

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

STUDY NUMBER TWELVE - Hebrews 7:1-10

TEXT:

v. 1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the defeating of the kings and blessed him,

v. 2 to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything, is first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

v. 3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but having been made like the Son of God, he is remaining a priest for all time.

v. 4 Now be giving careful consideration to how great this man must have been to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the best part of the booty.

v. 5 And those indeed of the sons of Levi, who are receiving the priestly office are having commandment in the Law to be collecting a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.

v. 6 But the one who is not having his descent from them has received a tenth from Abraham, and has blessed the one who is having the promises.

v. 7 But without any dispute the lesser is being blessed by the greater.

v. 8 And in this case mortal men are receiving tithes, but in that case one is receiving them, of whom it is being witnessed that he is living.

v. 9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who is receiving tithes, has paid tithes,

v.10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

INTRODUCTION:

(Politically Correct Bedtime Stories by James Finn Garner)

RAPUNZEL

There once lived an economically disadvantaged tinker and his wife. His lack of material accomplishment is not meant to imply that all tinkers are economically marginalized, or that if they are, they deserve to be so. While archetype of the tinker is generally the whipping person in classical bedtime stories, this particular individual was a tinker by trade and just happened to be economically disadvantaged.

The tinker and his wife lived in a little hovel next to the modest estate of a local witch. From their window, they could see the witch's meticulously kept garden, a nauseating attempt to impose human notions of order onto Nature.

The wife of the tinker was pregnant, and as she gazed at the witch's garden, she began to crave some of the lettuce she saw growing there. She begged the tinker to jump the fence and get some for her. The tinker finally submitted, and at night he jumped the wall and liberated some of the lettuce. But before he could get back, the witch caught him.

Now, this witch was very kindness-impaired. (This is not meant to imply that all, or even some, witches are that way, nor to deny this particular witch her right to express whatever disposition came naturally to her. Far from it, her disposition was without doubt due to many factors of her upbringing and socialization, which, unfortunately, must be omitted here in the interest of brevity.)

As mentioned earlier, the witch was kindness-impaired, and the tinker was extremely frightened. She held him by the scruff of the neck and asked, "Where are you going with my lettuce?"

The tinker might have argued with her over the concept of ownership and stated that the lettuce rightfully "belonged" to anyone who was hungry and had nerve enough to take it. Instead, in a degrading spectacle, he pleaded for mercy. "It was my wife's fault," he cried in a characteristically male manner.

"She is pregnant and has a craving for some of your lovely lettuce. Please spare me. Although a single-parent household is certainly acceptable, please don't kill me and deprive my child of a stable, two-parent family structure."

The witch thought for a moment, then let go of the tinker's neck and disappeared without a word. The tinker gratefully went home with the lettuce. A few months later, and after agonizing pain that a man will never really be able to appreciate, the tinker's wife gave birth to a beautiful, healthy prewoman. They named the baby Rapunzel, after a type of lettuce.

Not long after this, the witch appeared at their door, demanding that they give her the child in return for the witch's having spared the tinker's life in the garden. What could they do? Their powerless station in life had always left them open to exploitation, and this time they felt they had no alternative. They gave Rapunzel to the witch, who sped away.

The witch took the child deep into the woods and imprisoned her in a tall tower, the symbolism of which should be obvious. There Rapunzel grew to womanhood. The tower had no door or stairs, but it did boast a single window at the top. The only way for anyone to get to the window was for Rapunzel to let down her long, luxurious hair and climb it to the top, the symbolism of which should also be obvious.

The witch was Rapunzel's only companion. She would stand at the foot of the tower and shout,

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair,
"That I might climb your golden stair."

Rapunzel obediently did as she was told. Thus for years she let her body be exploited for the transportational needs of another. The witch loved music and taught Rapunzel to sing. They passed many long hours singing together in the tower.

One day a young prince rode near the tower and heard Rapunzel singing. But as he rode closer to find the source of the lovely sound, he spied the witch and hid himself and his equine companion in the trees. He watched as the witch called out to Rapunzel, the hair fell down, and the witch climbed up. Again, he heard the beautiful singing. Later, when the witch finally exited the tower and disappeared in the other direction, the prince came out of the woods and called up:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair,
"That I might climb your golden stair."

The hair cascaded from the window, and he climbed up.

When the prince saw Rapunzel, her greater-than-average physical attractiveness and her long, luxurious hair led him to think, in a typically lookist way, that her personality would also be beautiful. (This is not to imply that all princes judge people solely on their appearance, nor to deny this particular prince his right to make such assumptions. Please see the disclaimers in the paragraphs above.)

The prince said, "Oh, beautiful damsel, I heard you singing as I rode by on my horse. Please sing for me again."

Rapunzel didn't know what to make of this person, since she had never seen a man up close before. He seemed a strange creature--large, hairy in the face, and possessing a strong, musky odor. For reasons she could not explain, Rapunzel found this combination somewhat attractive and opened her mouth to sing.

"Stop right there!" screamed a voice from the window. The witch had returned!

"How . . . how did you get up here?" Rapunzel asked.

"I had an extra set of hair made, in case of emergency," said the witch matter-of-factly. "And this certainly looks like one. Listen to me, Prince! I built this tower to keep Rapunzel away from men like you. I taught her to sing, training her voice for years. She'll stay here and sing for no one but me, because I am the only one who truly loves her."

"We can talk about your codependency problems later," said the prince. "But first let me hear . . . Rapunzel, is it? . . . let me hear Rapunzel sing."

"NO!" screamed the witch. "I'm going to throw you from the tower into the thorn-of-color bushes below so that your eyes will be gouged out and you'll wander the countryside cursing the bad luck for the rest of your life!"

"You may want to reconsider that," said the prince. "I have some friends in the recording industry, you see, who would be very interested in . . . Rapunzel, wasn't it? Different, kind of catchy, I suppose. . . ."

"I knew it! You want to take her from me!"

"No, no, I want to continue to train her, to nurture her . . . as her manager," said the prince. "Then, when the time is right, say a week or two, you can unleash her talent on the world and we can all rake in the cash."

The witch paused for a second to think about this, and her demeanor visibly softened. She and the prince began to discuss record contracts and video deals, as well as possible marketing ideas, including life-like Rapunzel™ dolls with their very own miniature stereo Tune-Towers™.

As Rapunzel watched, her suspicions turned into revulsion. For years, her hair had been exploited for the transportation needs of others. Now they wanted to exploit her voice as well. "So, rapaciousness does not depend solely on gender," she realized with a sigh.

Rapunzel edged her way to the window without being seen. She stepped out and climbed down the second set of hair to the prince's waiting horse. She dislodged the hair and took it with her as she rode off, leaving the witch and the prince to argue about royalties and percentages in their phallus-shaped tower.

Rapunzel rode to the city and rented a room in a building that had real stairs. She later established the non-profit Foundation for the Free Proliferation of Music and cut off her hair for a fund-raising auction. She sang for free in coffee houses and art galleries for the rest of her days, always refusing to exploit for money other people's desires to hear her sing.
pp. 23-30

Bodily Exercise

Do you sometimes feel dog tired at the end of your work day? Maybe you're burning up more calories than you think you are. These are the ways you exercise and the number of calories per hour consumed:

Beating Around the Bush	75	
Jogging the Memory	125	
Jumping to Conclusions	100	
Climbing the Wall	150	
Swallowing Pride	150	
Passing the Buck	25	
Beating Your Own Drum	100	
Throwing Your Weight Around	300	
Turning the Other Cheek	75	
Dragging Your Heels		100
Pushing Your Luck	250	

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator for Windows 1.0d)

Bob Hope has written his own story called, Don't Shoot, It's Only Me. It is an incredible story of all of the people that he has influenced over the years of his career as a comedian.

He tells one story of his relationship to President Johnson when he was going through the Vietnam war crisis and the civil rights crisis:

(Don't Shoot, It's Only Me by Bob Hope and Melville Shavelson)

The President helped every joke with his reaction. I lost a great straight man when he retired, but that wasn't the only reason I was sorry. He'd had a rough time. One day he went over to the Lincoln Memorial and he looked up at Abe and he said, "You had a war; you had a civil rights problem; you had protesters; what can I do?" There was a pause, and finally a voice said, "Don't go to the theater."
p. 263

As we direct our attention to Hebrews 7, we are coming to the HEART OF THIS EPISTLE.

The author has told us several times that he is going to be discussing the crucial SUBJECT of:

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

The PURPOSE of chapter 7 is to show:

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO THAT OF AARON.

We have seen that Christ is superior to:

THE ANGELS,

MOSES (THE LAW-GIVER),

and now He is superior to:

AARON (THE LEVITICAL PRIEST).

DO YOU HAVE AN AGENT?

The sports scene is a dominant part of American society. Name your favorite sport: golf, tennis, hockey, bowling, baseball, football--they all have their high-priced talent. In many instances, athletes are hiring men to represent them in contract negotiations with team owners and managers. These go-betweens are called agents. Their job is to speak in behalf of their clients and to bring about harmony when there is disagreement, usually on matters relating to salary and benefits.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: Vol. IV has this statement to make under the title of "Priesthood":

The institution of the office was God's gracious provision for a people at a distance from Him, who needed one to appear in the Divine presence in their behalf. . . . It was the chief duty of a priest to reconcile men to God by making atonement for their sins; . . .
p. 2439

I believe God entered time and space to make a nonverbal statement. He didn't come to keep us from suffering; He came to suffer as we must suffer. He didn't come just to keep us from being afraid; He came to be afraid as we are afraid. He didn't come just to keep us from dying; He came to die as we must die. He didn't come to keep us from being tempted; He came to be tempted as we are tempted.

--Stephen Brown, If God Is In Charge . . ., p. 26.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator for Windows 1.0d)

(Lifestyle Discipleship: The Challenge of Following Jesus in Today's World by Jim Petersen)

We are a society of individualists and we like it that way. The pages of our history books present a parade of people who with their own two hands fought wars, forged governments, built industries, and made fortunes. It's "the American way." Frank Sinatra was only half joking when he introduced his autobiographical song, "I Did It My Way," as our national anthem.
p. 33

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

Now someone may say, "Wait a minute. I didn't choose Adam to represent me. I want to represent myself in this thing. I'm a pretty good person."

But God says, "If you want to represent yourself, you've got a problem. You've sinned too, just like Adam. You haven't done any better than he did."

We often hear people say, "Oh, if Adam hadn't done it." But the fact is, if Adam hadn't sinned, we would have done it anyway. I like the story of the forester named Sam. Sam chopped down trees every day, and every time the boss came by he would hear Sam saying, "Oh Adam! Ohh Adam! Ohhh Adam!"

One day the boss asked, "Why do you moan, 'Oh Adam!' every time you're out here chopping trees?"

Sam replied, "Because if Adam hadn't sinned, I wouldn't have to do this backbreaking work, which is part of the curse."

So the boss said to Sam, "Come with me." He took Sam to his palatial home with a tennis court, swimming pool, maid, and butler. "All this is yours, Sam," he said. You never have to complain again. I give all of it to you, a perfect environment."

Sam couldn't believe it. The boss said, "Now you can enjoy everything all the time, only don't do one thing. A little box sits on the dining room table. Don't touch it."

Sam went out and played tennis every day, swam, and had his friends over, but after a while he got bored. There was only one thing in that house he didn't know about: that little box on the dining room table. He walked by, checking out the box, but then he reminded himself, "You can't touch it. Don't touch it."

But every day Sam walked by and saw that box. One day, he finally gave in. "I've got to find out what's in that box." He went over and opened the box, and out flew a little moth. He tried to catch it, but he couldn't.

When the boss found out that the box had been tampered with, he sent Sam back out to the forest to chop trees. The next day, the boss heard him groaning, "Oh Sam! Ohh Sam! Ohhh Sam!"

pp. 271-2

I like the story of the woodpecker who was pecking on a tree. Just as he flew away, lightning hit the tree and split it right down the middle. The woodpecker heard the noise, turned back, and said, "Look what I did!"

A lot of us are spiritual woodpeckers. We are like King Nebuchadnezzar, a man we'll run into in a later chapter. We say, "Look at this Babylon I have built. Look at this home I've built. Look at this car I drive. Look at this school I went to. Look at this job I have. Look at what I have done." But the only reason we have anything is that God let lightning strike. So God says, "Brag that you know Me, the God of lovingkindness." p. 22

(Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God by David McCasland)

One night after a meeting, Irene and Oswald were about to leave the church when a woman came rushing up: "Oh, Mr. Chambers," she said, "I feel I must tell you about myself."

Oswald sat with the woman in a quiet corner and Irene resigned herself to a long wait. To her surprise, he was back again in a few minutes.

"That was quick," said Irene as they walked home.

Oswald chuckled. "I asked her if she had ever told God all about herself, and she said she hadn't. So I told her to go home and tell God as honestly as she could, and then see if she still needed or wanted to tell me. If only folk would go to Headquarters!" p. 136

(First Things First by Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, & Rebecca R. Merrill)

We may find it convenient to live with the illusion that circumstances or other people are responsible for the quality of our lives, but the reality is that we are responsible--response-able--for our choices. And while some of these choices may seem small and insignificant at the time, like tiny mountain rivulets that come together to create a mighty river, these decisions join together to move us with increasing force toward our final destiny. Over time, our choices become habits of the heart. And, more than any other factor, these habits of the heart affect our time and the quality of our lives.
pp. 169-70

(The Life of God in the Soul of Man by Rev. Henry Scougal)

Again, the grace is accompanied with a great deal of happiness and tranquillity: the proud and arrogant person is a trouble to all that converse with him, but most of all unto himself: every thing is enough to vex him; but scarce any thing sufficient to content and please him. He is ready to quarrel with every thing that falls out; as if he himself were such a considerable person that God Almighty should do every thing to gratify him, and all the creatures of heaven and earth should wait upon him, and obey his will.
pp. 80-81

(Broken in the Right Place by Alan E. Nelson)

I think men have a harder time with this problem than women. Women are more receptive to following Christ. The women kept their faith during the crucifixion. Women were the first to see that Christ had risen. We men have a more difficult time letting go of our stubbornness and admitting our weaknesses. We would rather drive for miles in circles than ask for directions. We would rather jump right into putting our children's Christmas toys together instead of first reading the instructions. We stammer to admit we were wrong and squeak out, "Will you forgive me?" Our arrogance is why statistics say 90 percent of the men in America do not have close friends, because close friends hold us accountable and require an amount of vulnerability.

p. 157

Most quarrels come from inner conflicts, not external circumstances. Most interpersonal tensions are merely projections of intrapersonal stress. I remember being in northern Oregon following the Mount St. Helens eruption. Powder ash was everywhere. I did not cause the explosion, but I experienced its fallout. Most anger and relational frustrations are the ashes of exploded pride.

p. 158

A sixth trait of mature people is that they learn from the past, live in the present, but aim for the future. Immature people live in the past, complain about the present, and usually avoid the future. Of course, exceptions exist. Some very immature people only live in the fantasy of the future. They talk about their ships coming in while they are presently falling apart because they have not learned from the past.

p. 155

(The Book of Virtues by William J. Bennett)

The Bridge Builder

Will Allen Dromgoole

This poem speaks to each generation's responsibilities to its successors.

An old man, going a lone highway,
 Came, at the evening, cold and gray,
 To a chasm, vast, and deep, and wide,
 Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
 The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
 The sullen stream had no fears for him;
 But he turned, when safe on the other side,
 And built a bridge to span the tide.
 "Old man," said a fellow pilgrim, near,
 "You are wasting strength with building here;
 Your journey will end with the ending day;
 You never again must pass this way;
 You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide--
 Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:
 "Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
 "There followeth after me today
 A youth, whose feet must pass this way.
 This chasm, that has been naught to me,
 To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
 He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
 Good friend, I am building that bridge for him."

p. 223

We come now in our study of the book of Hebrews to the HEART OF THE EPISTLE.

Wiersbe says:

With this chapter, the writer begins to explain the better priesthood of Christ; and he begins with the better order, the order of Melchizedek (Gen. 14).

Jesus Christ is both King and Priest, and His throne is a throne of grace (4:16). As King, He can control circumstances around you; as Priest, He can change attitudes within you. You will experience righteousness and peace as you yield to Him (v. 2; Pss. 72:7; 85:9-10; Isa. 32:17).
pp. 817-18

(With the Word: A Devotional Commentary)

Stedman makes the suggestion at the outset of this particular chapter:

Perhaps we shall be greatly helped to understand if we view this incident as a movie depicting the life of Christ.
p. 99

Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ as our great high Priest, Hession in his book From Shadow to Substance says:

He is never going to fall down on the job the Father has given Him to do, that of taking care of the interests of the feeblest saints before His face. No matter how failing they may feel themselves to be, no matter how disappointed in themselves they may become, they will never fail to find a "Friend at court" to represent them, someone to whom they can go in every time of need just as they are. The Father has arranged it that way. My peace with God, then, does not depend on my faithfulness to God; it does not even depend on Christ's faithfulness to me, but rather on Christ's faithfulness to Him who has appointed Him for me. What a pillow to rest the head on!
p. 58

MacArthur reminds us of the fact that Melchizedek is a type of Christ:

In biblical study, a type refers to an Old Testament person, practice, or ceremony that has a counterpart, an antitype, in the New Testament. In that sense types are predictive. The type pictures, or prefigures, the antitype. The type, though it is historical, real, and of God, is nonetheless imperfect and temporary. The antitype, on the other hand, is perfect and eternal. The study of types and antitypes is called, as one might expect, typology.

The bronze serpent that God commanded Moses to set on a standard (Num. 21:8), for example, was a type of Christ's being lifted up on the cross (John 3:14). The sacrificial lamb was a type of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who was sacrificed for the sins of the world (John 1:29; Rev. 5:6, 8; etc.).
pp. 171-2

Chapter 7 is the focal point of Hebrews. It concerns the central, the most important, part of Judaism--the priesthood. No sacrifices could be made except by the priest and no forgiveness of sins could be had apart from the sacrifices. Obedience to the law was exceedingly important, but the offering of sacrifices was even more important. And the priesthood was essential for offering them. Consequently, the priesthood was exalted in Judaism.
p. 172

Lane says:

The writer's main concern in 7:1-28 is to delineate the nature of Jesus' priestly office and prove that it is superior to the Levitical priesthood.
p. 163

Phillips tells us:

Thus, the writer finishes his digression and brings us back to Melchizedek. He is now ready to continue his treatise. He has shown that Jesus is a real Priest, as evidenced by His name, His nearness, and His nature. He has shown us that Jesus is a rightful Priest, chosen of God and with a tremendous challenge to men. Now he is going to show that Jesus is a royal Priest as well.
p. 98

Pink makes this point:

In 2:17 the apostle announced that the Lord Jesus is "a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God", while in 3:1 he calls on those who are partakers of the heavenly calling to "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession". Having shown in chapters 3 and 4 the superiority of Christianity's Apostle over Judaism's, [that is], Moses, whose work was completed by Joshua, Paul then declared that "We have a great High Priest, that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God", an High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, seeing that He also was tempted in all points like us (in His spirit, His soul, and His body), sin excepted; for which reason we are bidden to "Come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (4:14-16).
p. 356

Lenski says:

The readers, former Jews who were now thinking of returning to Judaism, are here confronted with their great forefather Abraham and are shown how he accepted the royal priest Melchizedek long before Levi and Aaron were born and the Aaronitic high priesthood came into existence. The readers want to be true sons of Abraham, yea, are thinking of returning to Judaism for that very reason. Well, let them look at Abraham and at the one priest to whom Abraham bowed. Let them consider what God said through David regarding this royal priest and regarding the Messiah-Christ who is typified by Melchizedek.
p. 208

Griffith Thomas prepares us for this study the best when he says:

This is the central chapter in the Epistle. At last the Priesthood of Christ is taken up with thoroughness. Was His priesthood a true one? This was the question which necessarily concerned and also perplexed the Jewish believer. It is difficult, if not impossible, for us today to understand the tenacity with which the Jews clung to their ideas of priesthood. This is shown by the way in which the Epistle deals with the subject, for only something very strong and convincing could suffice to remove and set aside the old priesthood which was at the very heart of Judaism. Christ is here shown to be a true priest, though not after the order of Aaron, but after another order, that of Melchizedek. This new idea has been prepared for, by three references to the priesthood of Melchizedek (5:6, 10; 6:20). Never before in the New Testament had Christ been called a Priest, though priestly functions as Redeemer are associated with Him in many places.
p. 81

Richards points out:

In chapters 4, 5, and 6 of Hebrews, the writer has held Jesus up as a High Priest. Why? Why build on the concept of the priesthood?

By this time it should be clear that the writer of Hebrews thinks of "religion" in terms of relationship with God. Some people think of religion as morality. "He's the most Christian man I know" is something a friend of mine once said, meaning simply, "He behaves in a moral and decent, or even benevolent way."

To others religion is primarily a philosophy of life, a belief system, a way of looking at man and the universe. Looking back into the Old Testament, the writer of the Book of Hebrews goes far beyond these human conceptions. Religion, he implies, is essentially concerned with the relationship between God and man. Its purpose is first of all to open the door of fellowship between them, and to help man be at home with God.

The Old Testament demonstrates, as do history and our individual experiences, that man is not at home with God by nature. In fact, sin has erected a barrier between God and man. In the days of Moses, Law was introduced to make this barrier plainly visible.

It's important for us to realize that this was the primary function of Law. Law never brought anyone to salvation. It was never intended to. What Law did, first of all, was to provide a standard against which actions might be measured. It was a mirror; looking at the holy Law God gave, one could see both God's perfect character and man's warped character. Law was not the door that opened up relationship with God. Law was the sign that shouted our need for such a door.

With the Law that brought condemnation, God immediately gave the priesthood and the sacrificial system. The Law was always a pointer that directed men to approach God with sacrifice. The priesthood and the sacrifices offered the avenue to relationship, the door through which the Old Testament believer entered God's presence.
pp. 69-70

In looking for a priesthood able to guarantee a permanent relationship with God, the writer looks away from the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Testament to a better one.
p. 71

Stepping into God's courtroom at the end of our lives, our only hope is a lawyer, a representative, a court-appointed attorney. We are guilty and there is no hope unless there is someone to intervene.

Job makes this very clear in the midst of all of his sufferings.

In Job 9:32, 33 he says:

He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both,

1 John 2:1, 2

My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

1 Timothy 2:5

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

Oh, how this study urges and behooves us to recognize the fact that in our arrogance we cannot represent ourselves in court. We are guilty! We are doomed for eternity unless we have someone to intervene. Someone to represent us in God's high and holy court. Do not ever live with the delusion or the arrogant thought that you can represent yourself and that the things you have done are going to be acceptable in that high court.

Luke 18:9-14

And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Hewitt summarizes the sections that are now before us in this way:

Christ's superiority over the three great aspects of the ritual system--priesthood, ministry and sacrifice--is now discussed. His priesthood is greater than the Aaronic, for it is after the order of Melchisedec according to a divine oath which has never been revoked (vii). His ministry is superior, for it is spiritual and eternal, not earthly and temporary (viii-ix). His sacrifice is also superior, for it was one sacrifice, not many, offered once for all time, not often (x. 1-18).

p. 115

The characteristics of Melchisedec and his superiority over Abraham are presented in verses 1-3. This is followed by a discussion on the fourfold superiority of the Melchisedec priesthood over the Aaronic (4-10).

p. 115

Barclay says:

We must begin by understanding the general position from which the writer to the Hebrews starts. He starts with the basic idea that religion is access to God. The essence of religion, to the writer to the Hebrews, is that it takes a man, without fear and without barriers, into the presence of God.

p. 68

The Latin word for priest is pontifex which means a bridge-builder; the priest was a man whose function it was to build a bridge between men and God. How? By means of the sacrificial system. A man broke the law; his fellowship with God was interrupted and his access to God was barred; by the offering of the correct sacrifice that breach of the law was atoned for; the fellowship was restored and the barrier was removed. That was the theory of the matter.

p. 68

G. Campbell Morgan says:

All the symbolism is that of the Hebrew nation, religion, and worship. The function of one standing within the veil is necessarily that of priesthood. To this subject the writer of this letter returned at this point. Aaron had passed within the veil on the great day of Atonement through the running years. Within, he acted as a priest, and having fulfilled his function, passed out again. Jesus entered within the veil to remain, but as He did so, the veil was rent in twain, thus leaving the way open for others to enter in.

p. 80

J. Vernon McGee says:

You and I are living in the day of Christ's priesthood.

p. 551

Westcott says:

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST AS ABSOLUTE HIGH-PRIEST SHADOWED FORTH BY MELCHIZEDEK (c. vii.).

The last words of the sixth chapter offered a twofold thought, which the writer of the Epistle now works out in detail, going back, after the solemn digression of c. vi., to the subject announced in c. v. 10. The priestly office of Christ is after the order of Melchizedek (1); and after this order He is High-priest for ever (2).

The main object of the section is to shew that there were in the O.T. from the first indications of a higher order of Divine Service than that which was established by the Mosaic Law; and that these found a perfect realisation in Christ, a Son, perfected for evermore.

p. 170

Lange in his commentary says:

The appearance and work of Jesus Christ have been pointed out to us in the Old Testament not only by words of prophecy, but also by types and figures alike in persons and acts.--We understand the history of the world, only as we conceive it from the point of view of sacred history, and interpret it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

p. 129

English says:

Here, however, the writer of the Hebrews Epistle selects a few verses from Genesis having to do with a scarcely known character, Melchisedec, and demonstrates, by his position and calling, the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus, the Son of God, to the Levitical priesthood.

pp. 183-4

DeHaan says:

We come now to the three chapters on the High Priest and His work in behalf of His people. First our attention is called to the mysterious king-priest, Melchisedec.
p. 113

Wiersbe has this further comment:

Regardless of what approach you take to the exhortation in this section, be sure to lay hold of the main lesson: believers must go on to maturity, and God has made it possible for us to do so. If we start to drift from the Word (2:1-4), then we will also start to doubt the Word (3:7-4:13). Before long, we will get dull toward the Word (5:11-6:20) and become lazy believers. The best way to keep from drifting is--to lay hold of the anchor!

Anchored heavenward! How much more secure can you be?
p. 70

(Be Confident: How to Keep Your Balance in the Day We Live)

The Jewish nation was accustomed to the priesthood of the tribe of Levi. This tribe was chosen by God to serve in the tabernacle (Ex. 29; Num. 18). Aaron was the first high priest, appointed by God. In spite of their many failures, the priests had served God for centuries; but now the writer has affirmed that their priesthood has ended!
p. 72

Listen to MOSES AFTER THE GOLDEN CALF EXPERIENCE:

Exodus 32:30-32

The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." So Moses went back to the Lord and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

Let us go back now in this epistle and pick up some of these great verses that have been scattered through these
1ST 6 CHAPTERS that are REFERENCES TO CHRIST'S FUNCTION AS A PRIEST:

Hebrews 1:3

who being the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature (real being), and who is bearing up all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Hebrews 2:17, 18

Therefore, He was obligated to be made like His brethren in all things, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 3:1, 2

Therefore, holy brethren, sharing in a heavenly calling, contemplate Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. Who is faithful to the One who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Since then we are having a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us be holding fast our confession.

For we are not having a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore be drawing near with confidence to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 5:1-6, 10

For every high priest when he is taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order that he may continually be offering both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who is able to be dealing gently with those who are ignorant and those who are being led astray, since he himself also is continually subject to weakness; and because of it he is under a moral obligation to be offering sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. And no one is taking the honor to himself, but when he is called by God [he responds to it], even as also Aaron. So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; just as He is saying also in another passage, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

As we begin our study of Hebrews 7, let us hear again those 2 WONDERFUL VERSES that concluded our last study:

Hebrews 6:19, 20

This hope we are having as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and secure and one which is entering within the veil, where Jesus entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Christ our High-Priest is a forerunner:

1.HE GOES TO PREPARE THE WAY

2.HE EXPECTS OTHERS TO FOLLOW

Let us begin our meditation by thinking of Psalms 33:22:

May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord,
even as we put our hope in you.

v. 1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the defeating of the kings and blessed him,

The word "FOR" takes us back to chapter 6:20 that we have just read speaking of the "order of Melchizedek." Now he defines further what he means in this section.

The Lord Jesus did not belong to the tribe of Levi or to the Aaronic priesthood because He was of the tribe of Judah, a royal line.

Now we come to this mysterious personality who flies across the pages of Scripture in brevity.

Deuteronomy 29:29

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.

The REFERENCES TO MELCHIZEDEK are first of all:

1. the HISTORICAL in Genesis 14:18-20
- 2.the PROPHETICAL in Psalms 110:4
- 3.the DOCTRINAL references are here in Hebrews, chapter 7 and back in 5:5, 6, 10 and then in 6:20.

Genesis 14:17-20

After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

To begin with, the writer set forth the personal greatness of the Old Testament figure . . . as a fit prototype for Christ Himself. . . . Melchizedek's name and title suggest the messianic attributes of **righteousness** and **peace**.
p. 797

Abram and Lot had separated in Genesis 13. Lot had chosen the well-watered plains of Jordan and moved his family and possessions, pitching his tents near Sodom.

There was a war on the plains and Genesis 14:11, 12 says:

The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.

Word gets back to Abram by one of the escapees from the conflict.

Genesis 14:14-16 tells us:

When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

I love the way Hughes compares this action on the part of Abram:

On June 27, 1976 armed operatives for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine surprised the twelve crew members of an Air France jet liner and its ninety-one passengers, hijacking it to a destination unknown. The plane was tracked heading for Central Africa, where indeed it did land under the congenial auspices of Ugandan President Idi Amin. And there it remained apparently secure at Entebbe Airport where the hijackers spent the next seven days preparing for their next move. The hijackers were, by all estimations, in the driver's seat.

However, 2,500 miles away in Tel Aviv, three Israeli C-130 Hercules transports secretly boarded a deadly force of Israeli commandos, who within hours attacked Entebbe Airport under cover of darkness. In less than sixty minutes the commandos rushed the old terminal, gunned down the hijackers, and rescued 110 of the 113 hostages. The next day, July 4, Israel's Premier Yitzhak Rabin triumphantly declared the mission "will become a legend," which it surely has!¹ Israel's resolve and stealth in liberating her people is admired by her friends and begrudged by her enemies.

Actually, Israel's resolve is nothing new, because the same quality can be traced all the way back to the very beginning of the Hebrew nation in the prowess of their father Abraham. The kidnappers in his day were a coalition of four Canaanite kings headed by King Kedorlaomer who attacked the Transjordan, defeating the city-states of Sodom and her neighbors and carrying off a large number of hostages, including Abraham's nephew Lot (cf. Genesis 14:5-12).

Undaunted, Abraham recruited "318 trained men" (v. 4)--protocommandos!--from his own household and took off in hot pursuit--until he closed in on the kidnappers somewhere close to Damascus. And there, under the cover of night, he deployed his small forces in a surprise attack. His troops, riding bawling camels and slaving horses, bore down on the hijackers and their hostages. Deadly arrows flew in the night, and bloody swords were raised gleaming in the dusty moonlight--and the four kings were put to flight.

The Genesis account gives this Entebbe-like summary of Abraham's

success: "He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people" (v. 16). Abraham could be formidable. It was not wise to mess with father Abraham!

So when Abraham returned to his home after the slaughter of the kings he was a hero, at the pinnacle of martial success. Can you see him proudly astride his lumbering camel, smeared with the dirt and blood of battle, leading his 318 proud men plus Lot and all the captives and all the plunder through Jerusalem? If so, you have the "feel" necessary to begin to appreciate Abraham's strange, mystic encounter with a shadowy figure of immense grandeur--Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem.

1. Facts on File: World News Digest with Index, Vol. 36, No. 1861, July 10, 1976 (New York: Facts on File), pp. 485, 486.
pp. 183-4

There are 2 THINGS that are said about Melchizedek here in verse 1:

1. He is the "KING OF SALEM"
2. He is a "PRIEST OF THE MOST HIGH GOD"

FIRST OF ALL, he is a "KING" and he is the "KING OF SALEM" or Jerusalem.

SECONDLY, he is introduced as a "PRIEST." He is not a priest just for Israel, he is a "PRIEST OF THE MOST HIGH GOD."

All of this precedes the formation and the existence of the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood under the Law.

Wiersbe points out:

We have noted already that, in the Old Testament economy, the throne and the altar were separated. Those persons who attempted to invade the priests' office were judged by God.
p. 72

(Be Confident: How to Keep Your Balance in the Day We Live)

DeHaan says:

Various guesses have been made as to the identity of this mysterious character. Some believe he was a Christophany, a corporeal appearing of Jesus Himself. Others believe he was some supernatural messenger; others that he was Shem, the son of Noah, or some mighty angel, or some other person who was a type of the priesthood of Christ. We need not speculate, for this man was either an appearing of Jesus Himself in human form, or a type of the Lord.
p. 113

Here in Hebrews he is mentioned to assure us that we can have victory and avoid failing to achieve God's best for us, because we have a High Priest who lives for the purpose of giving us the victory.
p. 113

Westcott summarizes these 10 verses before us by saying:

He marks (a) the characteristics of Melchizedek (1-3); and then (b) determines the relation of Melchizedek to the Levitical priesthood (4-10); . . .
p. 170

G. Campbell Morgan, speaking about Melchizedek, says:

All this is arresting and suggestive. Something took place, the record of which we are given. A thousand years passed, and a singer referred to this event. Another thousand years passed, and the One appeared to Whom reference was made. And then the writer of this letter quotes from the Psalm, and thus referred to the history.
p. 83

Morgan continues by saying:

The purpose of the writer, therefore, was that of showing the difference between the Priesthood of the Son and every other. Those referred to were divinely ordained, divinely instituted; but in themselves they could not meet human need. Such need is completely met in the Priesthood of the Son.
p. 86

Lenski says:

"This Melchizedek"==the man whom I have (6:20) so significantly brought to your attention for the third time (5:6, 10).
p. 209

Pink says:

At the close of chapter 6 the Holy Spirit directs our gaze into the Holiest, whither for us the Forerunner hath entered, even Jesus our great High Priest. He now proceeds to emphasise the dignity of His priesthood, showing that it is accompanied by royal majesty, that it is intransmissible, and that it abideth forever.

p. 360

Phillips says:

The writer begins by discussing Melchizedek himself to underline the undoubted lordship of Christ as Priest. For Melchizedek's priesthood was so powerful, so overwhelming, so indisputable, that Abraham acknowledged it instantly, completely, and without question.

p. 99

MacArthur agrees when he says:

Hebrews 7:1-10 first presents, then proves, the superiorities of Melchizedek's priesthood over that of the Levitical-Aaronic.

p. 173

Bruce says:

According to that narrative (which belongs, as archaeological evidence indicates, to the Middle Bronze Age), Chedorlaomer, an Elamite king, with three allied rulers, raided Transjordan and the Negeb, defeated the city-states of the "circuit of Jordan"--Sodom and her neighbors--and carried off a large number of captives, including Lot, Abraham's nephew. When news of this came to Abraham at Mamre, near Hebron, he armed his own retainers, enlisted the aid of his neighbors, and set off in pursuit of the invaders. He overtook them near Damascus, launched a surprise attack on them, put them to flight, and recovered the captives and the plunder. On his homeward progress he was met by the grateful king of Sodom, who proposed that Abraham should return the captives to him but retain the material plunder as his proper spoils of war. Abraham declined to retain anything because of an oath he had just sworn to "God Most High, maker of heaven and earth." p. 157

Delitzsch says:

The writer first compresses into one single compact sentence (vers. 1-3) everything, both in the utterances and in the very silence of holy Scripture, which may be regarded as characteristic of the person of Melchizedek, so as to convey a vivid impression of his mysteriously significant and unique personality. p. 327

DeHaan says:

As Melchisedec brought forth bread and wine to strengthen Abraham, so He has given us the Lord's Supper as the memorial of His victorious death and resurrection. p. 115

(Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God by David McCasland)

June 17--Cincinnati:

The love of this people is great, mighty. I have a greatly increased prayer list. I believe more and more that this is His way--intercessory prayer, this is the way He makes us broken bread and poured out wine for other people.

p. 166

"FOR THIS MELCHIZEDEK, KING OF SALEM, PRIEST OF THE MOST HIGH GOD, WHO MET ABRAHAM AS HE WAS RETURNING FROM THE DEFEATING OF THE KINGS"

Let us remind ourselves of what we learned of ABRAHAM back in Hebrews 6:13-15:

For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Blessing, I will bless you, and multiplying, I will multiply you." And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

James 2:23

and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.

A talented friend of mine, Jennifer, learned this difference after spending several years in a wheelchair. One day she tearfully prayed, "Lord, I could have done so much for You, if only I could have been healthy." God's response was inaudible but clear: "Many people work for Me, but very few are willing to be My friend."

(From Our Daily Bread, March 17, 1995)

Melchizedek met Abraham and blessed him. Notice it is BLESSING not judgment that is the focus of his ministry.

Genesis 47:7, 8

Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, Pharaoh asked him, "How old are you?"

IN SUMMARY of our 1st verse:

we have met Melchizedek,

he is a "KING" and a "PRIEST,"

he has met Abraham as he returned from his battle victorious

and he blessed him.

v. 2 to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything, is first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

Owen says:

That is typically, he was king of righteousness, and king of peace; to be the king of righteousness and peace is to be the dispenser of righteousness and peace to others. Thus it was with Melchisedec as a type of Jesus Christ.
p. 113

The record of Abraham's action is given first. He responds by giving a tithe to Melchizedek.

Then the writer focuses on the name:

MELCHIZEDEK

and the fact that he is the

"KING OF SALEM."

The name MELCHIZEDEK means "KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS."

He lives in Jerusalem and he is the "KING OF SALEM, WHICH IS [the] KING OF PEACE."

This takes us back to Hebrews 1:8, 9:

But with reference to the Son He is saying, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His Kingdom. You loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, anointed you, with the oil of gladness above your companions."

Hebrews 12:10, 11

For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

James 3:17, 18

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Jeremiah 23:6

In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness.

It is good for us to notice that:

RIGHTEOUSNESS PRECEDES PEACE.

It is "RIGHTEOUSNESS" first, and then "PEACE."

The Scriptures make it clear that:

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

The wicked are like the troubled sea whose waves cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace to them.

Isaiah 32:17

The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.

Psalm 85:10

Love and faithfulness meet together;
 righteousness and peace kiss each other.

The word "KING" is mentioned 3 TIMES here in verse 2.

It reminds me of that wonderful little piece put together by a Negro minister called:

"My King Is"

The Bible says my King is a seven way King.
 He's the King of the Jews, that's a Racial King.
 He's the King of Israel, that's a National King.
 He's the King of Righteousness.
 He's the King of the Ages.
 He's the King of Heaven.
 He's the King of Glory.
 He's the King of Kings.
 And He's the Lord of Lords.

That's my King.
 Well, . . . I wonder . . . do you know Him?

David said the Heavens declare the Glory of God
 And the firmament showeth His handy work.

My King is a sovereign King,
 No means of measure can define His limitless Love.
 No far seeing telescope can bring into visibility
 The coastline of His shoulder supplies.
 No barrier can hinder Him from pouring out His blessings.
 He's enduringly strong.
 He's entirely sincere.
 He's eternally steadfast.
 He's immorally graceful.
 He's imperially powerful.
 He's impartially merciful.

Do you know Him?

He's the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizon of this world.
 He's God's Son.
 He's a sinner's Savior.

He's a centerpiece of civilization.
 He stands in the solitude of Himself.
 He's August and He's unique.
 He's unparalleled, He's unprecedented.
 He's the loftiest idea in literature.
 He's the Highest personality in philosophy.
 He is the supreme problem in high criticism.
 He's the fundamental doctrine of true theology.
 He is the corner, the necessity for Spiritual religion
 He's the miracle of the age.
 Yes He is.
 He's the superlative of everything good that should choose to call Him.
 He's the only one qualified to be an all sufficient Savior.
 I wonder if you know Him today.
 He supplies strength for the weak.
 He's available for the tempted and the tried.
 He sympathizes and He saves.
 He strengthens and sustains.
 He guards and He guides.
 He heals the sick.
 He cleansed the lepers.
 He forgives sinners.
 He discharges debtors.
 He delivers the captives.
 He defends the feeble.
 He blesses the young.
 He serves the unfortunate.
 He regard the age, and He rewards the diligent.
 And He beautifies the meek.
 I wonder if you know Him?

Well, this is my King.
 He's the key to knowledge.
 He's the well-spring of wisdom.
 He's the doorway of deliverance.
 He's the pathway of peace.
 He's the roadway of righteousness.
 He's the highway of Holiness.
 He's the gateway of Glory.
 Do you know Him?

Well, His office is manifold.
 His promise is sure.
 His life is matchless.
 His goodness is limitless.
 His mercy is everlasting.
 His love never changes.
 His word is enough.

His grace is sufficient.
 His reign is righteous.
 And His yoke is easy and His burden is lighter.
 I wish I could describe Him to you!
 But He's indescribable.
 He's incomprehensible.
 He's invincible.
 He's irresistible.

Well, you can't get Him out of your mind.
 You can't get Him off of your hands.
 You can't out live Him.
 And You can't live without Him.

Well, the Pharisees couldn't stand Him.
 But they found out they couldn't stop Him.
 Pilot [sic] couldn't find any fault in Him.
 The witnesses couldn't get their testimonies to agree.
 Herod couldn't kill Him.
 Death couldn't handle Him.
 And the grave couldn't hold Him.

That's My King!
 That's My King!

And thine is the Kingdom and The Power and The Glory for ever and
 ever, and ever, and ever . . . How long is that? And ever, and ever. And
 when you get through with all the forevers Then AMEN!

Good God Almighty,
 AMEN.

Jesus Christ has gone back to heaven, and He has entered within the veil.
 He has completed the sacrifice, and He functions there as our High Priest
 before God the Father.

There is a day soon coming, however, that He is going to assume the reins of leadership and He will indeed reign just as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 9:6, 7:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Revelation 19:6, 7

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

Revelation 19:16

And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Ephesians 2:13, 14

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

IS HE YOUR PEACE TODAY?

Romans 5:1, 2

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Stedman raises the question:

What does his present ministry make possible in your life right now? He can give you only what He is, that is all. It takes Christ to be a Christian! We need what He is in order to be what He was, and what He is is revealed in His names. He is, first of all, king of righteousness; that is, He is the One who has the secret of right conduct, the principle, the divine program which results in proper behavior. He is the king of that, He controls it. He is also the king of peace. May I use the equivalent modern term for that phrase? Mental health! He is the king of mental health, the king of peace. He holds in His hand the secret of rest, of inner calm, of that adequacy within that gives poise, power and purpose to human life.

p. 101

Macaulay uses one of George F. Handel's hymns at this point:

Rejoice, the Lord is King!
 Your Lord and King adore;
 Ye saints, give thanks and sing
 And triumph evermore:
 Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
 Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.

Jesus, the Saviour, reigns,
 The God of truth and love;
 When He had purged our stains,
 He took His seat above:
 Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
 Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.

George F. Handel

p. 92

He then has these words:

Indeed, the measure of our obedience to His reign of righteousness is the measure of His peace in our hearts, till, every controversy settled, all resistance broken, and the King of peace ruling in our hearts with undisputed sway, we pursue our journey with the song:

Like a river, glorious is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious in its bright increase;
Perfect, yet it floweth fuller every day,
Perfect, yet it groweth deeper all the way.
Frances Havergal

p. 94

v. 3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but having been made like the Son of God, he is remaining a priest for all time.

As our writer concludes his description of Melchizedek, he has several things to say.

First of all, he says 3 THINGS. Melchizedek was:

1. "WITHOUT FATHER"
2. "WITHOUT MOTHER"
3. "WITHOUT GENEALOGY"

This passage reminds me of Philippians 3:4-7:

although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Genealogies were a very important issue and yet this is not something to be mentioned here about Melchizedek.

Whereas our verse says the first 3 THINGS, he is:

1. "WITHOUT FATHER"
2. "WITHOUT MOTHER"
3. "WITHOUT GENEALOGY"

it also continues to say 2 MORE THINGS:

4. "HAVING NEITHER BEGINNING OF DAYS"
5. "NOR END OF LIFE"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

In saying this, the author is often taken to mean that the silence of the inspired record presents Melchizedek as typologically **like the Son of God**. But though this is possibly true, the statements do not sound like it, particularly the assertion that Melchizedek **remains a priest forever**. The word "forever" occurs only in Hebrews (here and in 10:12, 14) and means "continuously" or "uninterruptedly."

It seems more natural that the author meant that Melchizedek belonged to an order in which there was no end to the priesthood of those engaged in it.
p. 798

We will note down in verse 8:

"and in this case mortal men are receiving tithes, but in that case one is receiving them, of whom it is being witnessed that he is living."

He lives, and so there is no end to his priestly reign.

Melchizedek may have been an ANGELIC BEING who reigned for a time at Salem. Without beginning he had pretemporal origin. This would not elevate him to the same level as the Son of God (1:5-14).

There is indeed evidence at Qumran that Melchizedek was regarded as an angelic personage. If this is the case the Son of God is the High Priest in an order in which Melchizedek is simply a priest.

A. T. Robertson says:

Melchizedek stands alone. He is not to be understood as a miraculous being without birth or death. Melchizedek has been made more mysterious than he is by reading into this interpretation what is not there.
p. 381

John MacArthur says:

That Melchizedek is said to have been **without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life** does not mean that he came from nowhere. It simply means that in the Old Testament record nothing is said of his parents or origin.

It is interesting that the single Greek word (agenealog tos) translated without genealogy is found nowhere else in Scripture--in fact nowhere else in Greek literature. The reason, no doubt, is that it would have had no use because it would have made no sense. Everyone has a genealogy, whether he can trace it or not.
p. 177

Individually, a priest served only from the time he was 25 until he was 50. No priest, no matter how faithful, could serve more than 25 years. Collectively, the priesthood was also temporary. It began in the wilderness, when the covenant with Moses was made and the law was given. It ended when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. The Levitical priesthood was for the Old Covenant and only for the Old Covenant, the covenant of law.
p. 178

Lenski points out:

The description advances beyond what is stated in Genesis in so many words to what appears in Genesis regarding this priest: he lacked everything that a Jewish priest had to have. He was "without father, without mother, without genealogical line, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." Every Aaronitic priest had to be able to trace and to establish his genealogy or be excluded from the priesthood (Ezra 7:63, 64); he was restricted even as to the wife he might marry, thus even the female line of descent (Ezek. 44:22; Lev. 21:7) was safeguarded.
p. 212

Westcott observes:

Melchizedek's typical character is shewn to be indicated positively by what is said of him, and negatively by what is not said.

Thus three distinct features are noted in which Melchizedek points to Christ. (1) His name and title: King of Righteousness and King of Peace. (2) His isolation from all priestly descent, as holding his priesthood himself alone. (3) The absence of all record of his birth and death.
p. 171

Larry Richards says:

The writer merely notes that since no birth or death is recorded, so far as Scripture is concerned we see him only as living. How appropriate, for Jesus, whom Melchizedek foreshadows, can only be seen as living too.
p. 72

Griffith Thomas says:

Taking the story of Genesis by itself, Melchizedek's priesthood is seen to be based on what he was, not on any right which he inherited.
p. 83

J. Vernon McGee explains:

Melchizedek is in the Book of Genesis, a book that gives pedigrees--it tells us that Adam begat so-and-so, and so-and-so begat so-and-so, Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob and Esau, and you follow the genealogies on down--it is a book of the families. Yet in this book that gives the genealogies, Melchizedek just walks out onto the pages of Scripture, out of nowhere, then he walks off the pages of Scripture, and we do not see him anymore. Why did God leave out the genealogy of Melchizedek? Because Melchizedek was to be a type of the Lord Jesus in His priesthood.
p. 552

English says:

Observe Melchisedec's foreshadowing of Christ. He is said to be (1) a king-priest, one in whom the divinely ordained roles are combined; (2) righteousness and peace meet each other in him (cf. Psalms 85:10); (3) his priesthood is greater than Abraham's and, consequently, super-Aaronic; and (4) it is an everlasting priesthood, predating Abraham's, without beginning and allowing no successor, without ending, for he "abideth a priest continually."
pp. 189-90

Hughes says:

Some have inferred from these words that Melchizedek must have been an angel who took on human form for Abraham, or even a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus himself. But such interpretations are unnecessary, because the writer is simply using a rabbinical method of interpretation from silence. His point is that the Genesis account does not mention Melchizedek's parents or genealogy or when he was born or died, thereby providing a fitting type of what would be fleshed out in the qualifications of Christ.²

2.F. F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 137, 138.
p. 186

Macaulay says:

But I believe my great High Priest of the order of Melchisedec when He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

He cannot fail, for He is God;
He cannot fail--He's pledged His word.
He cannot fail, He'll see you through;
He cannot fail, He'll answer you.

p. 96

F. B. Meyer says:

I will remember their sins and iniquities no more.--As a score is forgotten when blotted from a slate, so shall sin be as if obliterated from the memory of God. It will be forgotten, as a debt paid years ago. It will be so entirely put out of mind, that it shall be as if it had never been. If sought for, not found. The handwriting nailed through. The stone dropped into ocean depths. The cloud absorbed by the summer [h]eat, as it fades from the deep blue sky. Joseph's brethren, in their last approach to Joseph, after their father's death, betrayed a fear, that though his resentment was cloked, it was not thoroughly relinquished. But their fears were entirely groundless. They discovered that the offense had utterly passed from their brother's thought, "and Joseph wept when they spake unto him." In some such way as this God ceases to consider our sins, and grieves if we do not believe the thoroughness of his abundant pardon.
p. 32

Packer draws this application from the scene in Isaiah 6:

The two wings covering each angel's face is a gesture that expresses reverent restraint in God's presence. We should not pry into his secrets. We are to be content to live with what he has told us. Reverence excludes speculation about things that God has not mentioned in His Word--we must be content not to know what Scripture does not tell us.

--J. I. Packer, Hot Tub Religion, p. 56.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator for Windows 1.0d)

(The Message: Psalms by Eugene H. Peterson)

Psalm 31

You're my cave to hide in,
 my cliff to climb.
 Be my safe leader,
 be my true mountain guide.
 Free me from hidden traps;
 I want to hide in you.
 I've put my life in your hands.
 You won't drop me,
 you'll never let me down.

p. 43

"WITHOUT FATHER, WITHOUT MOTHER, WITHOUT GENEALOGY, HAVING NEITHER BEGINNING OF DAYS NOR END OF LIFE, BUT [in contrast] HAVING BEEN MADE LIKE THE SON OF GOD, HE IS REMAINING A PRIEST FOR ALL TIME."

This is a KEY PHRASE in the apostle's argument for the superiority of the priesthood of Christ over that of Aaron:

"HAVING BEEN MADE LIKE THE SON OF GOD, HE IS REMAINING A PRIEST FOR ALL TIME."

v. 4 Now be giving careful consideration to how great this man must have been to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the best part of the booty.

In view of the record that has been given in the FIRST 3 VERSES, the writer now gives a COMMAND:

"NOW BE GIVING CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO HOW GREAT THIS MAN MUST HAVE BEEN"

He is a man:

"TO WHOM ABRAHAM, THE PATRIARCH, GAVE A TENTH OF THE BEST PART OF THE BOOTY."

Pink says:

In the first three verses of Heb. 7 the apostle mentions those details in which Melchizedek resembled the great and glorious Priest of Christianity; in vv. 4 to 10 he applies the type unto his immediate purpose and design. Having affirmed that Christ, the promised Messiah, was a Priest after the order of Melchizedek (6:20), and having given a description of the person and office of that typical character from the inspired narrative of Moses (Gen. 14:), he now dwells upon various details in the type in order to establish the argument which he has in hand. That which the apostle particularly designed to prove, was that a more excellent priesthood than that of Aaron's, having been introduced according to the purpose and promise of God, it necessarily followed that the ceremonies and institutions connected with it had now been abolished.

p. 370

Hewitt sets the stage for these final verses by saying:

A fourfold superiority of the Melchisedec priesthood is now presented. Firstly, Abraham gave him tithes, thus acknowledging his priestly office, and in this respect his religious superiority. Secondly, Melchisedec blessed him, and the less is blessed by the greater because as a priest of God he was divinely commissioned to communicate such blessings. Thirdly, under the law, the Aaronic priesthood was temporary; but before the law was instituted Melchisedec's priesthood was perpetual. Lastly, in Abraham, Levi, who received tithes from the sons of Abraham, paid tithes to Melchisedec.
p. 117

The oratorical imperative consider suggests that we should contemplate spiritually those things which are visibly portrayed in the ancient narrative, especially the greatness of Melchisedec.
p. 117

Lane says:

The point to be proven in vv 4-10 is that Melchizedek is a priest who was superior to the Levitical priests.
p. 167

Thomas says:

Now comes a careful comparison of Melchizedek and Abraham. The greatness of the former is seen in the fact that even Abraham, of all men, the founder of the Jewish nation, recognized his superiority.
p. 84

Westcott says:

The general superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham, the great father of Israel, is stated summarily.
p. 174

A. T. Robertson expounds on the words:

How great (p likos). Geometrical magnitude in contrast to arithmetical (posos), here only in N.T., "how distinguished" [would be a legitimate translation].
p. 381

Bruce says:

The superior greatness of Melchizedek appears in two important respects: he accepted tithes from Abraham and bestowed his blessing on Abraham.
p. 162

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

In verses 4-10 four points are made to prove Melchisedek's superiority. (1) Melchisedek received tithes from Abraham. . . . The spontaneous gift by Abraham of a tenth of his booty shows that he realised his own inferiority to Melchisedek--Abraham, the founder of the Jewish race, the recipient of the promise on which the whole of Judaism was grounded! What a contrast here to the levitical priesthood! . . .

(2) Melchisedek further showed his superiority by giving Abraham a benediction. . . .

(3) Melchisedek's priesthood is superior to the levitical priesthood because it is permanent. . . .

(4) Melchisedek is superior because Levi had actually paid him tithes.
pp. 120-22

Wuest points out:

The writer now proceeds to show that Melchisedec was better than Abraham, in order that he might show that he was better than Levi, and thus better than Aaron. It follows therefore that if Melchisedec is superior to Aaron, his priesthood must be better than that of Aaron. Since that is the case, Messiah's priesthood, being in the order of the priesthood of Melchisedec, must be better.
p. 128

(Mama, Get the Hammer! There's a Fly on Papa's Head! by Barbara Johnson)

It has been said:

WE CRUCIFY OURSELVES BETWEEN TWO THIEVES--REGRET FOR
YESTERDAY AND FEAR OF TOMORROW.
p. 70

One of my favorite poems is "The Land of Beginning Again," by Louisa Fletcher. One of her stanzas sums up my motivation to make laughter a year-long resolution:

For what had been hardest we'd know had been best,
And what had seemed loss would be gain;
For there isn't a sting that will not take wing
When we've faced it and laughed it away;
And I think that the laughter is most what we're after
In the Land of Beginning Again.

p. 149

Draper says:

The word "consider" does not mean simply "to notice someone." It means "to give careful study" to Melchizedek. The word means "to give careful, studious attention to some object." It is used of a general reviewing of an army. This is extremely important because in chapter 5, the writer of Hebrews had scolded these Jewish Christians because they were so "immature." They had heard the gospel long enough that they ought to be teaching others, but they were still in need of learning their ABC's.
p. 177

Before the institution of the law and the Levitical system, Melchizedek is shown to remind us of God's intent. From the very beginning, God set out to build a bridge between man and himself.
p. 179

Macaulay says:

But here this "Friend of God" brings the tokens of his own submission to the feet of another Melchisedec. This was itself an acknowledgement of Melchisedec's superiority, if not in personal character, at least in office and ministry. To Abraham the essence of the recognized superiority was doubtless indefinable, but it is put down for us in the chapter we are now studying: Melchisedec was "made like unto the Son of God" (Heb 7:3), in a priesthood which transcended tribal distinctions, racial differences, and time itself.

p. 98

(The Pleasures of God by John Piper)

You do not glorify a mountain spring by dutifully hauling water up the path from the river below and dumping it in the spring. What we have seen is that God is like a mountain spring, not a watering trough. And since that is the way God is, we are not surprised to learn from Scripture--and our faith is strengthened to hold fast--that the way to please God is to come to him to get and not to give, to drink and not to water. He is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

p. 216

v. 5 And those indeed of the sons of Levi, who are receiving the priestly office are having commandment in the Law to be collecting a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.

Now the writer brings the Aaronic priesthood into the picture and points up the fact that they too get tithes from their own brethren, which are stipulated in the Mosiac Law.

And they are descendants of Abraham.

v. 6 But the one who is not having his descent from them has received a tenth from Abraham, and has blessed the one who is having the promises.

Verse 6 is a reference to Melchizedek and his priesthood. He is not having his descent from Aaron or from Abraham and yet he received a tenth, or a tithe, from Abraham. Melchizedek blessed the one who is having the promises.

This takes us back to chapter 6:12-18:

in order that you may not become sluggish (lazy), but imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises. For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Blessing, I will bless you, and multiplying, I will multiply you." And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. For men are swearing by one greater [than themselves] and with them an oath [given] as confirmation is an end of every dispute. In the same way God, desiring even more to demonstrate to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, guaranteed by means of an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may be having strong encouragement, we who fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.

v. 7 But without any dispute the lesser is being blessed by the greater.

There is no need for argument, there is not any. For "THE LESSER (Abraham) IS BEING BLESSED BY THE GREATER (Melchizedek)."

Delitzsch points out:

The relation of blessing and being blessed is that of giving and receiving. The giver of the blessing is always raised above the receiver, over whom he spreads or on whom he lays the benedictory hand, and pronounces the blessing over him in the power of God.
p. 344

v. 8 And in this case mortal men are receiving tithes, but in that case one is receiving them, of whom it is being witnessed that he is living.

Whereas in verse 7 the CONTRAST was between:

"THE LESSER"

and "THE GREATER,"

now the CONTRAST in verse 8 is between:

"MORTAL"

and IMMORTAL.

Between:

DYING

as opposed to:

"LIVING."

The:

DYING

or "MORTAL MEN"

are identified with the "LESSER" in verse 7

and the:

"LIVING"

or IMMORTAL

are identified with the "GREATER" in verse 7.

What a GLORIOUS EASTER MESSAGE! He is risen, yes, He is risen indeed! He is living! He lives! Christ Jesus lives! There is no end to His priestly reign.

Bruce points out:

Another token of Melchizedek's superiority to the Levitical priesthood is this: nowhere is it related that Melchizedek lost his priestly office by death, whereas we have the record, generation after generation, of Levitical priests who died and had to hand on their dignity and duty to their heirs. The tithe prescribed by Israelite law is paid to mortal men; the tithe which Abraham gave Melchizedek was received by one who, as far as the record goes, has no "end of life."

p. 163

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

Levite priests die like other men, but Melchisedek was believed to be immortal.

p. 122

The hymn "He Lives" says it so well:

I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today;
I know that He is living, whatever men may say;
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer,
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.

Refrain:

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me
along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart.

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and
sing
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!
The Hope of all who seek Him, the Help of all who find,
None other is so loving, so good and kind.

("He Lives" by Alfred H. Ackley. The New Church Hymnal,
Lexicon Music, Inc., 1976. #285)

v. 9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who is receiving tithes, has paid tithes,

v.10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

The point is now reached:

if the father is obligated to recognize the superiority, the sons ought to also.

Long before the Levitical laws had been established, where a special family was set apart in Aaron and Levi, we have evidence of the priesthood of Melchizedek of which the Lord Jesus Christ is a great High Priest.

What the writer is saying is that when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, Levi, who is descendent of Abraham, was also paying tithes through that identification.

The REASON is given in verse 10:

"FOR HE WAS STILL IN THE LOINS OF HIS FATHER WHEN MELCHIZEDEK MET HIM."

Paul uses a very similar argument in Romans 5:1-12 when he points out the fact that WHEN ADAM SINNED WE SINNED ALSO:

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

Lenski says:

The final "for" clause merely rounds out the whole statement that Levi and the entire priesthood that was descended from him bowed before Melchizedek in and through Abraham, their forefather. Can anything resembling that be said of Melchizedek? Thus the readers and all of us to this day behold how great this Melchizedek is (v. 4).
p. 221

Delitzsch says:

The author concludes from the proved subordination of Levi to Melchizedek, and the prophecy contained in the 110th Psalm, that the appearance of a new Priest, after the order of Melchizedek, implies the abrogation of the Levitical priesthood, and assumes the insufficiency of the law connected with it.
p. 349

Westcott says:

The argument turns mainly upon the nature of the Levitical priesthood, but the Law is involved in the Priesthood. The abrogation of the one carries with it the abrogation of the other. If the Hebrews came to feel that Christ had superseded the priests of the Old Covenant, they would soon learn that the whole Law had passed away.
p. 179

Pink says:

The all-important and inexpressibly blessed truth for us to lay hold of is that in vv. 9, 10 we have an illustration of the most soul-satisfying truth revealed in Holy Writ. Just as Levi was "in Abraham", not only seminally but respectatively, so every one of God's children was "in Christ" when He wrought out that glorious work which has honoured and pleased God high above everything else. When the death-sentence of the law fell upon Christ, it fell upon the believer, so that he can unhesitatingly say, "I was crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). So too when Christ arose in triumph from the tomb, all His people shared His victory (Eph. 2:5, 6). When He ascended on high, they ascended too. Let all Christian readers pray earnestly that God may be pleased to reveal to them the meaning, blessedness, and fulness of those words "In Christ".

p. 378

Phillips says:

The writer of Hebrews is inexorably pursuing his goal, forcing his readers to see how much more they have in Christ than they ever had in Judaism and the Levitical ritual. Why go back to an inferior priesthood when, in the Lord Jesus, they have a supreme and sovereign Priest acknowledged, in type if not in actual fact, by no less a person than Abraham himself, the founder of their race? Who would want a high priest drawn from among Aaron's sons when they can have something far better in Christ?

p. 102

It was Gustafson who said:

How often God gives victory
And then we revel in the deed,
While present opportunity
Slips past its bloom and turns to seed.

(From "Our Daily Bread," March 15, 1995)

I think it would be very good for us to pause for a few moments and reflect on what we have in Jesus Christ our High Priest.

Let us listen and meditate once more on Hebrews 4:14-16:

Since then we are having a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us be holding fast our confession.

For we are not having a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore be drawing near with confidence to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

How long has it been since you have come to this **THRONE OF GRACE** where you could receive mercy and find grace to help you in the time of need?

Spending time in the presence of our Great High Priest will manifest itself externally in a radiance that will be seen upon your face.

Exodus 34:29

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord.

Psalms 34:5

Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Matthew 5:16

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: In the Lord Jesus Christ we have not only a great High Priest, but also a soon-coming King.

LESSON #2: Jesus Christ is a King of Righteousness and also a King of Peace.

LESSON #3: Have you availed yourself of His righteousness and thus experiencing His peace?

LESSON #4: May I use a phrase from verse 4 to admonish you: "Be giving careful consideration" of the Lord Jesus Christ and your relationship to Him.

LESSON #5: The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ is superior to that of Aaron.

LESSON #6: The bread and wine brought by Melchizedek to Abraham in Genesis 14 remind us of the broken body and shed blood that we memorialize at the communion table.

LESSON #7: Jesus Christ our Savior lives forever, so there is no end to His priestly reign.

LESSON #8: Just as Levi paid tithes because he was a descendent of Abraham, so you and I are born sinners because we were in Adam when he sinned in the garden.

LESSON #9: You can be taken out of Adam and put in Christ by receiving Him as your Savior.

LESSON #10: Where are you at this moment? In Adam or in Christ?

G. Campbell Morgan says:

Later in this seventh chapter the writer summarizes the whole matter. Because the Son is a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, One Whose Personality transcends all human measurements and limitations, One Who stands first for righteousness, and so secures peace:

"He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him."

That word "uttermost" is a great word. It has within it two qualities, which merge into a complete revelation, the two qualities are represented by panteles, which means all, and is a word of quantity; and telos, which is a word of reach, and means extent. He is able to save to the uttermost, that is in Him there is fullness of provision in quantity, and fullness of provision in duration.
pp. 86-87

MacArthur says:

Jesus Christ, of course, is the reality, the true Priest who is eternal, of whom Melchizedek is but a picture. Jesus Christ is a priest, the only Priest, who is alive forevermore. He is a greater priest because He is a living priest, not a dying one. Christ is Priest of a better priesthood than Aaron's. He is Priest of a better priesthood even than Melchizedek's. He is the only Priest of the only priesthood that can bring God to men and men to God. This was a great word of assurance to those Jews who had come to Jesus Christ.
p. 181

ARE YOU A PRIEST?

The first necessity in recovering a priesthood for all believers, is for the laypeople--not just the ordained clergy--to restore to our churches a working sense of the priesthood.

The priesthood of the believer is a surprising doctrine. The New Testament has a lot to say about the priesthood of Christians but nothing about Christian priests. There is no officer or leader in the New Testament church who functions as an agent of mediation between the people and God. The whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament was just a foreshadow of what Jesus accomplished by His death and resurrection. Because of this there is no need for a new order of priests. Yet the Bible clearly says that Christians have a priesthood, but the service this priesthood performs is expressed in spiritual terms rather than in literal sacrifices and bloodshed. Furthermore, it is a corporate priesthood, not an individual one limited to the presbyters, bishops, and deacons.

What should this doctrine mean to a Christian? Above all, it declares that there is never a believer who has no ministry. The purpose of presbyters, bishops, and deacons is not to do all the ministering, but to enable the church to do the work of ministry.

So the first step to revitalizing this doctrine is for laypeople to get involved in the actual doing of the church's work. This includes lay involvement both at the local congregation level and at the regional or denominational level. The members of a church should have a say in who their pastor will be and in the exercising of church discipline.

One problem with this recommendation is that often the laypeople don't want to take such responsibility in the church. Three principles clarify the implications of this doctrine.

(1) All believers should be active in the work of the church, but not every believer needs to do every kind of work. The distinction between clergy and laity is still a valid one because presbyters, bishops, and deacons have distinct gifts--oversight, administration, preaching.

(2) The priesthood of all believers should never be used by any church member as a justification of claiming a right to exercise authority. A true understanding of the doctrine will lead us to humbly depend on others. Some Christians have used the priesthood of the believer as a way to force consensus within a group or denomination, but properly applied the doctrine has nothing to do with politics or power. It has to do with worship.

(3) So the place where the doctrine needs to be applied the most is in the liturgy. Ironically, many of the churches that stress this doctrine are the very ones where the preacher always dominates the worship service. Liturgically, the preacher and the people should both be servants of the Word because clergy and laity alike are part of an indivisible ministry.

"Are you a priest?" by Allen Guelzo. Christianity Today, Sep 16, 1991. Pages 35-38.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

In her beautiful poem, "The Parable of Tomorrow," Ruth Gibbs Zwall offers this description of the Savior's precious leading:

"I looked at the mountain.
 'It is too hard, Lord.'
 I said; 'I cannot climb.'
 'Take My hand,' He whispered;
 'I will be your strength.'
 I saw the road.
 'It is too long, Lord,'
 I said; 'so rough and long.'
 'Take My love,' He answered;
 'I will guard your feet.'
 I looked at the sky.
 'The sun is gone,' I said;
 'Already it grows dark.'
 'Take the lantern of My Word,'
 He whispered; 'that will be light enough.'
 We climbed. The road was narrow and steep,
 But the way was bright.
 And when the thorns reached out,
 They found His hand before they touched my own.
 And when my path grew rough,
 I knew it was His love
 That kept my feet from stumbling.
 Then I grew very tired.
 'I can go no farther, Lord,'
 I said. He answered, 'Night is gone.
 Look up, My child.'
 I looked and it was dawn.
 Green valleys stretched below.
 'I can go on alone now,'
 I said--and then I saw the marks.
 'Lord, Thou are wounded.
 Thy hands are bleeding.
 Thy feet are bruised.
 Was it for me?'
 He whispered, 'I did it gladly.'
 Then I fell at His feet.
 'Lord, lead me on,' I cried.
 'No road too long, no valley too deep,
 If Thou art with me.'
 We walk together now and shall forever!"

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God by David McCasland)

"When the heart sees what God wants," Oswald used to say, "the body must be willing to spend and be spent for that cause alone."

p. 20

(They Walked with God by James S. Bell, Jr.)

Several years ago an evangelist in England prepared some great placards and posted them all over the town, declaring that if any man in that town was in debt would come to his office before twelve o'clock on a certain day with the proof of indebtedness, he would pay the debt. This news spread all over the town, but the people did not believe him.

One man said to his neighbor, "John, do you believe this man will pay our debts?"

"No, of course not, it's only a hoax."

The day came, and instead of there being a great rush, nobody came. Now it is a wonder there is not a great rush of men into the kingdom of God to have their debts paid, when a man can be saved for nothing.

About ten o'clock a man was walking in front of the office. He looked this way and that to see if anybody was looking, and by and by, satisfied that there was no one looking, he slipped in and said, "I saw a notice about town that if any one would call here at a certain hour you would pay their debts; is there any truth in it?"

"Yes," said the man. "It's quite true. Did you bring the necessary papers with you?"

"Yes."

After the man had paid the debt, he said, "Sit down, I want to talk with you," and he kept him there until twelve o'clock. Before twelve o'clock had passed two more came in and had their debts paid. At twelve o'clock he let them all out. Some other men were standing around the door.

"Well, did he pay your debts?"

"Yes," they said, "it was quite true; our debts were all paid."

"Oh, then we'll go in and get ours paid."

They went, but it was too late. Twelve o'clock had passed. To every one of you who is a bankrupt sinner--and you never saw a sinner in the world that was not a bankrupt sinner--Christ comes and He says: "I will pay your debts."

D. L. Moody

11/22

(The Message: Psalms by Eugene H. Peterson)

Psalm 5

But you'll welcome us with open arms
when we run for cover to you.
Let the party last all night!
Stand guard over our celebration.
You are famous, Yahweh, for welcoming God-seekers,
for decking us out in delight.

p. 10

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

And I--in righteousness I will see Your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing Your likeness. (Psalm 17:15)

What beautiful pictures of Christ and our relationship to Him as His bride are portrayed for us in this lovely hymn text which was inspired by the dying words of a 17th century Scottish preacher. The colorful imagery enhances the truths of these very thoughtful lines.

"And glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's Land" were the final triumphant words spoken by Samuel Rutherford, a forceful evangelical preacher who suffered much persecution in Scotland for his support of the non-conformist movement. His open opposition to the state church resulted in banishment from his pulpit and home. When his courageous loyalty to Christ continued throughout his life, Rutherford was eventually charged with high treason, which could mean being beheaded. Already on his death bed, however, he sent, back this message: "I behoove to answer my first summons, and ere your day for me arrive, I will be where few kings and great folks come."

Two hundred years after the death of Rutherford in 1661, his victorious life, writings, and final words so impressed Anne Ross Cousin that she was moved to write this remarkable text. Mrs. Cousin describes vividly the glories of heaven. Her wonderful closing proclamation that "the Lamb is all the glory" is a fitting climax to the hymn's vibrant exaltation of Christ and His eternal abode.

The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of heaven breaks; the summer morn I've sighed for--the fair, sweet morn awakes. Dark, dark hath been the midnight, but day-spring is at hand, and glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.

O Christ, He is the fountain, the deep, sweet well of love! The streams on earth I've tasted more deep I'll drink above: There to an ocean fulness His mercy doth expand, and glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.

O I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved's mine! He brings a poor vile sinner into His "house of wine." I stand upon His merit--I know no other stand, not e'en where glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.

The Bride eyes not her garment but her dear Bridegroom's face; I will not gaze at glory but on my King of grace, not at the crown He giveth but on His pierced hand: The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land.

p. 290

(When God Whispers: Glimpses of an Extraordinary God By
an Ordinary Woman by Carole Mayhall)

She was, maybe, two and a half. She stood peering down the jetway, an intense look on her face and a small bunch of wildflowers glued in her fist. Diminutive jeans. Stocking feet, no shoes.

Her mother, hugging a smaller child to her chest, stood behind her. I wondered if I'd recognize the one they were waiting for so eagerly.

Bored business travelers deplaned. Families. Aged women. As each person exited, I mentally crossed off the possibility.

By this time, most people had left the jetway, and the child's face screwed up with worry. "Where is he, Mommy? Is he coming?"

Her mother nodded in assurance.

Then, smiles. "There he is!" the mother exclaimed, glimpsing him above the heads of the stragglers.

I could have guessed by his face--eyes crinkled, huge smile. The lettered A cap carelessly sitting on his head, Madras shorts, crumpled T-shirt, running shoes--all went unnoticed by the welcoming committee.

This man was greeted with such joy and ceremony, it was as though the world stopped a minute to watch. He knelt to the height of his small daughter and gathered her in his arms. Then, standing up, he encircled his wife and baby and gave each a resounding kiss.

I watched the small ceremony with a tug on my heart and a smile.

The same evening, stepping off my own flight, another tableau. A father this time and two small children. Between them a hand-lettered cardboard sign, which read:

WELCOME HOME, MOMMY

Someday . . .

Someday I will be greeted like that.

Eagerly.

I will hear the words from One who loves me beyond my comprehension.

He will say, "Welcome Home! Welcome home, My beloved daughter!"

Tell me, isn't that worth waiting for?

pp. 91-92

(Carpe Diem by Tony Campolo)

A pastor friend of mine tells about a lady in his church whose little girl was diagnosed with cancer. The doctors told her that it would only be a matter of months before the child was dead. The woman left the child in her hospital bed, went down to the parking lot, got into her car, rolled up the windows tightly, and then proceeded to curse out God. She called Him every mean name she could think of. And when she finally fell silent in exhaustion, she heard a voice say lovingly and distinctly, "I'm glad you did that. It has been a long time since you spoke to Me."

p. 212

(Holiness by J. C. Ryle)

As old Latimer would have said, it is a kind of 'mingle-mangle', and does no good. It neither exercises influence on daily conduct, nor comforts in life, nor gives peace in death; and those who hold it often awake too late to find that they have got nothing solid under their feet.

p. 10