

Hebrews 7:4-19

“Side by Side comparison”

- I. Introduction
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I. Introduction

Having just given the reader in the first three verses of chapter 7 “*five positive differences that Jesus has in the Melchizedekian Priesthood, that aren’t available in the Aaronic Priesthood.*” The writer now anticipates in verses 4-10 the need for proof of what he has just said so he gives them three proofs that what he had just declared was true. The second thing that the writer does is present a side by side comparison of the superiority of the Melchizedekian priesthood by placing it next to the Imperfection of Levitical priesthood.

II. Vs. 4-10 Three proofs

Vs. 4-10 In these verses the writer instead of focusing on the positive differences of the Melchizedekian Priesthood looks at the inadequacy seen in the Aaronic Priesthood.

1. Vs. 4-6 The first proof is in two parts that demonstrated the *Melchizedekian Priesthood* superiority as seen in the actions of Abraham giving a tenth of his spoils to Melchizedek. He writes, “*Consider how great this man was, to whom EVEN the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.*” There are two things that could have obligated Abraham to give a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek:
 - a. First, IF Melchizedek as a king had fought alongside Abraham against Chedorlaomer. But there is no mention or indication that Melchizedek was even there let alone fought or provide resources to the battle.
 - b. Second, IF Melchizedek as a priest of the, Most High God, had preformed some sort of priestly services on behalf of Abraham or his army prior to the battle. But there in no mention of this until after the battle where Melchizedek brought out the bread and wine and blessed Abraham with what today we call the Lord’s supper or communion.

Since neither of these two obligations occurred it implies that Abraham’s tithe was free from obligation, law or commandment and instead was freely and generously given out the best that Abraham had. Abraham simply recognized Melchizedek as deserving of the tithe based upon who he was and who he served the Most High God! It was given in thanks giving as an act of worship!

The Second, part of this proof is a bit more complicated to understand: The Israelites

were agrarian in their economy, they survived off the land. But the tribe of Levi was the priestly tribe and as such was supported by the tithes from the brothers of the other 11 tribes. So you had 11 tribes of Abraham's descendants tithing to one tribe. The point the writer makes is that since Abraham the common ancestor paid tithes to Melchizedek before his future ancestors existed then all the tribes including the descendants of Levi also paid tithes to Melchizedek. As if the descendants of Levi himself, paid tithes through Abraham, even though they were yet unborn to Melchizedek through Abraham. The point is: **If these Levitical priests through Abraham offered help in comparison to Melchizedek, it was incomplete, limited and temporary.**

2. Vs. 7 The second proof is found here in verse 7 where we read "***beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the greater.***" One of the things that we learn in reading the first testament is that it is essentially the history of one man and his descendants. It starts with his introduction to us in Genesis 12:1 and ends with the prophet Malachi. That which started with God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5 with God's words, "*Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.*" And He said to him, "*So shall your descendants be.*" Continued on through out the first testament but what's interesting is this priest-king is only mentioned in a few verses and what is mentioned about him in connection to Abraham and the promise is that he blessed him. Melchizedek is established as greater than Abraham and greater than any descendants that came from Abraham. In John 8:56-58 Jesus entered a discussion about Abraham and made this remarkable statement saying, "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.*" Then the Jews said to Him, "*You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?*" Jesus said to them, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.*" We are never given how Abraham knew about Melchizedek, and we have no idea how much Melchizedek knew about Abraham. What is not in dispute "***beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the greater.***"
3. Vs. 8-10 There is one last proof of the five positive differences of the *Melchizedekian Priesthood* as we read in verse 8 "*mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.*" The point is that even if the Levitical priests weren't required to quit after 25 years of ministry, they would have had to cease at some point when they died. The argument the writer makes is that this fact reveals that the Levitical priesthood was designed as temporary because the priests were temporary. The other tribes all paid tithes to a temporary system but their forefather whom all the tribes were in his ancestry paid tithes to a priest who lived on and didn't die since no death is recorded of Melchizedek. That makes his priesthood eternal and not temporary and clearly superior to Aaron's. Jesus being from the *Melchizedekian Priesthood* is a living priest, not a dying priest. He therefore is the only priest who can without interruption bring God to humanity and humanity to God.

III. Vs. 11-19 Three arguments

Vs. 11-19 Next the writer **shows** just how far the Levitical system is inferior as we learn that the ministry of Jesus Christ superseded the Law. The context in this section is found

in verse 19 where the writer informs his readers that the purpose of the priesthood is to enable humanity to “*draw near to God*”. You can sum up Christianity in three words “**Access to God**”! That was also the goal of Judaism and the Levitical priesthood but the veil was always there keeping the majority of humanity away. The veil was there because of sin and the Levitical sacrifices only symbolically anticipated the fulfillment. Now that the fulfillment had come in Christ’s sacrifice for the sin of the whole world the Levitical priesthood and system was no longer necessary. This was a difficult thing for the Hebrews to accept as they couldn’t imagine that the Mosaic order was only symbolic and temporary and fully inadequate to bring anyone to perfection, (verse 19). They struggled at grasping how something that was instituted by God couldn’t be perfect? It wasn’t that it wasn’t perfect for what God had designed it for it was just not permanent and as such it was insufficient for what these Hebrews were attempting to use it for. The outline of the writer’s argument in verses 11-19 goes as:

- a. Vs. 11-14 **Imperfection of Levitical priesthood**: No where in scripture does God say that His intent was that the *Levitical priesthood* would remain forever. In fact, the first testament predicts another priesthood was coming as twice recorded in chapter 7 verse 17 and 21 quoting out of Psalm 110:4 “*The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."*” The argument is simple as it asks two questions to those who are still fixated upon the Levitical system:
 1. “**If God through His word predicted another priesthood was coming, then it is reasonable to believe that the new one was necessary and would replace the old priesthood?**”
 2. “**If God intended the Levitical priesthood to continue and improve or be necessary to gain access to God then why did He plan for the Messiah to be a priest from a different order, Melchizedek?**”

The timing of Melchizedek’s introduction to Abraham further illustrates this as God placed this between Abraham’s calling and the covenant He made with Him. This indicates that it was always God’s intention that access to Him from Abraham’s descendants would be from a higher priestly order than the one generated from Abraham’s descendants! The “*perfection*” mentioned in verse 11 has to do with the purpose of the priesthood which to reconcile men to God through the sacrificial system. Because this was only a typology that pointed to the finished work in Christ it

was not able to make men perfect, had those sacrifices been able to bring a person into God's presence they would have ceased but instead they had to done every day. The purpose of both the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic Law were to bring people to God but both were only symbolic and awaiting the finished work of that which they pointed too, Jesus and as such were imperfect towards what the Jews were now trying to make the two do. The is why Jesus said to them in John 14:6 "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" What the Levitical priesthood could not do Jesus in the Melchizedek priesthood could do! **The point the writer makes is that all the Aaronic Priesthood could do is correctly diagnose the problem they could never produce a cure!** The word in verse 12 "changed" describing the priesthood being changed means to put one thing in the place of another. Through Christianity came from the fulfillment of of Judaism, it wasn't an enhancement it was designed as a replacement as what Judaism did was point towards the completed work in Jesus. The Hebrews were rejecting the fact that Jesus didn't come from the priestly tribe of Levi and the author doesn't deny this instead he says that this very fact proves the temporary nature of the *Levitical priesthood*. As a priest he had no genealogy, and as such **He ministers in the power of an endless life**. Jesus had no beginning, no ending, but continues forever. The Law, which is only temporary, must go. It had an inherent weakness in that it could not supply what the flesh in its frailty lacked.

- b. Vs. 15-17 **Perfection of Melchizedekian priesthood**: The Greek has two words for the word "another" in verse 15, "*and additional one – of the same kind*" and "*another of a different kind*". The differences in the meaning of these two Greek words for "*another*" is that the **first one** indicates a "*quantitative difference*" where as the **second** indicates a "*qualitative difference*". The reference here describing Jesus is that of the second word for another as Jesus in Him we do not have a High priest like the others that were limited. Instead we are told in verse 15 that He "arises" by Himself. He didn't come into the world as all the other priests before Him had, He was born of a virgin, no other priest from the tribe of Levi could claim that. This implies that He had no priestly ancestry, He took up the mantle of High Priest not by ancestry but by WHO He was. He also indicates that He was one of a kind in that He was the only priest who rose from the dead as the grave couldn't hold Him. Another difference is that heredity took president over godliness a prerequisite for the priesthood but not in the *Melchizedekian priesthood*, which Jesus belonged too. Serving in the *Levitical priesthood* had nothing to do with character, ability, personality or holiness. Instead Jesus came in power to do what no other priest could ever do; give access to God the Father!
- c. Vs. 18-19 **Summation of the argument**: Aaron and the Levitical priesthood by necessity has to be replaced by Jesus and the *Melchizedekian priesthood*. The Greek word "annulling" means to do away with something that has been established because it was imperfect and replace by something that is new and is perfect. The old system could **reveal sin but it could never remove sin!** It is for this reason it had to be removed and replaced as it could never grant access to God. That is what Paul says in Romans 7:24 where we read, "*O, wretched man that I am. Who can set me free from this body of death?*" Did you notice that Paul asked a rhetorical question and phrased it WHO and NOT WHAT? That is exactly what the writer says in verse 19, "**for the**

law made nothing perfect..” That is the point the author of Hebrews is making, what humanity needs isn’t going to be found in the WHAT of religion but in the WHO of Jesus! Paul went on to explain this in Romans 8:3-4 saying, “*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, judged sin in the flesh, that the righteousness that the law demanded might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.*”

There is one clear fact that points to the superiority of something when compared to another: That is when it replaces the older model. The appearance of Jesus as High Priest in the order of Melchizedek proves His superiority. The new High Priest (Jesus) came with a different address and a different ancestry. That meant if the old priesthood went, the Law had to go too. This new priest had a different address; he came from the tribe of Judah instead of the tribe of Levi. Judah was not a priestly tribe it was a kingly tribe. This new High Priest was a king!