

Hebrews Chapter 7A

When I desire to communicate with clarity there are times when I will use contrasting images or some kind of comparison to get my thought across.

- For instance: If I were to compare a certain person to Abraham Lincoln what qualities might I be highlighting? Honesty and integrity
- If I were to compare my car to a “Lemon” I am sure you would know what I meant.

Well the Word of God often employs contrasts and comparisons to help us understand the divine nature of our great Creator.

Psalm 91:4 (NKJV) **He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.**

- The Lord Jesus spoke in very similar terms as he wept over the city of Jerusalem. Lu 13:34 **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!**
- Using the protecting, comforting image of a mother hen and her baby chicks God communicates his desire to guard and comfort his beloved children.

In order to show the exceeding greatness of our Lord and the supremacy of His New Covenant the writer of Hebrews employs numerous comparisons and contrasts.

- IN Ch. 1 He compares the Lord Jesus to Angels to show his supremacy over the mediators of the Old Covenant.
- In Ch. 3 the Author declares Jesus’ supremacy over Moses when he likened Jesus to a Son ruling over his Father’s house and Moses to a Servant in the house.

Here in Chapter 7 the author uses contrasting images to show the superiority of Christ’s priesthood as it is held up to that of the Levities.

- I should warn you, there is a measure of difficulty in today’s study: Why?

In today’s world the whole concept of a “Priesthood” seems hard to grasp. The human office of Priest has become obscure in our day at times even suspect.

- Today, in most circles, simply mentioning the word, “Priest” automatically points people to the Church of Rome and sadly raises the issue of corruption.
- The contemporary Jewish community is really no help to us. Since the fall of the Temple in 70 AD the work of the Levitical Priests in the O.T. sacrificial system has been dismantled.
- So we really can’t point to any present day examples. We simply must go to the Bible in order to understand the Priestly office.

Before we dig into the text it is important that we understand the Old Testament reveals TWO very different priesthoods.

- First (*in order of appearance*) is the priesthood of Melchizedek which is somewhat obscure (*It's described for us in only 3 verses in Genesis 14 and ONE verse in Psalm 110*)
- Interestingly Psalm 110 was written 1000 years after Genesis 14 and Hebrews 7 was written 1000 years after Psalm 110. So this Melchizedek is only spoken of every 1000 years.
- As we will see the obscurity of Melchizedek's priesthood is by divine design.

Then there is the Levitical priesthood

Originally, according to God's design the firstborn sons of Israel were to be set apart as priests. They were to serve in the Tabernacle as the spiritual leaders of God's chosen people.

- In the original Passover, when God spared the firstborn Jews in Egypt, during the Plague of the Firstborn, He "acquired" the firstborn of Israel for himself and designated them for this special role.

But during the Exodus, while Moses was receiving the Law on Mount Sinai, all of the tribes worked together to create and worship a golden calf.

- The only tribe that did not participate in this shameful act was the tribe of Levi.
- It was at that time when the firstborn sons of all the people lost their special status and God transferred the priesthood to the tribe of Levi.

Numbers 3:12 "**Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine,**"

- Although all priests were Levites, not all Levites were priests. Those who served at the Altar had to be descendants not only of Levi but also of Aaron. The rest of the Levites served in different roles around the Temple.
- A Levitical priest began his service at the age of 25 and served until he reached the age of 50. At that point his ministry came to an end.
- So we see that the Levitical priesthood was designed to be temporary. There are a few more distinguishing factors about the Levitical priesthood:
 - Their priesthood was hereditary. You could not apply for the job you had to be born into it. (*descendent of Aaron*)
 - The Levitical priesthood was National – the sacrifices and intercession were made on behalf of Israel alone

As we consider the High Priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus it is important that we understand that Jesus was NOT born of the tribe of Levi He was born of the tribe of Judah, so he would have been disqualified from serving as a Levitical priest.

BUT Messiah was to serve as a Priest, How then can Jesus be a priest?

- The writer of Hebrews told us in Chapter 5 Jesus was a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5: 1 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. 3 Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. 4 And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; 6 as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

(One of my favorite questions in High School) WHY do we need to know this? Why is it important that Jesus Christ functioned as a qualified, God ordained Priest?

- As a Priest Jesus offered the one and only atoning sacrifice that completely removed sins.
- If his priesthood was not legitimate, if he were disqualified from serving then his sacrifice would be rejected and we would still be in the bondage of our sin.

BUT Jesus was in fact a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. HIS was a:

1. Presidential (Royal) Priesthood compared to a Common Priesthood.
2. Perpetual Priesthood compared to a Temporary Priesthood
3. Personal Priesthood compared to a Hereditary Priesthood
4. Prominent Priesthood that blesses the Inferior

1 Presidential (Royal) Priesthood rather than a Common Priesthood.

Hebrews 7: 1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 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.

- FOUR times in TWO verses Melchizedek is referred to as a king.
 - King of Salem – Literally “King of Peace” (Salem / Shalom)
 - “Salem” refers to the ancient city of Jerusalem, so we believe that Melchizedek actually ruled over God’s special city
 - Melchizedek – (Name literally translated = Melek – King / Zdik - Righteousness therefore he is the King of Righteousness)

So Melchizedek was both King and Priest; (I want U to see) there are other places where the Prophets of God foretold a coming King who would also serve as a Priest.

Zechariah 6: 12 ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. 13 It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor,

and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Psalm 110: 1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." 2 The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! 3 Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

- Because Jesus is a Priest after the order of Melchizedek we have a King of Righteousness who stands before the Father on our behalf.
- Because He has risen from the grave he lives forever to make intercession for us.
- As the Priest of God Most High he stands as our advocate with the Father.
- As the King of Righteousness he rules and reigns in us by the Holy Spirit always working to transform us into his image.
- So we see that Christ's priesthood was presidential now we see it is perpetual.

Perpetual Priesthood rather than a Temporary

Hebrews 7: 3 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.

- Remember, I said earlier that a Levitical priest served from the time that he turned 25 until the day he turned 50. No matter how faithful, no matter how respected his work, he retired from the priesthood at the age of 50.
- This temporary nature of the priesthood is also seen in the record of history. As I read earlier the Levitical priesthood began in the wilderness, at the giving of the Law and it came to an end in 70 AD when the Temple was destroyed.
- On the other hand, there were no time limitations set on Melchizedek's priesthood "resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever."
- This is where we need a little bit of explanation.

When you consider the texts involving Melchizedek it becomes apparent that He was a real king, who served as a real priest in a real city during the time of Abraham. And his real life serves as a unique type of which Jesus Christ is the Antitype.

- When we try to understand the Bible, especially the way that the O.T. relates to the N.T. we encounter what is known as "Typology."

Typology is a method of biblical interpretation whereby an element found in the Old Testament is seen to prefigure or foreshadow one that which is found in the New Testament. The initial image is called the type and the fulfillment is designated the antitype. Examples:

- Moses lifted up the Brazen Serpent in the wilderness for the healing of Israel (Type) – Jesus on the cross (Anti-type) That is explained in John 3

- The Passover Lamb (blood applied to the door post was a type) – Death will Passover all who are covered by the blood of the Lamb.= Sacrifice of Jesus

When it comes to Melchizedek, the Bible contains NO record of his genealogy, He is: **without father or mother or genealogy**

- That doesn't mean that he did not have parents it simply means that they are not recorded for us in Genesis. (many fanciful ideas come from this omission)
 - He is an angel? The Holy Spirit, Preincarnate Christ?
- The omission of His parentage is especially significant when compared to the Levities. They were unable to serve as priests without clear genealogical records.

The Bible contains NO record of Melchizedek's birth or death: **having neither beginning of days nor end of life,**

- IN this way Melchizedek's Priesthood serves as a TYPE a picture, image of the perpetual priesthood of the Lord Jesus.
- The details of Melchizedek's life were purposefully omitted by God in the inspiration of Scripture in order that He could foreshadow the coming priesthood of Christ.
- With this in mind our focus should be on the clarity of Christ and not the obscurity of Melchizedek....

Hebrews 7:23 **The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25 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 permanent nature of Christ's priesthood is a great comfort to me. The very one who bore the wrath of God on the cross for me has been raised from the dead and NOW stands in my defense at the right hand of God.
- Because of HIS ongoing work he is able to save completely, fully and eternally all those who come to God through Jesus.
- OK His priesthood is presidential, it is perpetual and now we see it is personal.

2 Personal Priesthood compared to a Hereditary Priesthood

As I said before the Levitical Priesthood was entirely hereditary, it was passed on to subsequent generations from Aaron. If you had Levi Genes, regardless of your personal qualifications you became part of the priesthood.

- On the other hand, Melchizedek's priesthood was personal, his parentage and his origin were irrelevant in his service to God.
- AGAIN, that doesn't mean he had no father or mother but that His priesthood was not dependent on his family line it is entirely personal, based upon the sovereign choice of God.

- Unlike Melchizedek, the family line of the Lord Jesus is clearly presented in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke but like Melchizedek his parentage had no bearing on his priesthood.
- The priesthoods of Melchizedek (the Type) and Jesus Christ (the antitype) are entirely personal based on God's sovereign plan of redemption. As the writer of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 7:16 (Jesus) **has become a priest, (Like Melchizedek) not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.**

- Christ's priesthood is unchanging in its character, and spiritual in its nature. Because death could not hold Him, Because he lives forever at the right hand of God His priesthood is enduring and perpetual,
- His intercession is unceasing and effective, so in every way it far exceeds the service that was performed by the priests under the Law.

3 Prominent Priesthood that blesses the Inferior

Finally the greatness of this man Melchizedek is shown in the historic narrative recorded for us in the book of Genesis.

- Abraham the great Father of the people of Israel gives to Melchizedek a tithe (1/10) of the spoils of war when he fought against the coalition of Canaanite Kings and Melchizedek turns around and blesses Abraham. (Gen 14)

Hebrews 7:4 **See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! 5 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.**

- When the land of Israel was divided up among all of the tribes, the Levites were left out. They possessed no land. Instead they were to live on the tithe given by their brothers. That way they were free to give all of their efforts to the ministry of the Temple.

6 But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. 8 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. 9 One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, 10 for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

- It simply makes sense that the greater man would be honored by and receive gifts from the lesser man. In this case Melchizedek was honored by and received a tithe from Abraham.
- The text also states that the lesser is blessed by the greater and Melchizedek was the one who blessed Abraham.

- And since all of the tribes of Israel, were yet to come from the loins of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, We can say that Levi (through Abraham) paid tithes to Melchizedek. (*Once again showing the supremacy of Melchizedek*)
- The logic of the author's comparison once again reveals the Excellency, the superiority of the Lord Jesus.
- He is a greater priest, of a greater covenant, offering a greater sacrifice.

The priestly function of Jesus Christ was twofold:

FIRST: HE offered himself as the one and only atoning sacrifice for sin.

- Think about that: Not only is he the priest offering the sacrifice but he is also the sacrificial Lamb.

SECOND: He is our intercessor: Following his resurrection and ascension Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father where he ever lives to make intercession for us.

- The Apostle John tells us this:

1Jo 2:1 **My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**

- At the right hand of God there sits a resurrected, glorified, perfect man.
- A man who is familiar with all of our weaknesses, tempted in every way like us but without sin. HE is our advocate, He stands in our defense and speaks our name before the Father.

Westminster Longer Catechism: Q. 55. How does Christ intercede?

A. Christ intercedes by continually appearing in our human nature before the Father in heaven. There he makes his will clear that his own merit of obedience and sacrifice on earth be applied to all believers; he answers all the accusations against believers and makes sure they have peace of conscience, in spite of their daily failings; and he welcomes them without hesitation to the throne of grace and accepts who they are and what they do for him.

Understanding this text in Hebrews is tedious, BUT Applying it is glorious.

AS a King: Heb 1:3 **He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.**

AS a Priest: **After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,**

APPLY: Because our Priest, once and for all provided complete atonement for sin:

- We can live our lives free from guilt and condemnation.
- We can face every new day with the confidence of faith knowing that regardless of what the day will bring our High Priest is standing before the Father praying for us,

What is it that troubles you this morning?

- Addiction? Anger? Broken heart? Broken relationships? Grief? Infirmity?
- Have you been hurt, abandoned, you think that no one knows that heartache that you feel?
- If you have been born of God, repented of your sin and trusted in Christ for your salvation I want you to know you have a faithful High Priest.

Because Jesus is praying for you I can say with confidence:

Rom 8:28, **we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.**

- Hear the Word of the Lord as we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the Lord's table.

Hebrews 9: 11 **when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.**