

The Priesthood of Melchizedek (Heb. 7–8)

The Letter to the Hebrews deals with the priesthood from two perspectives. In the previous writing in our series, we were able to familiarize ourselves with the priesthood of Aaron. This also pointed to the priesthood of Melchizedek. The letter shows its origins to be older and more enduring, not an allegory but the essence of the office itself. It flows from the imperishable power of life, an eternal order and office (Heb. 7:15–17).

To Christians who had converted from Judaism the ordinances of the Law, with its priesthood and other proceedings were familiar. They were enticed to return to the former. For that reason, the letter enlightens the spiritual priesthood, which is concentrated in Christ through the royal priesthood of Melchizedek. The narrative of Melchizedek is in the beginning part of the Bible (Gen. 14:18–20). The letter also borrows from Psalm 110 in which the LORD (Jahve) gives the king-priest office to “my Lord.”

Melchizedek

The progenitor Abraham, then still named Abram, received a blessing from the priest of the Most High God, Melchizedek, who according to his name was also the “king of righteousness” and the king of Salem (Jerusalem). Melchizedek has no genealogy in his background. There is not mention of even his father. He has arisen, given the Jewish tradition, “from great anonymity.”

Melchizedek was not a priest of sacrifice but rather a distributor of the gift of blessing. His portion in bread and wine was also a gift. Abraham received a blessing for himself from one who was greater/more esteemed and as a display of his subjection and gratitude he gave tithes.

Like unto the Son of God

The priesthood of Melchizedek was God’s given authority already long before the covenant of the Law (Heb. 7:15–16). It points to Christ, who is Lord of both the Old and New Testaments. The priesthood of Jesus could not be descended from the Levitical priesthood of Aaron because He was of the family of David, the tribe of Judah. The priesthood of Aaron was only a pale foreshadow of that that was to come (Heb. 8:5). On the other hand, the priesthood of Melchizedek was a royal priesthood.

In Christ was fulfilled the promise: You are a priest forever. The old gave way when the allegory was fulfilled. Jesus proclaimed that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach...and sent me...” (Luke 4:17–21). After completing the redemption work, He sits as a High Priest at the right hand of the throne of Majesty. He left the priesthood of Melchizedek’s office of blessing on earth with “the low priests.” It did not go to the glory of heaven.

The Office of the Holy Spirit

The risen Lord sent His own on a priestly task: Even as my Father hath sent me so send I you. He gave His own the office of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the forgiveness of sins (John 20:21–23).

The core of the New Testament is the forgiveness of sins (Heb. 8:12). The Holy Spirit conveys this as the office of the royal priesthood. For that reason, all the children of God are priests serving in the tabernacle of the New Covenant, the congregation of Christ. We are now a royal priesthood, a holy generation, a peculiar people (1 Pet. 2:9). We have been authorized with the office of the blessing of the forgiveness of sins.

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