

The High Priest of Our Confession: 2

The Greatness of the Order of Melchizadek

Hebrews 3.1

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus”

Last time we began looking at the Great High Priest of our Confession. His priesthood is like no other – it is not like the Levitical priesthood, with Aaron as High Priest.

The High Priestly ministry of Jesus can be summed up in the one word - Better

This theme runs through the book of Hebrews

- There are no less than 12 occurrences of the word *better* in the book, more than any other book in Holy Scripture.
- This book of Hebrews highlights the differences between the High Priestly ministry of Aaron and that of Jesus.
- The High Priestly ministry of Jesus is:
 - ⤴ of a *better* order (Ch 7)
 - ⤴ under a *better* covenant (Ch 8)
 - ⤴ in a *better* sanctuary (Ch 9)
 - ⤴ because of a *better* sacrifice (Ch 10)

Last time we introduced the ministry of Melchizadek

Melchizadek was king of Salem – translated King of Righteousness and also King of Peace.

He was made like the Son of God – without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life. (Hebrews 7.1-3)

Melchizadek's priestly order is an eternal priesthood.

Jesus is not High Priest after the order of Aaron – He is High Priest after the order of Melchizadek.

“you are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizadek” Hebrews 5.6

The Greatness of the Order of Melchizadek

Hebrews 7.4

“Now consider how great this man was”

In this verse the writer to the Hebrews focuses our thoughts on the greatness of Melchizadek.

If we rightly understand the greatness of Melchizadek it will help us understand the greatness of Jesus our great High Priest.

- The Jews looked up to and honoured Abraham (as their father of their faith and religion) - they made reference to Abraham as their father in response to a challenge from Jesus (**John 8.33, 39, 53, 56-58**)

“(33) They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How *can* You say, 'You will be made free?'.... (39) They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.... (53) Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?" (56-58) Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad." Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."”

- The Jews gloried in Aaron (as High Priest) as the representative of God and their worship of Him. Their worship was based on sacrifice with its limitations.

“Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” (**Exodus 32.1**)

“Then Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw *it*, they shouted and fell on their faces.” (**Leviticus 9.22-24**)

- Then finally, the Jews were strict sticklers for the Law, this was God's covenant with them - they observed it to the last letter (**Matthew 23.23**)

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone”

Jesus used their strict observance to explain that He was the fulfilment

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” (**Matthew 5.17-18**)

jot – smallest letter, dot

tittle – the points of letters, strokes

However, this chapter reveals that Melchizadek:

- is greater than Abraham (vs 4-10)
- he is greater than Aaron (vs 11-14)
- he is greater than the Law (vs 11-19)

Greater than Abraham (v4-10)

- Abraham gave tithes to Melchizadek
 - According to the law the priests received tithes, but here a stranger received tithes from the father of the whole people.
- Melchizadek blessed Abraham
 - the lesser is blessed by the better
 - “Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better” (vs7)

Jesus is our High Priest after the order of Melchizadek – He comes to bring God's blessing to us – He receives tithes from us. Whatever we give to Him, we cannot out-give Him.

Greater than Aaron (v11-14)

- The Aaronic order was only a type of Christ's work upon the earth – that of sacrifice, shed blood, atonement and reconciliation.
- This order was only a shadow of the better order to come – something else was necessary.
- Aaron could only enter the Holy Place once a year, not without blood, and then he was only in the Presence for a very short while.
- A higher priestly order was necessary to open up the way and grant access to heaven's throne – to which we can now come boldly
 - “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” Hebrews 4.16

The Aaronic priesthood were only priests with limited ministrations– Melchizadek was Priest and King, one who ruled and reigned.

Greater than the Law (v11-19)

- The law was given only until the Seed should come
 - “What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator” Galatians 3.19
- The Law and Life are two opposites – the Aaronic order was one of a fleshly commandment, they were mediators of the covenant; but the order of Melchizadek is according to the power of an endless life. This life brings a *better* hope, through which we draw near to God.

Melchizadek was greater than Abraham, Aaron and the Law – Jesus is in the same order.

Jesus came as High Priest so that we could draw near to God – to open up access to all, which only the High Priest enjoyed for a brief moment once a year.

He is High Priest in the power of an endless life.

Jesus is surety of a *better* covenant

- He has an unchangeable priesthood because He continues for ever

- He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him
- He makes intercession for the saints
- He is higher than the heavens
- He offered up Himself.

He is High Priest of our confession