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# MELCHIZEDEK, THE PRIEST WHO DERIVED HIS PATTERN FROM THE PREEXISTENT CHRIST

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ABSTRACT: Melchizedek is one of the most mysterious characters of the book of Genesis. As priest of God Almighty he blessed Abraham, the patriarch returning from war, and received tithes from him. The Epistle to the Hebrews presents Jesus Christ as high priest according to Melchizedek's priestly order, based on God's oath found in Psalm 110:4. While Christ's priestly order according to Melchizedek is higher than Aaron's priestly order, it is important to remember that Christ is greater than Melchizedek. In other words, Melchizedek derives his pattern from the preexistent Christ, and not the other way around. It is the purpose of this paper to bring to attention that the superiority of the characteristics of and blessings derived from Christ's priesthood according to Melchizedek's order is best understood only within this frame.

KEY WORDS: Melchizedek, Priestly order, Melchizedek's pattern, A Type of Christ, The Preexistent Christ.

## Introductory matters

One of the most interesting characters of the Bible who appears in the book of Genesis is Melchizedek. After a brief appearance in a meeting with Abraham he disappears, and later is mentioned only once in the Old Testament, in the book of Psalms. In the New Testament he appears again in the Epistle to the Hebrews where the writer discusses his identity, ministry, and the ways in which Jesus Christ is a high priest according to Melchizedek's priestly order.

After a brief overview of the identity of Melchizedek, the paper will present the need for an important frame through which the characteristics and blessings of Christ's priesthood according to Melchizedek's order can be contemplated. This frame is strongly connected to the idea that Melchizedek derives his pattern from

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the preexistent Christ. The paper will continue by presenting the superiority of the new priestly order of Melchizedek and its blessings, all of them viewed through the proposed frame.

### *The identity of Melchizedek*

The biblical records of Melchizedek are found in three different passages. The first one is the narrative that presents him in a rather short scene (Genesis 14:18-20). It is the only narrative in the Bible where the name Melchizedek appears. After returning from the defeat of king Chedorlaomer and of the kings that were with him, Abraham is met by Melchizedek, king of Salem, who brings him bread and wine. Melchizedek blesses Abraham, and Abraham gives him tithes of all. Then Melchizedek disappears just as mysteriously as he appeared on the scene. Some commentators think that Salem was the city that became later Jerusalem. Charles A. Trentham (Trentham 1972: 51) states that Melchizedek was the supreme authority of the city 'which was destined to become the holy capital of Israel'. He refers to Salem as being identified with Jerusalem in the Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon on Genesis 14:18.

The two other passages refer to Melchizedek or make some statements based on what transpired from the first passage found in Genesis 14. Psalm 110:4 is a very brief reference to Melchizedek and his priestly order ('The LORD has sworn, and will not relent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.') In the New Testament, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews refers to Melchizedek in a more extensive section: Hebrews 5:6-10; 6:20; 7:1-24.

There have been various interpretations as to the identity of Melchizedek. Some think that he could have been an angelic being that reigned for a time in Salem (Jerusalem). Hodges, for instance, bases this on Hebrews 7:8 where it is stated that Melchizedek is alive (Hodges 2005: 789). Trentham refers to the Essenes of Qumran as claiming that Melchizedek was an angel, but he also finds it important to state that the writer of Hebrews wants to highlight the superiority of Christ to Melchizedek: 'Granted that he was an angel … he was still inferior to the true, unique Son of God' (Trentham 1972: 52).

Could it be that Melchizedek was actually a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Are Melchizedek and Jesus the same person? A case can be made either way. The question is not unfounded, given the fact that Abraham received another special visit from the Lord (Genesis18:17-33). Some think that it is possible that Abraham, after his weary battle, met and gave honor to the Lord Jesus Himself (Got Questions). F.W. Grant contends that the way Hebrews 7:3 formulates that Melchizedek was 'made like unto the Son of God' clearly says that he was not the Son of God (Grant 2002: 58).

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At the very least, Melchizedek is a type of Christ, prefiguring the Lord's ministry, and one of the main objectives of the writer of Hebrews is to present the Christian faith as compared to the Old Testament law and sacrificial system. He does not say that Melchizedek was actually without parents, but the writer is making a comparison. 'Just as Melchizedek suddenly appears in Genesis 14 without genealogy and without the mention of his death, just so Christ actually had no beginning and will have no end' (Francisco 1973: 162).

Genesis 14:18 presents Melchizedek as one who is a king as well as a priest. 'The combination of these two offices was to be a distinguishing characteristic of the Messiah', says Alan Stibbs (Stibbs 1953: 1100), comparing Hebrews 8:1 with Zechariah 6:13. Hebrews presents Jesus Christ as a royal high priest, in line with the Old Testament prophecy of Zechariah 6:13. The writer of Hebrews brings strong arguments to sustain that Christ's office transcends all others. One of them is the fact that this office is 'after the order of Melchizedek' (Hebrews 5:16). As such, 'he exercises both kingly and priestly authority' (Stibbs 1953: 1100).

The way the writer to the Hebrews brings together Melchizedek and Christ is considered to be the usual rabbinic method of interpretation. The interpreters bring arguments 'not only from the *utterances* but also from the *silences* of Scripture' (Barclay 1976: 68). In the passage that draws the parallel between Melchizedek and Christ, the writer builds not only on what the Scripture says about Melchizedek, but also on what it does not say. For example, the argument that Melchizedek has no genealogy (he is without father and without mother, Hebrews 7:3) is based on the silence of Scripture which does not provide any genealogy of Melchizedek. There will be other references to this rabbinic method of interpretation in this paper.

### *The need for a frame to understand Melchizedek's priestly order*

The writer of Hebrews presents Christ as the ultimate solution to the problem of sin and the surpassing glory of the Christian faith as compared to the Old Testament law and sacrificial system. Among the arguments that prove Christ's superiority is the entire 'package' that contains the writer's references to Melchizedek, the mysterious royal priest who appeared to Abraham.

The writer's starting point is the Old Testament promise in which God swore that the Messiah is a priest forever according to Melchizedek's order. From this starting point follow all the ramifications: Christ is presented as a high priest who is superior to Aaron; the new covenant brought to life through him is superior to the old covenant. In a summarized way, one can say that there are two important groups of ramifications: characteristics of and blessings derived from Christ's priesthood according

to Melchizedek's order. While they are of great importance, it is of utmost significance to understand this: Melchizedek is great, but Christ is greater. In other words, Melchizedek derives his pattern from the preexistent Christ, not Christ derives his pattern from Melchizedek. 'It was Melchizedek who was like the preexistent Son of God, and not Christ who was like Melchizedek' (Trentham 1972: 52). Hebrews 7:3 clearly states that Melchizedek was 'made like unto the Son of God'. It is not saying that the Son of God was made like unto Melchizedek.

In fact, all the characteristics and blessings of Christ's priesthood according to Melchizedek's order need to be contemplated within this frame. It is the purpose of this paper to bring to attention that the superiority of the characteristics of and blessings derived from Christ's priesthood according to Melchizedek's order is best understood only within this frame.

## The superiority of Melchizedek's priestly order

The writer of Hebrews presents several arguments that prove the superiority of Melchizedek's priestly order and, by implication, Christ's priesthood. The primacy of Melchizedek's priestly order is clearly seen in the chronological appearance of the priestly orders of the Old Testament. The appearance of Melchizedek provides the first occurrence of the word 'priest' in the Bible, long before the Levitical priesthood was set in place within the Mosaic law. Also, Abraham's tithes to Melchizedek show the pre-Mosaic date of the custom.

One of the strongest arguments of the writer is that while Aaron and Levi are mortal, Melchizedek lives. In the Levitical order tithes are received by mortal priests, but in the case of Melchizedek they are received by the one who is testified to be alive.

The superiority of Melchizedek's order does not imply that Melchizedek is greater than Christ. On the contrary, the Bible clearly shows that Christ is greater than Melchizedek and all the other important figures of the Old Testament. The superiority of Melchizedek's order just wants to point towards the superiority of Christ!

### *The greatness of Christ: he is greater than Melchizedek*

No other than Abraham, the patriarch, is blessed by Melchizedek, and Abraham gives tithes to him. Moreover, Abraham did it after a victory when 'he might have claimed to be second to none in the land' (Stibbs 1953: 1100). The fact that Abraham gives tithes shows that he acknowledged Melchizedek's God as the true God and Melchizedek's priesthood as true one (Kevan 1953: 89).

Throughout the Bible the greater blesses the lower in rank. Hebrews 7:7 confirms

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that the lesser is blessed by the better. At the beginning of the letter to the Hebrews, the writer presents the ways in which God spoke in times past, and makes sure that the readers understand that finally God spoke through his Son, who is greater than any prophet or angel. He is above all Old Testament figures. This is in absolute concordance with the message of the gospels. In Matthew 12, Jesus Christ states three times his greatness. He is greater (μεῖζόν - more exalted, more majestic) than the temple (Matthew 12:6), greater (πλεῖον – superior, more excellent) than Jonah (Matthew 12:41), and greater than Solomon (Matthew 12:42).

Also, Jesus Christ is above Abraham. In John 8 there is a long discussion between Jesus and the Jews. What they understand from Jesus' statements is quite astounding to them, therefore they ask the direct question: 'Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom make you yourself?' (John 8:53). Jesus gives the answer: 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad… Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am' (John 8:56.58). It can be concluded that, according to Jesus, one of the aspects of being greater than Abraham is Jesus' existence before him. Abraham and Melchizedek were contemporaries. If Jesus Christ was before Abraham, then the logical conclusion is that he was also before Melchizedek. By the same token, he is greater than Melchizedek.

***The uniqueness of the Priesthood of Christ***

There are a number of features that are unique to the priesthood of Christ. These features are brought to the fore via Melchizedek and his priestly order.

Priesthood serving both Gentiles and Jew. Melchizedek was king of Salem and served as priest of God Almighty. Despite the fact that the identity of Salem as a city is disputed, it seems indubitable that it was a Canaanite city, with Canaanite dwellers in it. There is no information as to how he tried to bring them to faith in the only true God, and no information regarding the beliefs of those Gentiles. But the fact that Melchizedek is presented as priest implies that he served those Gentiles.

When Melchizedek brought bread and wine to Abraham, then blessed him, he actually served both him and the Jewish nation that would come after him, since they were in the loins of Abraham, just like the Levites gave tithes to Melchizedek, while they were in the loins of Abraham when he met Melchizedek. Melchizedek's order was to serve both Gentiles and Jew. Christ's priestly order is of Melchizedek in this respect too: he came to serve all mankind. 'For God so loved *the world* that he gave his only begotten Son' (John 3:16).

Melchizedek blesses Abraham: 'Blessed be Abram of the most high God (El El-

jon), possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God (El Eljon), who has delivered your enemies into your hand.' Melchizedek is the servant of God, the Creator and owner of the entire world. Vernon McGee (McGee 1981: 65) states that 'this man was the high priest of the world in that day. The Lord Jesus is the great High Priest for the world today. The Lord Jesus is after the order of Melchizedek – not Aaron – as set forth here. Aaron was just for Israel and just for a tabernacle.'

It is pertinent to say that it was not Melchizedek first to bless both Gentiles and Jew. The Lord had this in his eternal plan and revealed it to Abraham when he called him out from Mesopotamia years **before** meeting Melchizedek. Galatians 3:8 gives a glimpse of that, as it recalls God's promise found in Genesis 12:3. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, saw it clearly: 'And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed.' Therefore, Melchizedek derives his pattern from the preexistent Christ, in whom it was clear beforehand ('foreseeing') that the justification of the heathen would take place many centuries later.

Divinely established priesthood. Melchizedek was a non-levitical priest. In his time, Levi was not born yet. The Levitical priesthood was established by human act (Exodus 28:1), although at the divine order, while there is no information about the establishment of Melchizedek's priesthood. The silence of Scripture seems to give again ground for the rabbinic interpretation that could come to the conclusion that Melchizedek's priesthood was not established by human act.

If the priesthood of Melchizedek was not established by human act, there is only one viable option left: divine establishment. Christ's priesthood was established without any doubt by divine appointment, as Psalm 110:4 testifies.

Priesthood with continual abiding. In the Genesis record, nothing is said about the ancestry or genealogy of Melchizedek. That is rather unusual, since the Old Testament puts great emphasis on genealogies. All the important people of those times are presented with their genealogies. Melchizedek was obviously an important person, but no genealogical line is attached to him. Also, genealogies were particularly important for priests. In the time of Ezra, the priests who were not found in the genealogies were put out of the priesthood (Ezra 2:62). Melchizedek is simply presented as a priest. His birth and death are not mentioned either, nor his parents. He simply appears and 'is left to abide alone and "for ever" in the minds of readers as Melchizedek the priest' (Stibbs 1953: 1099).

As King, Jesus Christ is Abraham's son. The first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew gives proof that he is the son of David. On the other hand, the first chapter of the Gospel of John says: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God… And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and

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we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth' (John 1:1.14). 'He had no beginning or ending of days as far as creation is concerned- He is the eternal God… We have in Melchizedek a marvelous picture of the Lord Jesus Christ' (McGee 1981: 65).

The beginning and ending of Melchizedek's life are not the only events that Scripture is silent about, but also the beginning or ending of his priestly ministry. The Scripture is silent about any ending of his priesthood or any successor and, thus, the writer of Hebrews concludes that it never ended ('abides a priest continually,' Hebrews 7:3). Therefore, he is left performing an endless act (M'Caw 1953: 491). Turning to Christ, it is obvious in the New Testament that the high priesthood of Christ is validated by the power of an indestructible life. After his death on the cross he rose to life, never to die again! Other priests received they office at birth and held it until the time of their death. 'No such mortality applies to the high priesthood of Jesus' (Trentham 1972: 54).

Priesthood established by divine oath. In addition to Christ's appointment as high priest comes the divine oath (Psalm 110:4). The oath is made concerning the indissolubility of this priesthood ('you are a priest forever' - Hebrews 7:27), and the impossibility to alter it, change it, or replace it (Hebrews 7:24). The oath is a guarantee that the words spoken by the person are true. God never needs to do that, since his words are always true. As Barclay (Barclay 1976: 80) said, 'if God ever confirms a statement by an oath, that statement must be of extraordinary importance'. God never introduced the Levitical priesthood by an oath. Christ's priesthood was something new and introduced by God's oath. That is why Christ's priesthood can never pass away: God's oath is that his Son will be priest forever. Aaron's priesthood was replaced by Christ's eternal priesthood. Christ's priesthood will never be replaced.

It is also worth remembering that the prophecy concerning Christ's priestly order is made in the Psalms, written with hundreds of years before Christ appeared and presented his sacrifice on Golgotha. As high priest, he presented the ultimate sacrifice for all mankind. However, not the time of the psalmist was the earliest when it became clear the need of a new priestly order. This was foreseen long before even Melchizedek appeared on the scene, when the Scripture points toward the ultimate sacrifice that would supersede the Levitical sacrificial system:

> 'For as much as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who truly was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you' 1Peter 1:18-20. Christ, the high priest who would present himself as perfect sacrifice, was foreordained even before the foundation of the world!

It is worth mentioning other features that are unique to Christ's priesthood, although they are not brought to the readers' attention via Melchizedek. It is unique the fact that Christ did not have to offer sacrifice for himself (Hebrews 7:27). He was sinless and totally perfect. The Levitical high priest had to offer sacrifice first of all for himself. Christ is superior to all high priests in this respect.

The other important point is that in Christ's priesthood there is no need to endlessly repeat the sacrifices. Christ's sacrifice was presented once and for all at Golgotha (Hebrews 7:27). Its effect spans across all ages and anyone can benefit from it no matter when that person lived here on Earth.

### *The nonlevitical priesthood and its implications*

The Scripture testifies that the Aaronic priesthood was not completely adequate, and God had in his plan something better. If someone would try to prove the superiority of the Levitical priesthood to Melchizedek's saying that Melchizedek's priesthood was succeeded by Aaron's, the writer of Hebrews replies by pointing towards Psalm 110. Psalm 110 was written much later than the Aaronic priesthood was established in the Pentateuch. God would have not promised in Psalm 110 a new priesthood after the order of Melchizedek if the Aaronic priesthood could accomplish all that he desired.

Melchizedek was greater than the Levites. It is worth observing how the writer of Hebrews brings a 'playful exegetical argument to demonstrate the superiority of Melchizedek and, by implication, Christ to the Levitical priests' (Attridge 1988: 1265). When Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham, he actually received it from the sons of Levi, descendants of Abraham. They had not been born at that time, but they were to descend from him. Also, in the Levitical order the Levites received tithes from the people. It can be concluded, therefore, by association, that Melchizedek received tithes not only from the Levites, but from all the people of Israel.

The law of Moses was superseded by Christ. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, a tribe that was not appointed to serve at the altar. This also indicated that the new priesthood was 'so radically different that it originated in a tribe from which no priest had ever come and concerning which Moses said nothing. A higher law then that of Moses must invest this new priest with his authority' (Trentham 1972: 53).

The new order of priesthood implies the suppression old Levitical order. Vernon McGee (McGee 1981: 65) states that in *service,* Christ's priesthood follows the order of Aaron – in the sacrifice and entering the Holy of Holies, but in his *person* he had no beginning or ending of days, and his priesthood follows the order of Melchizedek.

The Levitical order is part of the law of Moses; therefore it can be concluded that

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Christ, the high priest of this altogether different order supersedes the law of Moses. The writer of Hebrews states in 2:2-3 that the message spoken by angels (that is, the law of Moses) was inferior to the message of salvation brought by Christ. Therefore, the law of Moses, which established the Levitical order, was superseded by Christ.

Free access to God. One of the implications of the nonlevitical priesthood of Christ is that it secures free access to God, a privilege that was not possible during the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priest had to be the intermediary between man and God, and even the priest could not go into the Holy of Holies, the closest place of going into the presence of God Almighty. The access was highly restricted: only one person, the high priest could approach the mercy seat, and only once a year. On the other hand, Christ, the high priest after Melchizedek's order, went into the Holy of Holies to present his own body as sacrifice, and through him the access to God is secured to all who come. At the time of his sacrifice the veil of the temple was torn (Matthew 27:51) as a sign that the free access was ensured through Christ. He is the mediator through whom the access to God is completely free: 'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1Timothy 2:5).

A new covenant needed for a new priestly order. The priesthood had a very strong connection to the old covenant between God and his people. Therefore, a new priestly order meant a new covenant. That is what the writer of Hebrews brings to his readers' attention in 7:12, 22. It is not only a new covenant, but a better one, in line with all the better things emphasized in Hebrews.

## Blessings derived from Melchizedek's priestly order

Melchizedek's priestly order is not only superior but brings blessings that are available to all the believers who follow Christ. The implications of the nonlevitical priestly order already gave some glimpses of such blessings, and the following ones continue the line already started.

### *Righteousness and peace*

Melchizedek's name means king of righteousness. His realm was Salem, so he was also king of peace. Righteousness and peace. Barclay (Barclay 1976: 72) observes that 'the order is at once significant and inevitable. Righteousness must always come before peace.' It is in concordance with Romans 5:1: 'Therefore since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God.'

These two features belonged not only to Melchizedek, but to Christ too, from eternity. Regarding his righteousness, the Old Testament says: 'Your righteousness

is an everlasting righteousness' (Psalm 119:142). In the New Testament, the author of Hebrews refers to Christ's eternal righteousness: 'But unto the Son he says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom' (Hebrews 1:8).

Regarding his peace, the prophet Isaiah presents the child who was to be born, as 'The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:6). If he is everlasting, then his peace is everlasting too. Again, there is no doubt that Melchizedek derived his pattern from the preexistent Christ!

***Ministry of fortification and preparation***

It is rather remarkable that after returning victoriously from the war, Abraham is met by two kings almost at the same time: Melchizedek, king of Salem, and Bera, king of Sodom. Bera offered Abraham all the goods they took away from the defeated kings, but Abraham did not accept it. His character shines at this point as he chooses to live by faith in God and rely on his provision. Commentators suggest that Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek provided the needed sustenance to be strong in the face of temptation coming from the king of Sodom. In other words, Melchizedek fortified and prepared Abraham to stand against temptation. Some think that Melchizedek did not appear on the stage before Abraham would go to war against Chedorlaomer, but before meeting the king of Sodom, because this was a more serious spiritual battle than against the enemy kings (Mackintosh 2000: 91). When Melchizedek blessed Abraham he reminded him that the most High God is the possessor of heaven and earth (Genesis 14:19), so Abraham can completely rely on him. Theodore Epp says that 'because Abraham had been spiritually fortified beforehand, he was ready when the king of Sodom offered him earthly riches' (Epp 1970: 83). In his answer to Bera, Abraham points out that he had already made up his mind not to take anything from the spoils. He could have decided this before going to war, during the war, or during his meeting with Melchizedek. Although there is not enough information as to the time of that decision, Melchizedek's blessing must have fortified him for sure.

Christ's ministry of fortification and preparation to stand against temptations and choose God's way is part of his high priestly ministry. Even now, he is interceding for his disciples (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). Just knowing that provides strength to the believer, not to mention the happenings in the spiritual world and in the heart, soul, and mind of the believer, generated by this intercession!

***The promise of a heavenly Canaan***

In the time of Abraham, bread and wine were inseparably associated with the ownership of land, since only the owners could produce these. Philip Manning (Manning

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2000: 159) emphasizes that these gifts represented the land from which they were produced and when Melchizedek brings bread and wine to Abraham, he symbolically is presenting the land from which they were produced. In other words, this is a reference to the promise God made to Abraham about the land of Canaan that he and his descendants would possess. Manning continues with the New Testament promise of an eternal, heavenly Canaan for all true believers (Manning 2000: 160).

The blessing that derives from the promise of a heavenly Canaan becomes reality through Jesus Christ. While Melchizedek's act of bringing bread and wine can be interpreted as a reference to the promised land, it is brought to reality only through Christ.

### *Bread and wine from the priestly office*

There have been suggestions that the bread and wine offered by Melchizedek make one think of the eucharist. While there is no direct biblical support for that, there have been attempts to bring indirect biblical support of this idea. Actually, the blessing of the eternal, heavenly home, symbolized by the produce of the land, bread and wine, is reachable only by the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice, symbolized by the bread and wine! Therefore, bread and wine are indeed the outstanding blessings of his priestly office!

Christ is obviously more outstanding in this act than Melchizedek. He offered himself (his body and blood) for bringing the believers into an everlasting kingdom, while Melchizedek offered only the produce of the land, even if that was an important symbol.

Long before Melchizedek brought bread and wine to Abraham, the sacrifice of Christ had been already planned and known from eternity: 'And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Revelations 13:8). Chronology helps understand once again that Melchizedek's pattern is built upon Christ's.

## Conclusion

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews carefully presents Jesus Christ as our divinely appointed high priest; God declared him high priest according to Melchizedek's priestly order. He is better than any other high priest, and everything about him is not only better, but it is perfect. The Old Testament order was just a shadow of the better things that Christ and his redemptive work brought into the world.

While analyzing the superiority and uniqueness of Christ's priestly order, it was

important to realize that his priestly order is not only a shift from the Levitical order to Melchizedek's. Melchizedek's priestly order is superior, but he derives his pattern from the preexistent Christ. Therefore, Christ's frame of reference goes back not only to Melchizedek, but to himself in his eternal existence. In God's eternal plan and wisdom, Melchizedek appeared on the stage when God's redemptive plan started to unfold in the history of redemption. He had to be a type of Christ, prefiguring the Lord's ministry. Melchizedek was a signpost that pointed in two directions: back to the eternal Christ, and forward to the Christ who came to sacrifice himself, rose from the dead, and lives forever as our unique High Priest!

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