

The writer of Hebrews first mentioned Melchisedec in Heb. 5:6 with a quotation from a Messianic psalm (Psa. 110:4). The writer then expressed his desire to explain in depth the significance of Melchisedec but that it would prove difficult due to the spiritual immaturity of his readers (Heb. 5:11-14). He spends chapter 6 urging his readers to take the step of faith in Christ because of the reliability of God's promises. Now, in chapter 7, the writer explains that the priesthood of Melchisedec is superior to the Levitical priesthood and that Jesus is the priest that God promised would be "after the order of Melchisedec."

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1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 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.

**"For this Melchisedec...abideth a priest continually"** – The beginning of v. 1 and the end of v. 3 encompass the statement of the writer of Hebrews. Everything in between is a description of Melchisedec. The writer wants us to see the similarity to Jesus Christ through the idea that Melchisedec is continually a priest. He is not saying that Melchisedec is eternally a priest. Some have interpreted this passage to mean that Melchisedec was a pre-incarnate Christ, but that is not what is being said here. As we will see, Melchisedec is continually a priest in the sense that it is not recorded in scripture when he became a priest nor when he ceased being a priest, in contrast to Aaron and his descendants. As such, he is a type of Christ.

**"king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him"** – These facts are recorded in Gen. 14:18-19. Melchisedec is described as a king and a priest who met Abraham and blessed him. The writer mentions the blessing in order to show the superiority of Melchisedec over Abraham (vs. 6-7).

**"To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all"** – The writer will also make a point from the fact that Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec (vs. 4-5, 8-10), again showing his superiority to Abraham.

**"first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace"** – The name "Melchisedec" means "king of righteousness" and the name "Salem" means "peace" (thus, "king of peace"). The writer is pointing out that Abraham paid tithes to the king of righteousness and of peace.

**"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life"** – Some have interpreted this to mean that Melchisedec was a pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. However, what the writer is saying here is that nothing is recorded in scripture about Melchisedec's parents or descendants, nor does it record his birth or death. He simply walks onto the pages of scripture for a few verses and then walks back off. We know nothing else about Melchisedec.

**"but made like [to be made like; to make a facsimile] unto the Son of God"** – The Greek word translated "made like" does not say that Melchisedec is Jesus Christ. It merely says that the record of Melchisedec in scripture creates a picture similar to the Son of God, the eternal One Who has neither beginning or ending. It is in that sense that Melchisedec remains a priest continually.

**Verses 4-22:** The writer wants us to consider how great Melchisedec must have been for Abraham to willingly pay tithes to him. Receiving tithes was a privilege reserved for those from the tribe of Levi and yet Melchisedec, who had no lineage recorded in scripture, blessed Abraham and was paid tithes by him, the recipient of God's promises. In fact, even Levi, who normally received tithes, also paid tithes to Melchisedec through his ancestor Abraham. The writer goes on to point out that the Levitical priesthood could not complete our salvation, otherwise God would have no reason to mention a new priest after the order of Melchisedec. This change in priesthood necessitated a change in the law, allowing a priest to come from another tribe besides Levi. Jesus Christ came from the tribe of Judah, a tribe never mentioned by Moses pertaining to the priesthood, and God has made Him a priest in the pattern of Melchisedec rather than the Levitical priesthood ordained by the law. Thus, Christ was made our high priest by an oath and not by the law, because the law could not complete our salvation. However, our salvation is complete in Christ, Who is the guarantee of a better testament.

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23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

**"And they truly were many priests"** – The writer is contrasting Christ's priesthood and the Levitical priesthood. "They" refers to the Levitical priesthood. There were many men who served as high priest, beginning with Aaron. Each man's time as high priest was limited and temporary and so it was necessary for another man to take over once the previous high priest vacated the office.

**"because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death"** – Levitical high priests were mortal men. They could only serve as long as they were living. Once they died, their son assumed the office of high priest until their death. Thus there was a long line of men who served as high priests ("many priests").

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24 But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

**"But this man"** – The context of the verses leading up to v. 23 is the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus Christ over that of the Levitical priest. Even if the previous verses had not established the context, v. 22 explicitly does so: "*By so much was Jesus made a surety [guarantee] of a better testament.*" This context makes it obvious that "this man" refers to Jesus Christ, in contrast to the "many priests" mentioned in v. 23.

**"because he continueth ever"** – In contrast to the fact that a Levitical high priest can only serve a limited time before he dies and another man succeeds him, Jesus Christ's priesthood "continueth ever." His priesthood will never end and will continue eternally.

**"hath an unchangeable priesthood"** – Jesus will never die and have to pass his priesthood on to a successor.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

**“Wherefore”** – For this reason – because Jesus has an eternal and unchanging priesthood.

**“he is able also to save them to the uttermost [completely; perfectly] that come unto God by him”** – Jesus Christ is the only way we can come to God and the salvation that comes through Him is perfect and complete, with no shortcomings or caveats. This is in contrast to the law and the Levitical priesthood which could never bring salvation to their adherents.

**Heb. 7:19** *“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”*

**Heb. 10:1-4** *“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”*

**Heb. 10:11-12** *“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;”*

**“seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”** – Intercession with God on behalf of the people is the job of the high priest. Christ eternally intercedes for us with a priestly ministry that will never end or be interrupted. Our sins have a continual atonement through His blood.

26 For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

**“For such an high priest became [fitting; appropriate] us”** – Christ is a high priest appropriate to the task of making a complete and permanent atonement for our sins, unlike fallible human Levitical high priests (v. 27). He is just the high priest that we needed.

**“who is holy [undefiled by sin], harmless [guiltless], undefiled [free from defects], separate from sinners”** – Unlike human high priests, Jesus is a high priest that is untainted by sin and thereby “separate” (set apart) from sinners.

**“and made higher than the heavens”** – Christ is not an earthly high priest, but has been exalted above the heavens to sit at God’s right hand. His glory is far above that of any high priest.

27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

**“Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s”** – “Those high priests” (the Levitical high priests ordained by the Mosaic law) were human beings with a sin nature and so they had to offer a sacrifice for their own sins before they were ready to offer sacrifices for the people (Lev. 16:6). However, this is not true of Jesus because He did not need to offer a sacrifice for His own sins since He had no sins that needed atonement.

**“for this he did once, when he offered up himself”** – Instead of offering multiple sacrifices (for Himself and for the people) like the Levitical high priests, Christ only needed to offer one sacrifice: the sacrifice of Himself. This sacrifice needed to be offered only once, because it will never cease to have the power to atone for the sins of men. Christ will never have to offer another sacrifice, unlike the Levitical high priests who continually needed to offer sacrifices every day (Heb. 10:11).

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

**“For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity [weakness]”** – The limitations of the law made it necessary to fill the office of high priest with men who had the same sinful weaknesses that the people had to whom they were to minister. This made it necessary for them to offer sacrifices for their own sins before they could offer sacrifices in behalf of the people.

**“but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son”** – The oath mentioned here is the one in which God swore that the Messiah (Christ) would not be a priest from the Levitical order but a different kind of priest (**Psa. 110:4** *“The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek”*). God swore this oath “since” (after) the law was given, further distinguishing Christ from the priests appointed by the law. It was by this oath that God made His Son a high priest and not by the law.

**“who is consecrated [perfect; complete] for evermore”** – Christ is our perfect and complete high priest. Nothing else needs to be done to complete our salvation nor do we need to worry that at some point in the future He will fail in being our high priest.