally translated “and higher than the heavens He has become”

7:27 Christ is sinless. Christ does not need to

make a daily sacrifice for His own sin and then for the people's. Jesus offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice for the people. Because He had a perfect sacrifice and was a perfect sacrifice, He only had need to offer it one time.

Hebrews 7:27 (27) who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Jesus does not need any daily sacrifice, but He does intercede for the people daily. Jesus was perfectly qualified to be our High Priest and is without any weakness. His offering was good enough that no other offering will ever be needed.

7:28 The law of the Old Testament priesthood made men high priests who had infirmity or weakness. In contrast to this the word of the oath, which was since the law in origin but replaced it, made the Son a priest and He is consecrated for evermore.

Hebrews 7:28 (28) For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

The priest did not come from a super race of people, but were ordinary men. Their weakness was that they were limited by their humanity and sin. The promise we read in Psalm 100 came 400 years after receiving the Law. Since the promise came after no one can argue that the Law was better than the fulfillment of the oath.

The phrase “appoints a Son” is in reference to the appointment of Jesus as High Priest. Jesus’ priesthood is summed up as being both perfect and forever. He is perfectly qualified to be High Priest. He serves as High Priest as long as a High Priest is needed. His death was a perfect sacrifice which provided once a for all sacrifice. His resurrection was proof of His forever priesthood and assures His continued intercession.