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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Hebrews 7.

(2013).

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

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## Hebrews 7.

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**INTRODUCTION:** this letter is written to Hebrews who had been enlightened, endured sufferings, been publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, stood alongside others who were persecuted, had compassion on those in prison and joyfully accepted others plundering their property (probably the Romans) knowing they had an eternal possession (Heb. 10:31-36).

It appears they had a faith in Christ, but were still bound by the Levitical priesthood and the Jewish religious system and because of this the author brilliantly uses Moses Tabernacle, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place and Old Testament Scriptures to prove Jesus is the only High Priest anyone needs and that it is by faith in Christ and God's grace not religious works that God's people are counted righteous. The blessing of this letter is not limited to the Hebrews since everyone who is seeking God or who is a brother or sister of Christ will be overwhelming awed as they read this well-crafted and awe-inspiring letter as it beautifully progresses through the chapters proving Jesus is the Christ (probably written about A.D. 68).

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### Topics.

- Abraham apportioned a tenth-part of everything to Melchizedek.
- Melchizedek resembles the Son of God and continues a priest forever.
- Melchizedek meets Abraham.
- Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham.
- Another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek.
- The Lord has sworn, "You are a priest forever."
- We have a high priest, exalted above the heavens.
- God has appointed a Son who has been made perfect forever.

**The Previous Chapter:** in the previous chapter the author told the Hebrews not to lay again a foundation of repentance from dead works, but to leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity, because it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have been enlightened. He spoke of Abraham receiving the promise, of a sure and steadfast anchor of the heart, of the inner place behind the veil and stated that Jesus has gone on our behalf into heaven to act as high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

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**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### Abraham apportioned a Tenth-Part of everything to Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:1-4 ----- <sup>1</sup>For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils!

**Melchizedek:** means king of righteousness and king of peace he was the priest and king of Salem (meaning peace). The most common thought amongst Bible scholars is that the place Melchizedek ruled over was Jerusalem since Salem is a part of the name of Jerusalem itself and Asaph when referring to the city of Jerusalem wrote, "God's abode has been established in Salem his dwelling place in Zion" (Psalm 76:2).

The account of Melchizedek is very brief the name occurs in the Bible only in (Gen. 14) (Psalm 110:4) and here in this letter to the Hebrews, other than what is written in these Scriptures nothing else is known of him.

There is no record of any genealogy of him and its stated here that he had neither father nor mother nor beginning of days or an end of life. This does not mean that Melchizedek was eternal, but that since there was no genealogy of his birth, his mother or father or even his death it is as though humanly speaking he had no beginning and no end (especially to a Jewish mind since they were very particular about keeping records of their families genealogies because of the inheritance of land). Other than these few facts Melchizedek remains a mystery since there is very little else written of him.

### **Melchizedek resembles the Son of God.**

The words, "Melchizedek resembled Christ" (v3) carry seven ideas: -

1. Neither Melchizedek nor Christ, were numbered with the Levitical priesthood (Hebrews 7:5-6).
2. No King of Israel or priest held the title king and priest as Melchizedek and Christ did.
3. Both Melchizedek and Christ were priests of peace over a kingdom of peace.
4. In Christ and Melchizedek the office of king and priest were united.
5. The birth of Christ and of Melchizedek is mysterious.
6. Neither Melchizedek nor Christ served in the temple or the altar.
7. Both Melchizedek and Christ are spoken of as a priest above Aaron.

### **Melchizedek continues a Priest Forever.**

The words, "Melchizedek continues a priest forever" (v3) obviously does not mean that he is in heaven alongside Christ acting as priest. The genealogy of every other priest mentioned in Scripture was carefully traced and preserved, in striking contrast there is no account of Melchizedek parents, none of his birth, none of his death, none of the beginning or end of his priesthood which means he appears in the record without parents, genealogy, beginning or end, simply as one that liveth (v8), a fitting type of Christ whose priesthood and kingly state endure forever.

In this respect, like the Son of God, Melchizedek stood alone. He was not in a line of priests; he was preceded by no one in the sacerdotal office, nor was he followed by any. Nothing is recorded as to the beginning or end of his life; thus he typically resembled the Son of God, whose existence is from everlasting to everlasting, who had no one that was before him, and will have no one come after him, in his priesthood.

### **Abraham gives a tithe of 10% to Melchizedek.**

**The Story:** the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had been attacked and defeated. Their enemies had taken Lot (the son of Abraham's brother), all his family and all who were dwelling in Sodom with him captive.

When Abraham heard that his kinsman had been taken prisoners he went with only three hundred and eighteen trained men of his own house and defeated those who had taken his relatives captive. Upon returning with the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, with Lot, the women and all the people and their possessions,

Melchizedek who it seems was well known and respected as a priest of God and king of Salem, came out to express his gratitude and to refresh Abraham with bread and wine. Melchizedek blessed Abraham and Abraham gave him 10% of all the spoils he had taken from the enemies he had defeated in battle (v4) as a thank-offering to God (the full story is found in Genesis chapter 14).

The author is using this story to prove to the Hebrews that the one who receives the tithes is greater than the one who gives them and the one who gives the blessing is greater than the one who it is given to.

The Hebrews and Jews held the Levitical priesthood in enormously high esteem it was for them a most sacred national institution. In this letter the author is not only proving to them that the Levitical priesthood no longer serves any purpose, but is also assuring them that that by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ they would have a much better High Priest.

### **The Descendants of Levi take Tithes from the People.**

Hebrews 7:5-8 ----- <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. <sup>7</sup>It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. <sup>8</sup>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.

**Mortal men:** refer to the Levites who receive the 10% tithe from the people.

**The one who lives:** refers to Melchizedek who received 10% from Abraham, notice the Scripture does not emphatically say that Melchizedek is eternally alive, but that it is testified (witnessed in KJV) that Melchizedek lives, meaning this is what people are saying of him and this most likely because he was a great king and priest and yet no-one could find any genealogy of him or even any record of his birth or death thus the reason most likely for the testimony, 'he lives.'

### **Levite Priests were commanded to Take Tithes from the People of Israel.**

The descendants of Levi who held the priestly office were commanded under Old Testament law to take a 10% tithe from the people of Israel. This tithe was the only tax the nation of Israel had to pay; it was to provide food and shelter for the Levitical priesthood (not designer clothes, Rolex watches and opulent lifestyles), but what they needed to live comfortably and support their families. As the priesthood diminished and kings arose many more taxes were imposed on the nation.

### **NOTE.**

Christ's death and resurrection abolished the entire Levitical priesthood including the command to pay the 10% tithe. Under the New Testament Covenant there is no command to pay to those who minister in God's church a 10% tithe.

### **For further information see the following title: -**

- Tithing (New Testament) in, Tithing (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The author of Hebrews is continuing to brilliantly use Old Testament Scripture to prove to doubtful Hebrews that Jesus is exalted above every Old Testament priest. In these verses he is highlight two things: -

1. The one receiving the tithe must be greater than the one paying the tithe therefore Melchizedek must be greater than Abraham even though Abraham was the one who had received the promise from God.
2. Melchizedek blessed Abraham and the one who blesses must be greater than the one receiving the blessing.

Based on the principal the one who receives the tithe must be greater than the one giving the tithe and the one who blesses must be greater than the one being blessed the author proves that Melchizedek must be higher in rank than Abraham and therefore higher in rank than the Levitical priests since they are descendants of Abraham.

### **Levi Paid Tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham.**

Hebrews 7:9-11 ----- <sup>9</sup>One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, <sup>10</sup>for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. <sup>11</sup>Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

Following on from the principal the one receiving the tithe must be greater than the one giving the tithe the author now points out that because Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Abraham gave the tithe to Melchizedek he in this sense also paid tithes to Melchizedek which means Melchizedek must be greater than the Levitical priests. The author of this letter understands that though the Hebrew people he is writing to at some level seem to accept Christ they still hold onto the Levitical priesthood. He understands they have been indoctrinated with this Old Testament system for over four-thousand years so is very patiently, kindly and brilliantly building his case to prove two things, firstly that Jesus is the priest to come after the order of Melchizedek and secondly Jesus is superior to all other priests.

All Hebrew's held Melchizedek in high esteem and would have certainly been fully aware that it is written in the Psalms: -

- The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4).

So the author to get them thinking outside of their indoctrinated mindset and being aware that they knew the Scriptures spoke of another priest to come in the likeness of Melchizedek he asked them a question: -

- Why would God say that another priest will arise after the order of Melchizedek if perfection could have been attained by Aaron's priesthood?

Then he makes the statement: -

- Surely if this was the case God would not have spoken about another priest to come.

Suddenly light-bulbs would have started turning on in the minds of those who had a right heart attitude.

### **When there is a Change in the Priesthood, there is a Change in the Law.**

Hebrews 7:12-14 ----- <sup>12</sup>For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. <sup>13</sup>For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. <sup>14</sup>For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

Prior to Christ all priests of Israel had to be descendants of Levi, this was another stumbling block to the Hebrews since Jesus came from the tribe of Judah of which nothing about priests was spoken. The author understanding that this was a difficulty for his readers shines a floodlight on the fact that Melchizedek who he has proven to be greater than Abraham and the Levitical priests and who the LORD Himself exalted, saying, "He will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4) was not from the tribe of Levi.

The words: -

- When there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well (v12).

Refer to a change in the Law of Moses that states, "Israel priests must be descendants of Levi." This is why the author is pointing out that Melchizedek was of another tribe and therefore the priest to come after the order of Melchizedek will likewise also be of another tribe.

### **Another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek**

Hebrews 7:15-17 ----- <sup>15</sup>This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, <sup>16</sup>who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. <sup>17</sup>For it is witnessed of him "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." (Cited from Psalm 110:4).

The likeness of Jesus to Melchizedek here refers to two things, firstly that neither Melchizedek or Jesus were appointed priest by the Law of Moses which states all priests must be descendants of Levi, their priesthood was not a legal requirement. Secondly, the testimony of Melchizedek is that he has no end since there is no record of his death so in this sense his priesthood is spoken of as having no end and of course Jesus priesthood is eternal.

God resurrected Jesus to his right-hand side to be seated on the throne of grace and mercy and appointed him the eternal High Priest for all who seek after God. The words, "After the order of Melchizedek" embraces many things (see the title, Melchizedek resembles the Son of God' following v1-4), but here the likeness is primarily that Jesus is a priest and king as was Melchizedek since no king or priest of Israel ever held both titles and that there is no end to Jesus priesthood.

### **A Better Hope is introduced, through which we draw Near to God.**

Hebrews 7:18-25 ---- <sup>18</sup>On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness <sup>19</sup>(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. <sup>20</sup>And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, <sup>21</sup>but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.' "<sup>22</sup>This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. <sup>23</sup>The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, <sup>24</sup>but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. <sup>25</sup>Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

The author still proving to the Hebrews, who though accepting Christ still gave value to the Levitical priesthood and the law now shines a spotlight on the uselessness of the law and begins to show the superiority of Jesus over all other priests.

### **The Law made Nothing Perfect.**

The law is perfect in itself, but is made weak because of sin in the flesh (i.e., selfishness, ego, pride and greed etc.), it is this sin in the flesh that limits all mankind from attaining to the perfection in actions, thoughts and motive that the law demands. This is why not one of us can be saved by works of the law or by strictly adhering to religious rites, customs and traditions. Though the law is perfect it has no power to make mankind perfect, this is why it has been set aside as a means of attaining righteousness that leads to eternal life.

### **The Better Hope.**

The better hope is of course the Lord Jesus Christ and the Gospel of grace. In contrast to the law which could make no-one perfect God grants as a pure and free gift righteousness that leads to eternal life to all who humble themselves in honest repentance before God and accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and faithfully follow him. Everyone in Christ is saved by faith and God's grace and not by the works of the law, thus the obvious reason Jesus is given the title, "The better hope" and the reason why Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, it is his righteousness that saves us not our own.

Added to this unlike all human priests he is eternal and never changes, but remains a compassionate merciful priest before God on our behalf forever unlike the Levitical priests who could be good or bad, kind or harsh, compassionate or legalistic, merciful or condemning is it any wonder Jesus our eternal merciful and compassionate High Priest is called, "The better hope."

### **The Lord has Sworn, "You are a Priest Forever."**

Under the Old Covenant God did not individually appoint each priest by an oath, they became priests by birth because during the Old Testament era God had appointed that the descendants from the tribe of Levi would form the priesthood. This is one of the reason why there were good and bad priests amongst the priesthood since their appointment was not based on God's individual selection of them, nor did it depend on them being tried tested and proved worthy, but simply on being born into the tribe of Levi. In total contrast to their appointment Jesus was not only appointed by God Himself with an oath, but also tried and tested in every area of life and remained totally devoted and faithful to his heavenly Father even to the death.

### **We have a High Priest, Exalted above the Heavens.**

Hebrews 7:26-28 ----- <sup>26</sup>For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup>He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. <sup>28</sup>For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever (the word of the oath refers to Psalm 110:4).

In contrast to the High Priests of the old covenant who daily offered sacrifices for their own sins and for the sins of the people of Israel, Jesus did this once for all when he offered himself up to his enemies to be slain as the Lamb without blemish.

The words: -

- The law appoints men in their weakness as high priests (v28).

Refer to the law which stated that a high priest must be a descendant of Aaron. Their appointment was not dependant of whether they were worthy of it or not, but on birthright thus the reason there were good and bad high priest amongst the people of Israel. Whereas Christ appointment to high priest is not only by God's choosing his very own Son, but also by Christ's perfect life of compassion, kindness, grace and mercy toward sinners which was tried and tested even to death, thus the reason God has exalted him as the eternal heavenly High Priest forever.

### **God has appointed a Son who has Been Made Perfect Forever.**

The words, "God has appointed a Son who has been made perfect forever" (v28). Jesus was born of a woman so that he could have the same nature as all humanity it was God's purpose to have an eternal priest born with the same nature as we all have. Though Jesus never outwardly sinned he was tempted in every respect as we are so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. We do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 2:17) (Heb. 4:15).

Jesus is able to understand human weakness and what it is that limits us from attaining to the perfect standard the law demands, this is what makes Jesus Christ the perfect High Priest he has experienced our nature. God nature is such that He is Holy in mind thought, motive and intent there is no darkness in any part of God, he is pure light. This is why not one of us can enter into the Most Holy Place of God's presence without a covering. There is no doubt that any man or woman who does not break the law can on man's level be referred to as a righteous person but the instant that person stands in the Holiness of God, everything that dwells in the heart and the mind is exposed to His light thus the reason we all need a covering.

God's nature is such that to enter into fellowship with Him requires holiness not only outwardly, but also in our mind, our thoughts and our heart, which means not one of us can stand before God and claim we are worthy since we are all tainted with the ugliness of darkness in some area of our lives. But here is the breathtaking awe-inspiring and humbling Good News of the Gospel: -

- God, the almighty creator and source of all life so loved you and I, that he gave his only Son, that if we believe in him we will not remain in the grave but be raised to eternal life and everlasting glory (John 3:16).

But the Good News of the Gospel gets even better, i.e., some might ask, "Does this mean, I will have to go to church, Bible meetings, prayer groups and such like things to earn God's love and eternal life?" No! The Bible says: -

- If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved, because with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved (Rom 10:9-10).

When any man or woman honestly humbles themselves before God in repentance and accepts His Son as their Saviour, God will not only accept them in love and grace but also fill their heart with His Spirit. They are born again meaning they are made spiritually alive to God. They are an infant in Christ beginning a spiritual journey in God who not only have a, perfect eternal heavenly brother who calls them his friend, but who will act on their behalf before God as their merciful, sympathetic and compassionate High Priest.

No-one who is devoted to Christ should ever fear being rejected when they go in prayer and confess those things within that we all keep secret from others. Some men and women have a best friend who they know they can trust will still love and accept them even when they open their lives wide open to them. This is the relationship Christ desires to have with all his friends, he desires not only to be our perfect High Priest but to be our best friend the one who knows all our ugliness and still accepts us.

This is the beauty, the wonder and glory of the Gospel of Christ. God counts those who love His Son as righteous. The righteousness our Heavenly Father imputes to us will be manifested outwardly and in perfection when Christ returns and the sons and daughters of God are gathered together to be with the Lord in eternal glory.

Until that glorious day, we all live in a fallen corrupted body that has sinful dysfunctions and aberrations and therefore all have weaknesses. We are all flawed at some level, this flaw influences our actions, our mind, our thoughts and our motives it is this flaw that separates us all from God and limits us from attaining to the perfection that the law demands. This is why the author of Hebrews is spending so much time proving to the doubtful Hebrews that Jesus Christ is the better hope and that we are all saved and accepted by faith and God's grace despite the flaws that dwell within us.

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