

MELCHISEDEC: PICTURE OF CHRIST, THE BETTER PRIEST

Hebrews 7:1-12

By Raymond White

When the message of Christ was preached to the Jews, a principle objection was priesthood. “But we already have a priest: Aaron. His priesthood brings us to God so what need have we of yet another priest? Why Christ?”

That’s a fair question. The short answer is that Christ’s priesthood is “better.” That of course is a tall claim, easy to say, harder to prove. So, let’s prove it. The Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) says this about the priesthood of the coming Christ.

Genesis 14:18 Melchizedek king of Salem...was the priest of the most high God. :19 [Melchizedek] blessed [Abraham] :20 and [Abraham] gave [Melchizedek] tithes.

Psalms 110:4 ...Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

That’s it. Pretty scant, just four terse verses. But it says everything we need to know.

Here is the connection: Psalms tells us that when Christ comes, his priesthood will not be the Jewish priesthood, Aaron’s priesthood, but will be a different priesthood, Melchizedek’s priesthood, a “better” priesthood. The reasoning is straightforward. If Melchizedek’s priesthood is better than Aaron’s priesthood, then Melchizedek is better than Aaron. And if Christ comes with Melchizedek’s priesthood, then Christ, like Melchizedek, is better than Aaron.

Why is this important? Hebrews tells us why.

[1] MELCHIZEDEK’S PRIESTHOOD IS ROYAL

Hebrews 7:1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God...

Israel’s kings were not priests and Israel’s priests were not kings. Those two duties (head of state and head of church) separated with Moses. Joshua became the head of state (political leader) and Eliezer (Aaron’s son) became the head of the church. So separation of church and state became official and the two authorities went their separate ways, often conflicting.

Note that prophecy had nothing to do with it — both men were prophets. They had to be to correctly administer their offices. One prophet led the nation, another prophet led the church.

But Melchizedek was different. He was both king and priest. And Christ, when he comes, Psalms tells us, will be like that: king and priest, ruling men for God and presenting me to God.

[2] MELCHIZEDEK’S PRIESTHOOD IS ETERNAL

Hebrews 7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

Thus the man Melchizedek is a model for his priesthood. In Genesis, there is no record of Melchizedek’s birth or death. That doesn’t mean that he wasn’t born or that he didn’t die. It just means that there’s no record of either. Aaron, on the other hand, his birth and death are recorded

in Exodus. So the picture is that Aaron's priesthood began and will end, while Melchizedek's priesthood never began and will never end. His is an eternal priesthood.

This is a requirement of Christ and his priesthood. Why? Because the salvation he brings is eternal. He doesn't bring us into God's presence only for us to be kicked out when the offering wears off. That was the problem of Aaron's priesthood — new sins required new sacrifice.

Hebrews 7:27 Who [Christ] needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice...for this he did once when he offered up himself :28 For...the Son...is consecrated for evermore.

It was one sacrifice that Christ made which resulted in one eternal salvation. The priesthood of Aaron could never do that, that's why they performed sacrifice over and over.

[3] MELCHIZEDEK'S PRIESTHOOD IS SUPERIOR

Hebrews 7:6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham and blessed him. :7 And...the less is blessed of the better.

Here's the point: Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek therefore Melchizedek is better than Abraham. Melchizedek blessed Abraham therefore Melchizedek is better than Abraham. And Melchizedek was certainly no descendant or ancestor of Abraham's so there can be no claim of priesthood by parentage — one did not come from the other.

Now for a picky detail.

Hebrews 7:9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who received tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. :10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

What is that all about? Well, you see a Jew could argue that, yes, Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec and therefore Melchisedec was Abraham's superior. But that was Abraham and Abraham was not a priest. But Levi, standing for the Levitical priesthood, wasn't there. Maybe if he had been there, he might not have paid tithes to Melchisedec. Maybe Levi was his equal.

Hebrews argues back: But he was there. Not born yet, but still in the loins of Abraham. Therefore, Levi, his descendants, and the Levitical priesthood submitted to Melchisedec.

[4] MELCHIZEDEK'S PRIESTHOOD IS PERFECT

Hebrews 7:11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood...what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

This final argument is airtight. If the Levitical priesthood was perfect, there would be no need for another priesthood, would there? That Christ brings with him a different priesthood — newer, and older — that alone proves that there is something deficient about the Levitical priesthood. Therefore, when Christ comes, it is critical that he bring with him a different priesthood, one that accomplishes the things that the Levitical priesthood could not do.