
Words of Truth

Hebrews 7:1-3

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The previous chapter concluded with Christ being an high priest after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 6:20). The Jews needed to understand this. Jesus was not an high priest after the order of Aaron. This is significant, because the change in the priesthood signified the need for the change of the law as well (Hebrews 7:12). Jewish Christians needed to fully grasp these points lest they fall away by turning away from our Lord back to a dead law (cf. Romans 7:1-6).

In this study, we will be considering the following text: *“For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually”* (Hebrews 7:1-3).

The slaughter of the kings referenced in the text we are studying can be found in Genesis 14:1-16. As Abraham returned, we read: *“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all”* (Genesis 14:18-20). The only other inspired record we have wherein Melchisedec is mentioned, outside of the book of Hebrews, is found in a prophetic portion of a Psalm (Psalms 110:4; cf. Hebrews 5:1-6).

We read that Abraham gave a tenth to Melchisedec. Later, Jacob intended to give God a tenth of what he was blessed with (Genesis 28:10-22). Once the Law of Moses came into effect, Israel tithed a tenth to the Lord (Leviticus 27:32 and Numbers 18:26). This was not written to instruct first century Christians to tithe a tenth. Christians are instructed to give on the first day of the week as we have prospered (I Corinthians 16:1-2) and as we have purposed in our hearts (II Corinthians 9:6-7). What was written in Hebrews 7:1-3 was given as an historical account of who Melchisedec was. His priesthood was before the Law of Moses and thus before the priesthood that came about through the bloodline of Aaron. It appears that the Jews had forgotten that the Law of Moses wasn't always in place. The will of God was being accomplished before Moses and after the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross.

We then read that Melchisedec was “Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life.” What does that mean? Does that mean that he was eternal? We read he was made like unto the Son of God. Does that mean he was before all things as Jesus was (Colossians 1:17)? You could easily come to those conclusions. However, those conclusions would be wrong. Let’s dive in a little to find this out.

The phrase “Without father” [ἀπάτωρ] means: “Fatherless, i.e. of unrecorded paternity: — without father. Whose father is not recorded in the genealogies” (Strong’s # 540). The phrase “without mother” [ἀμήτωρ] means: “motherless, i.e. of unknown maternity: — without mother. Born without a mother; bereft of a mother; born of a base or unknown mother; unmotherly, not worthy of the name of mother” (Strong’s # 282). The phrase “without descent” [ἀγενεαλόγητος] means: “unregistered as to birth: — without descent. One whose descent there is no record of, without genealogy” (Strong’s # 35).

Understanding the meaning of those words is HUGE! Joseph and Mary were not Levites. Under the Law of Moses Jesus could not have been a priest. Consider what that looked like under the Old Law: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel. And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest’s office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death... And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood”* (Numbers 3:5-10 and Ezra 2:61-62). So, the Lord is showing the Jews that Jesus not being of the tribe of Levi means nothing. If they researched Melchisedec’s family they’d find nothing. So, the priesthood of Melchisedec doesn’t begin or end with any carnal bloodline. Whereas, in times past, death ended the priest (Hebrews 7:23); this priesthood has no end (more on that later in this chapter).

The priesthood of Melchisedec and that of Jesus resemble each other. Both are priesthoods that are not tied to genetics. Both priesthoods are of divine agency. Jesus died in the flesh, but His priesthood and His work as our High Priest continues. Notice: *“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”* (Romans 8:34; cf. I John 2:1). The point being that should not be missed is this: the Jews needed to understand the priesthood of Christ was not after the flesh like the priesthood under the Law of Moses was.