

The Doctrine of Melchizedek¹

Topics		
Hebrew	Gen. 14:18	Psalms 110:4
Heb. 5	Hebrews 6	Hebrews 7
Hebrews 8		Conclusion
Charts, Maps and Doctrines		

Preface: The priest Melchizedek, even though only mentioned twice in the Old Testament, figures prominently into the theology of the writer of Hebrews. Therefore, in this second instance, we need to examine this Melchizedek further.

1. The Hebrew is Mal^ekîy Tsedeq (מֶלֶכִּי צְדֵק) [pronounced *mah^e-KEE TZEH-dek*], which means *my king is Tsedek, king of Tsedek* and is transliterated *Melchizedek*. This proper name is found in only two Old Testament passages: Gen. 14:18 Psalm 110:4. The first word is *king* with the 1st person singular suffix (Strong's #4428 BDB #572). The latter word is possibly derived from an Arabic verb which means *to speak the truth*. It could also come from an Arabic noun that means *hard, even, straight, perfect*. Various authors give this the meaning *innocent; loyalty; authorized; just, righteousness*. This is the Hebrew word for *righteousness, rightness*. (Strong's #6664 BDB #841). This gives us more of a title than a name: *My King [is] Righteous*. However, there are others (e.g., Gesenius), who render this *King of Righteousness* or *King of Salem (Jerusalem)*. Strong's #4442 BDB #575.
2. The first occurrence is in Gen. 14:18.
 - a. The first recorded war involves two alliances and the Sodom-Gomorra alliance was defeated by the Shinar-Ellasar-Elam-Goiim alliance. One of the casualties was Lot, Abram's nephew, who was living in the general area of Sodom. He was brought back as a slave.
 - b. Abram, despite the fact that this is a fairly large tribal war, gathers 318 of his own men, his personal delta force, and he moved north and attacked the latter alliance at night, and not only defeated them, but put them on the run. He rescued his nephew Lot.
 - c. The king of Sodom, having just lost to this alliance, came out to see Abram. No doubt, some of his own people had been freed from slavery and he came out very likely to thank Abram and to gather his people.
 - d. Also, the King of Salem, Melchizedek, came out to Abram. Many believe him to be the king of Jerusalem; and he is not mentioned previously as being on either side of the alliance.
 - e. He brings with him, bread and wine, and blesses Abram by the Most High Elohim, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Who delivered Abram's enemies into his hand.
 - f. Abram gives Melchizedek a tenth of his possessions.
 - g. He also returns to the King of Sodom all that belonged to him which Abram retrieved in the nighttime attack.
 - h. Everything in this context indicates that Melchizedek is a valid priest to God. Some suggest that he might even be a theophany (a physical manifestation of God/Jesus Christ on this earth prior to His incarnation). There is not enough evidence in this passage to allow for that interpretation.
3. The second occurrence of Melchizedek in the Old Testament is our passage, Psalm 110:4.
 - a. The first verse of this psalm sets us up: God the Father speaks to God the Son and tells Him, **"Sit on My right hand until I make Your enemies your footstool."** (Psalm 110:1b).

¹ Dude!

- b. In v. 4, again we have God the Father speaking to God the Son (there is not reason to assume otherwise), and He says, “You are a Priest forever, according to the manner of Melchizedek.” (Psalm 110:4b).
 - c. This indicates that we are speaking of a slightly different priesthood than the Aaronic priesthood found in the Mosaic Law. The writer of Hebrews straightens us out here. The New Testament author mentions Melchizedek 9 times!
4. The first set of occurrences for Melchizedek are found in Hebrews 5.
- a. Hebrews 5:1–11 (Updated Young’s): For every chief priest taken out of men on behalf of men, is set in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, able to be gentle to those ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also compassed with infirmity; and because of this infirmity he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins; and no one to himself does take the honour, but he who is called by God, as also Aaron: so also the Christ did not glorify himself to become chief priest, but He who spake unto him: ‘My Son you are, today I have begotten you;’ as also in another place He says, ‘You are a priest—to the age, according to the order of Melchizedek;’ who in the days of his flesh both prayers and supplications unto Him who was able to save him from death—with strong crying and tears—having offered up, and having been heard in respect to that which He feared, through being a Son, did learn by the things which he suffered—the obedience, and having been made perfect, He did become to all those obeying Him a cause of salvation age-during, having been addressed by God a chief priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, concerning whom we have much discourse and of hard explanation to say, since ye have become dull of hearing.
 - b. Heb 5:1 (God’s Word™) : Every chief priest is chosen from humans to represent them in front of God, that is, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin. The chief priest can be gentle with people who are ignorant and easily deceived, because he also has weaknesses. Because he has weaknesses, he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins in the same way that he does for the sins of his people. No one takes this honor for himself. Instead, God calls him as he called Aaron. So Christ did not take the glory of being a chief priest for himself. Instead, the glory was given to him by God, who said, "You are my Son. Today I have become your Father." In another place in Scripture, God said, "You are a priest forever, in the way Melchizedek was a priest." During his life on earth, Jesus prayed to God, who could save him from death. He prayed and pleaded with loud crying and tears, and he was heard because of his devotion to God. Although Jesus was the Son of God, he learned to be obedient through his sufferings. After he had finished his work, he became the source of eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him. God appointed him chief priest in the way Melchizedek was a priest. We have a lot to explain about this. But since you have become too lazy to pay attention, explaining it to you is hard.
 - c. First of all, the writer of Hebrews tells his audience that he has not really told them everything that they needed to know here because they are not listening as they should, and, whereas, they should be teachers by now, they are still spiritually illiterate (Hebrews 5:11–12).
 - d. Secondly, the points the writer makes are as follows:
 - i. The Chief Priest is taken from men, and he represents men to God. This is the function of a priest in general.
 - ii. He can be sympathetic toward those for whom he offers sacrifices, as he is a man just like they are.
 - iii. He must also offer sacrifices for himself, because he sins just like everyone else.
 - iv. God called Jesus Christ to be the Chief Priest just as He called Aaron to be the first *Levitical* priest (Aaron is properly the first in a line of Aaronic priests). The author establishes this by first noting the God the Father in time sired God the Son; and then said, “You are a priest forever.”
 - v. However, Jesus was a priest more like Melchizedek than like Aaron.
 - vi. The writer of Hebrews decides that he will not explain this any further at this point in time. However, he will reconsider and explain it in greater detail in Hebrews 7.
5. Melchizedek is mentioned again in Hebrews 6:
- a. Hebrews 6:18–20 (Young’s Updated translation): ...that through two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, a strong comfort we may have who did flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us , which we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and entering into

- that within the veil, whither a forerunner for us did enter—Jesus, after the order of Melchizedek chief priest having become—to the age.
- b. Hebrews 6:18–20 (God’s Word™): God did this so that we would be encouraged. God cannot lie when he takes an oath or makes a promise. These two things can never be changed. Those of us who have taken refuge in him hold on to the confidence we have been given. We have this confidence as a sure and strong anchor for our lives. This confidence goes into the holy place behind the curtain where Jesus went before us on our behalf. He has become the chief priest forever in the way Melchizedek was a priest.
 - c. The writer of Hebrews gets charged up again and mentioned Melchizedek.
 - d. He makes the following points:
 - i. God made an oath so that we would be encouraged (Hebrews 6:13–18).
 - ii. Jesus Christ is a sure and strong anchor for our lives.
 - iii. Jesus Christ has become our Chief Priest forever, just as Melchizedek was a priest.
6. The writer of Hebrews then decides, I am going to teach them about Melchizedek, regardless:
- a. Hebrews 7:1–28: For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who did meet Abraham turning back from the smiting of the kings, and did bless him, to whom also a tenth of all did Abraham divide, (first, indeed, being interpreted, ‘King of righteousness,’ and then also, King of Salem, which is, King of Peace,) without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, and being made like to the Son of God, does remain a priest continually. And see how great this one is, to whom also a tenth Abraham the patriarch did give out of the best of the spoils, and those, indeed, out of the sons of Levi receiving the priesthood, a command have to take tithes from the people according to the law, that is, their brothers, even though they came forth out of the loins of Abraham; and he who was not reckoned by genealogy of them, received tithes from Abraham, and him having the promises he has blessed, and apart from all controversy, the less by the better is blessed— and here, indeed, men who die do receive tithes, and there he, who is testified to that he was living, and so to speak, through Abraham even Levi who is receiving tithes, has paid tithes, for he was yet in the loins of the father when Melchizedek met him. If indeed, then, perfection were through the Levitical priesthood—for the people under it had received law—what further need, according to the order of Melchizedek, for another priest to arise, and not to be called according to the order of Aaron? for the priesthood being changed, of necessity also, of the law a change does come, for he of whom these things are said in another tribe has had part, of whom no one gave attendance at the altar, for it is evident that out of Judah has arisen our Lord, in regard to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet more abundantly most evident, if according to the similitude of Melchizedek there does arise another priest, who came not according to the law of a fleshly command, but according to the power of an endless life, for He does testify—“You are a priest—to the age, according to the order of Melchizedek,” for a disannulling indeed does come of the command going before because of its weakness, and unprofitableness, (for nothing did the law perfect) and the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw nigh to God. And inasmuch as it is not apart from oath, (for those indeed apart from oath are become priests, and he with an oath through Him who is saying unto him, “The Lord swears, and will not repent, You are a priest—to the age, according to the order of Melchizedek;”) by so much of a better covenant has Jesus become surety, and those indeed are many who have become priests, because by death they are hindered from remaining; and he, because of his remaining—to the age, has the priesthood not transient, whence also he is able to save to the very end, those coming through him unto God—ever living to make intercession for them. For such a chief priest did become us—kind, harmless, undefiled, separate from the sinners, and become higher than the heavens, who has no necessity daily, as the chief priests, first for his own sins to offer up sacrifice, then for those of the people; for this he did once, having offered up himself; for the law does appoint men chief priests, having infirmity, but the word of the oath that is after the law appoints the Son—to the age having been perfected.
 - b. Hebrews 7:1–28: Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. He met Abraham and blessed him when Abraham was returning from defeating the kings. Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything he had captured. In the first place, Melchizedek’s name means king of righteousness. He is also called king of Salem (which means king of peace). No one knows anything

about Melchizedek's father, mother, or ancestors. No one knows when he was born or when he died. Like the Son of God, Melchizedek continues to be a priest forever. You can see how important Melchizedek was. Abraham gave him a tenth of what he had captured, even though Abraham was the father of the chosen people. Moses' Teachings say that members of the tribe of Levi who become priests must receive a tenth of everything from the people. The priests collect it from their own people, Abraham's descendants. Although Melchizedek was not from the tribe of Levi, he received a tenth of everything from Abraham. Then Melchizedek blessed Abraham, who had God's promises. No one can deny that the more important person blesses the less important person. Priests receive a tenth of everything, but they die. Melchizedek received a tenth of everything, but we are told that he lives. We could even say that when Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything, Levi was giving a tenth of everything. Levi gave, although later his descendants would receive a tenth of everything. Even though Levi had not yet been born, he was in the body of Abraham when Melchizedek met him. The people established the Levitical priesthood based on instructions they received. If the work of the Levitical priests had been perfect, we wouldn't need to speak about another kind of priest. However, we speak about another kind of priest, a priest like Melchizedek, not a Levitical priest like Aaron. When a different kind of priesthood is established, the regulations for those priests are different. The priest whom we are talking about was a member of a different tribe. No one from that tribe ever served as a priest at the altar. Everyone knows that our Lord came from the tribe of Judah. Moses never said anything about priests coming from that tribe. The regulations were different. This became clear when a different priest who is like Melchizedek appeared. That person is a priest, not because he met human requirements, but because he has power that comes from a life that cannot be destroyed. The Scriptures say the following about him: "You are a priest forever, in the way Melchizedek was a priest." The former requirements are rejected because they are weak and useless. Moses' Teachings couldn't accomplish everything that God required. But we have something else that gives us greater confidence and allows us to approach God. None of this happened without an oath. The men from the tribe of Levi may have become priests without an oath, but Jesus became a priest when God took an oath. God said about him, "The Lord has taken an oath and will not change his mind. You are a priest forever." In this way Jesus has become the guarantee of a better promise. There was a long succession of priests because when a priest died he could no longer serve. But Jesus lives forever, so he serves as a priest forever. That is why he is always able to save those who come to God through him. He can do this because he always lives and intercedes for them. We need a chief priest who is holy, innocent, pure, set apart from sinners, and who has the highest position in heaven. We need a priest who doesn't have to bring daily sacrifices as those chief priests did. First they brought sacrifices for their own sins, and then they brought sacrifices for the sins of the people. Jesus brought the sacrifice for the sins of the people once and for all when he sacrificed himself. Moses' Teachings designated mortals as chief priests even though they had weaknesses. But God's promise, which came after Moses' Teachings, designated the Son who forever accomplished everything that God required.

- c. In Hebrews 7, the writer makes these points:
- i. First off, we get an idea as to the personality of the writer of Hebrews, as, at the end of Hebrews 5, he sounds as though he is not going to deal with the concept of Melchizedek's priesthood because it just might be too difficult for his readers to understand; yet, after v. 20 in the previous chapter, he suddenly launches into a full explanation.
 - ii. He gives us the basic background, that Melchizedek was the priest of the Most High God and he met Abraham after the slaughter of the kings.
 - iii. Abraham gives this priest a tenth of his goods and the writer tells us, his name, by interpretation is, *King of Righteousness*; and that he was also, then, the king of Salem, which is the king of peace. Recognize that this passage could just stand for thousands of years not really understood; but now that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, all of a sudden, the King of Righteousness, the King of Salem (Jerusalem), the King of Peace—these titles, all applied to Melchizedek and never to an Aaronic priest—suddenly, these titles make sense.
 - iv. The writer of Hebrews then tells us more about this Melchizedek: *...without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the*

Son of God, he abides as a priest forever. At this point, we begin to wonder about who this priest is. Throughout Genesis, if this book is marked by anything, it is by genealogies. Every character that we find in this book has some genealogy, and most characters in Genesis, we could trace their lineage back to Adam. But not Melchizedek. He plays this pivotal role, he comes out of nowhere, he seems to have no genealogy. If I were to make judgments based upon one verse, this verse would make me think that Melchizedek is a theophany. However, since Jesus Christ is a priest *after the manner of or after the pattern of* Melchizedek, I am led to believe that Melchizedek is a true human priest of the Most High God. Having no father or mother means, even though he plays this pivotal role in Genesis, we do not know who his parents are. This is the opposite of an Aaronic priest, who ideally can trace his lineage all the way back to Aaron (at least a priest of that time period).

- v. This priest collects a tenth of Abraham's wealth, even though the Aaronic priesthood, descended from Abraham, has the privilege and responsibility of collecting a tenth from the Jews. This reads, literally, that **they came out of the loins of Abraham**. From Abraham is descended Levi, and from Levi we have Moses and Aaron, the latter of whom is the father of all priests.
- vi. The writer makes a further point: the lesser is blessed by the greater; Abraham is blessed by Melchizedek. The obvious is, the Hebrews who receive this letter are blessed by Jesus Christ, Who is the Greater. You may not recognize what the writer is doing, but these Hebrews to whom he is writing, continue to follow the Mosaic Law, and they continue to follow the things in the Law. Therefore, they are probably even still giving tithes to a defunct and apostate priesthood. However, to keep his analogy pure, the writer focuses merely on the giving of a tenth to the Aaronic priesthood as compared to Abraham giving a tenth to Melchizedek.
- vii. Levi, the father of the priests, was in Abraham's loins, so to speak, while Abraham gave a tenth of his possessions to Melchizedek; therefore, Levi, in Abraham's loins, paid tribute to this priest.
- viii. If perfection was found in the Levitical Priesthood, why would there need be a Priest to appear after the order of Melchizedek rather than after the order of Aaron?
- ix. Then the writer makes a major point in Hebrews 7:12: **For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also**. You see, our focus of study is Melchizedek. However, that is not the prime focus of the writer of Hebrews, even though he is dealing with Melchizedek in great detail here. His focus is upon these believing Jews who go back and follow the Mosaic Law, even though another High Priest has come on the scene. The focus of this writer is, "For you Hebrews who believe in Jesus Christ, you are no longer under the ceremonial aspects of the Law. You do not offer animal sacrifices anymore; you do not pay tithes to the Aaronic priesthood anymore. Because there was a change in the priesthood, there is also a change of law which accompanies it." In case you don't grasp this, what the writer is teaching is dispensations. He is not teaching it from a dispensational point of view, but from the point of view that, a change in the priesthood requires a change of law.
- x. Jesus Christ was born of the tribe of Judah, which is not connected to the Aaronic priesthood; however, the key is the fact that Jesus Christ is eternal, unlike the priests descended from Aaron. Then the writer quotes our passage, **"You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."** (Hebrews 7:17b; Psalm 110:4). No priests descended could be considered **a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek**.
- xi. The writer of Hebrews again returns to his primary focus: **the Law (of Moses) makes nothing perfect**. The readers need to focus upon Jesus Christ, who brings with Him **a better hope**.
- xii. Interestingly enough, Aaronic priests took their office without an oath of any sort; they were born into it. However, Jesus became a priest forever by oath: **The Lord has sworn and He will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever"** (Hebrews 7:21b; Psalm 110:4). Because of this oath, **Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant** (Hebrews 7:22).
- xiii. There are more men in the Aaronic priesthood, but all of them die. Jesus is One, but He lives as a priest to God forever.

- xiv. Recall that a priest represents us before God. Here is the crux of our Lord's superiority: although these many Aaronic priests come and go, **Jesus Christ stands forever before God to make intercession for us.**
 - xv. Because Jesus is sinless, He does not need to offer up a sacrifice for Himself and He offered up Himself one time as a sacrifice for all.
 - xvi. The Law, which makes nothing perfect, appoints men as High Priests who are sinful; however, Jesus Christ came upon the scene, as per an oath from God, an oath which came after the law, and **He is made perfect forever.**
7. Even though the continuation of the writer is outside our study, per se, let me give to you the next portion of his argument: Hebrews 8:1: **Now the sum of the things which we have spoken is this: We have such a High Priest, who has sat down on the right of the throne of the Majesty in Heaven, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One have something to offer also. For if indeed He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the Law, who serve the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was warned of God when he was about to make the tabernacle. For, He says "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you in the mountain." But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by so much He is also the Mediator of a better covenant, which was built upon better promises.**
8. Conclusion:
- a. Although the priests who are descended from Aaron, along with the Tabernacle and Temple, and the animal sacrifices, are shadows of what is to come, the priesthood of Jesus Christ is more closely aligned with the priesthood of Melchizedek.
 - b. Melchizedek appears in a book of genealogies without so much as a mention of his lineage, or even his mother and father.
 - c. The True Priest of God to come would be a priest forever, and He would not be an Aaronic priest but a priest like Melchizedek.
 - d. Jesus Christ is our true High Priest, a High Priest who forever makes intercession for us before God.