
Words of Truth

Hebrews 7:4-10

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We have been studying about the priesthood of Jesus. In the immediate context, we've seen that the priesthood of Jesus is after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 5:6, Hebrews 5:10, and Hebrews 6:20). That point is repeated throughout the upcoming verses as well (Hebrews 7:11, Hebrews 7:15, Hebrews 7:17, and Hebrews 7:21). Some of what we are going to be reading in the verses of this study we have already studied in previous articles. This context is repetitive. Therefore, I will aim not to readdress things we've already studied.

What we will be looking at in this article comes from the following text: *“Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him”* (Hebrews 7:4-10).

This study is about how great Melchisedec was. To illustrate that, the Lord has it pointed out again that the patriarch Abraham gave tithes to him. The usage of the word patriarch [Greek - πατριάρχης] stands out here. The meaning of that term is: “a progenitor (“patriarch”): — patriarch. Founder of a tribe, progenitor of the twelve sons of Jacob, founders of the tribes of Israel; of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (Strong's # 3966). That term is applied to David (Acts 2:29) and the fathers of Israel (Acts 7:8-9). In a point that will be addressed later in this article, the priesthood of Melchisedec didn't take tithes from brethren. He took tithes from the patriarch himself.

The Levites took tithes and offerings from their brethren to maintain the work of God and support themselves as commanded by God (Numbers 5:9-10, Deuteronomy 18:1-8, etc.). Melchisedec didn't receive a tithe from Abraham out of necessity. He was the king of Salem (Genesis 14:18). Abraham gave to him because he was superior. Think about that. Abraham is the man in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed (Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 18:18, Genesis 22:18, and Galatians 3:8-9). He honored Melchisedec. The priesthood of Jesus is

arranged like that of Melchisedec's. Jesus' priesthood is not after Aaron. So, the Jews needed to recognize the superiority of the priesthood of Christ as Abraham did with the priesthood of Melchisedec.

It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. Melchisedec blessed Abraham (Genesis 14:18-19). The Jews understood this principle. Their history taught them that blessings were given from their fathers to their children (Genesis 27:1-28:14 and Genesis 48:1-22). So, if they missed the fact that Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedec and that proved his superiority, they should have seen it in this fact. Melchisedec was the one in a position to offering a blessing to Abraham, not the other way around. This indisputable fact proves the point of the context. Abraham was never made a priest. He was never in that position. His descendants were not descendants of a priest. Levi, the son of Jacob and Leah (Genesis 29:31-35), therefore did not inherit the priesthood from his fathers.

Melchisedec's priesthood was one that endured beyond death. The Levitical priesthood had to be passed on to descendants within the tribe of Levi. When Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu died, they did not have sons to pass on the priesthood to. Therefore, Aaron's sons Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office (I Chronicles 24:1-2). What record do we have of Melchisedec's sons? The answer is, we don't have one. Yet, the priesthood did not die. Jesus is now after that order; arrangement. First century Jewish Christians needed to see these changes and recognize that a superior priesthood was in place unlike what they were accustomed to.

In addition to all that has been said, consider that the Levites were to tithe from what they received of their brethren (Numbers 18:25-32). The point is given that Melchisedec received tithes. What we do not see is any account wherein it was stated that Melchisedec gave from the tithes he received. The point is continually being made that Melchisedec's priesthood was superior to that of the sons of Levi.

If the point was not yet understood from what was written, they needed to use some logic and consider which priesthood was older. Jesus used this teaching method in teaching on divorce and remarriage. Jesus went back to the beginning of creation to establish God's intent for marriage (Matthew 19:1-12). Before Levi was even born, Melchisedec met with their father Abraham.

Changes are difficult for people. The Lord is trying to get them to understand that their system was a change. The Lord did not intend for Israel to be married to the Law of Moses permanently (Romans 7:1-6). The Law of Moses was added because of transgressions. They needed to understand that the promises and the life to come were made in Abraham before the Law was given (Galatians 3:7-29). Going forward in this chapter, this is the point that is going to be made.