

SERMON  
SERIESAND WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE  
TO PLEASE HIM, FOR WHOEVER  
WOULD DRAW NEAR TO GOD  
MUST BELIEVE THAT HE EXISTS  
AND THAT HE REWARDS THOSE  
WHO SEEK HIM.

## HEBREW'S



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HEBREW'S  
VERSE BY  
VERSE STUDYLET US DRAW NEAR IN  
*Faith***SESSION OBJECTIVE: HEBREWS 7:1-10**

To better understand why Melchizedek is a superior priest to Levi.

**Read the Text:**

*"For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 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. 3 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 forever. 4 See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! 5 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. 6 But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. 8 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. 9 One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, 10 for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. (Hebrews 7:1-10, ESV)*

**Study the Text:****A Logical Sequence**

Hebrews chapter 7 forms a sequential argument for why Jesus Christ is the final and greatest high priest. To make the case, the author first has to explain why Melchizedek is a greater priest than Levi (vs.1-10), which necessarily entails that the Melchizedekian priesthood is greater than the Levitical priesthood (vs.11-19). Then, and only then, can it be argued that Jesus, as a part of the greater priesthood, can subsequently be seen as the final high priest within this order (vs.20-28). We will approach these three parts over the next three weeks. Today, we begin with verses 1 through 10 and will discuss what makes Melchizedek superior. This will include a more in-depth discussion on who exactly Melchizedek is (and crucially, who he isn't), as well as biblical evidence for his superiority to Levi.

## The Identity of Melchizedek

Before the superiority of Melchizedek can be established, we need to know who he is. Verses 1 through 3 lay out several clues that answer this. Essentially, what we will discover is that Melchizedek is a *typological foreshadowing* of Jesus Christ. Below is a breakdown of some of the key details in this text.

### **A KING AND A PRIEST**

Verse 1 describes him initially as “king of Salem” and “priest of the Most High God.” These two roles are important because they are unusual. In the Levitical system, a priest was not permitted to be a king. Typically, kings descended from Judah (2 Sam. 7:16), whereas priests descended from Levi (Num. 18:7). That Melchizedek is both a king and a priest is an important clue that he foreshadows the Messiah, who was prophesied to be both a priest and a king. The prophet Zechariah, speaking of the coming Messiah, said: “It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both” (Zech. 6:13). Melchizedek, then, is a prototype that illustrates what a priest-king might look like. The significance of Christ is that, unlike Melchizedek, Jesus is a *Davidic* king from the tribe of Judah. That He is not from Levi, however, is why Hebrews is making the case that He is qualified to be a priest.

### **MELCHIZEDEK: “KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”**

Verse 2 then continues by first translating the name “Melchizedek.” In Hebrew, the term *melek* means “king.” Subsequently, *malki* means something like “my king or king of.” The term *sedeq* means “righteousness or justice.” When put together, the translation is “king of righteousness,” which is an attribute of Jesus Christ. 1 John 2:1 refers to Him as “Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1 Corinthians 1:30 says that He Himself is our righteousness.

### **KING OF SALEM: “KING OF PEACE”**

Moreover, he is the “king of Salem,” that is, “the king of peace.” Isaiah 9:6-7 predicts that the Messiah will be both the “Prince of Peace” who will rule the nations with righteousness as “Mighty God.” Ephesians 2:14 says that “He Himself is our peace.” Beyond that, even the location of “Salem” is significant. Most scholars believe that Salem is the same location as the later *Jerusalem*. Psalm 76:2 says, “His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.” Both Salem and Zion are in apposition to one another; they are one and the same place. Melchizedek, then, not only foreshadows the peace which the Messiah brings, but also a king over the very city of the Lord.

### **WITHOUT FATHER AND MOTHER**

Some rather fantastical things have been suggested concerning Melchizedek, primarily because of verse 3. He is said to be “without father or mother or genealogy,” which has prompted some to argue that he is some sort of deified individual. However, verse 4 goes on to make it clear that he is merely a “man.” How are we to make sense of this description, then? This is a common way of saying that Melchizedek has no genealogical record. He is “without father and mother,” meaning, “it is unknown what line he comes from.” This is especially stark when he is first introduced in Genesis 14. Up to that point, significant effort has been given to genealogies of Adam, Noah, Noah’s sons, and Abraham. Then, out of nowhere, Melchizedek appears! The point is that his line is untraceable. Under the Mosaic Law, this would usually disqualify someone from being a priest, because, as has already been stated, only Levites could be priests, and you would have to prove your Levitical line through genealogy. But Melchizedek’s line seemingly doesn’t matter, which indicates something important about this priesthood: it is not by bloodline, but by divine appointment. Both Melchizedek and Jesus Christ are priests by divine appointment. No appeal to a bloodline is needed.

**WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END**

The even more troubling description comes next: “Having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he continues a priest forever” (Heb. 7:3). This is where the typology the author is employing becomes the most evident. In the same way that Melchizedek has no genealogy, so too is it true that no description exists of how he was born or when he died. He has “no beginning of days,” that is, no record of his birth. He has no “end of life,” that is, a record of his death. The author uses the silence of Scripture concerning Melchizedek’s birth and death to establish a typological connection to Christ. Melchizedek was born, but it is not recorded. He died, but it is not recorded. Yet, as a mere man, he was actually born and did actually die. Christ, according to His humanity, was born and died, and both were recorded. Yet according to His divine nature, He is eternally without beginning or end. The author employs figurative language about Melchizedek to draw a comparison to the literal reality of the Messiah. Remarkably, the author does not say that Christ resembles Melchizedek, but that Melchizedek resembles the Son of God. The Son is the substance; Melchizedek is the shadow. Scripture presents Melchizedek in such a way that he functions as a literary and historical foreshadowing of Christ.

**The Greatness of Melchizedek**

After establishing Melchizedek's identity, evidence is presented to demonstrate his superiority over both Abraham and Levi. Though Melchizedek was without genealogy, he received a tithe from none other than the great patriarch, Abraham, and his reception of this tithe is significant for two reasons. First, because while the Mosaic law required tithes to be given by “brothers” (that is, other Israelites), no such law required anyone to tithe to Melchizedek. Abraham tithed without the compulsion of the law. Beyond that, Abraham is the one “who had the promises” (Heb. 7:6). Thus, verse 7 says: “It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.” Abraham is clearly superior, and yet, Abraham tithed to him. And, in doing so, Levi also, in a sense, tithed to Melchizedek, since he was technically still in Abraham’s “loins” (Heb. 7:9-10).

**Study Questions****Day One**

1. Read Hebrews 7:1-2. What are the various titles ascribed to Melchizedek in this passage?

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2. Read Hebrews 7:3. In your own words, summarize what verse 3 teaches about Melchizedek (Hint: See above notes).

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**Day Two**

1. Read Hebrews 7:4. Who tithed to him? What is significant about this?

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2. Read Hebrews 7:5. What were the Levitical priests commanded by the law to receive?

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### Day Three

1. Read Hebrews 7:6. On what basis does Melchizedek receive tithes from Abraham? How does this distinguish him above the Levitical priests?
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2. Read Hebrews 7:7. Why is Abraham considered superior? Based on what?
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### Day Four

1. Read Hebrews 7:8. How does this further set Melchizedek apart from the Levitical priests?
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2. Read Hebrews 7:9-10. On what basis does the author claim that Levi also tithed to Melchizedek?
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#### Discuss the Text!

## Session 16 Discussion: No Genealogy

Hebrews 7:1-10 is not the most applicable passage to us, but it is an important one. To make the case that Jesus is the final high priest of a greater priesthood, we have to understand who Melchizedek is. However, one application might be: God, in his sovereignty, can use people about whom we know very little to accomplish great things. You do not need to be born into royalty or established as someone great for God to use you to do great things. Talk about how unimportant your past is to your ability to serve God today.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever known anyone born into an extremely affluent family? How did everyone around them treat them as a result? Did it make their lives easier? Did they receive privilege?
2. Do you believe your past transgressions prevent God from using you as you serve Him? Why or why not?
3. Do you believe your past good works obligate God to use you as you serve Him? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think God uses seemingly “nobodies” to accomplish His purposes?
5. Why is it encouraging to know that God often chooses people based on His calling rather than their pedigree, accomplishments, or family background?
6. Kid Talk: Ask your kids if they know their grandparents' names. Then ask if they know the names of their great-grandparents (and continue until they can no longer name them). Then make the point that their physical heritage doesn't matter nearly as much as their spiritual heritage in Christ. God uses whom he chooses, regardless of the family or affluence they are born into.

## Takeaways:

1. Melchizedek prefigures Jesus Christ in several typological ways.
2. Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham, and in a sense, even from Levi, thereby establishing his superiority.