

# CHRIST, THE SUPREME HIGH PRIEST

C. Stephen David | *Ekklesia Evangelical Fellowship* | March 19, 2023

**What drives many religions?** Fear and greed.

**What must drive believers?** The glory of God and love for God.

**2 Peter 3:18**, But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

**Steven Cole:** If you want to endure hardship and even persecution, if you want God's blessing on your family and in your personal life, if you want to resist temptation and live a righteous life, **seek God for a clearer vision of the glory of Christ.**

One way to grow in the knowledge of Christ Jesus is to know His supreme high priesthood over the Levitical priesthood. He has become so for your sake.

**Hebrews 5:11-6:20 [Four Sermons: Christ our Sympathizer and Savior [2 Parts]; Press On To Maturity, Perseverance of the Saints] is sandwiched between these verses [interlude]:**

- ❖ **Hebrews 5:9-10**, And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, **being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.**
- ❖ **Hebrews 6:19-20**, We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, **having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.**

**After offering a word of rebuke for their slow learning and not being able to persevere in their faith in Hebrews 5:11-6:20, the author now goes on to explain how Christ is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.**

**Note:** Hebrews 7-10 speak about the supremacy of Christ over the Levitical priesthood and the law. Therefore, I will be thematic for your better comprehension rather than go verse by verse. Please keep reading these chapters.

**The author begins the supremacy of Christ's priesthood in Hebrews 4:14 and explains through the rest of the chapters until 10.**

- ❖ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

In order for us to understand Christ's supremacy over the Levitical priesthood, we must understand who the high priests are:

## A. THE ROLE OF HIGH PRIESTS

The word "priest," with and without modifiers, appears over 700 times in the OT and over 80 times in the NT.

- ▶ Remember the promise of God to Abraham, "I will bless you and multiply you."
- ▶ Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, and Levi was the third son of Jacob through Leah. **Levi begat Kohath, Kohath begat Amram, and Amram begat Moses and Aaron [Levi was their great grandfather].**
- ▶ From the tribe of Levites, priests came from the bloodline of Aaron. Aaron was the first high priest and his son Eleazer was the next high priest.

**Hebrews 5:1**, For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

- ▶ **Chosen from among men** [only men were high priests]
- ▶ **To act on behalf of men in relation to God** [to represent people to God, mediators, intercessors]
- ▶ **To offer gifts and sacrifices for sins**
  - **Why?** Because God is holy, He hates sin, he punishes sin. Sacrifices speak about the satisfaction of divine justice.
  - If there was no sin, there wasn't a need for high priests.

**Note:** Unless we understand the holiness of God and the depravity of our hearts, we don't appreciate the necessity and ministry of a high priest.

## B. CHRIST THE GREAT AND BETTER HIGH PRIEST THAN THE LEVITICAL PRIESTS

Levitical High Priests	Christ, the High Priest
<p><b>IMPERFECT:</b>  <b>Hebrews 5:2</b>, "He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since <b>he himself is beset with weakness.</b></p> <p><b>Hebrews 5:3</b>, Because of this he is obligated to offer</p>	<p><b>PERFECT:</b>  <b>Hebrews 4:15</b>, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, <b>yet without sin.</b></p> <p><b>Hebrews 7:26</b>, For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, <b>holy</b></p>

<p>sacrifice <b>for his own sins</b> just as he does <b>for those of the people.</b></p> <p><b>Hebrews 7:28</b>, For the law appoints <b>men in their weakness as high priests</b></p>	<p>[without sin], <b>innocent</b> [without evil], <b>unstained</b> [without blemish], <b>separated from sinners</b> [not fellowshiping with sinners but not partaking in the sinful lifestyle of sinners], and <b>exalted above the heavens</b> [resurrection, ascension and glorification].</p> <p><b>Hebrews 7:28</b>, For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a <b>Son who has been made perfect forever.</b></p> <p><b>Hebrews 5:8-9</b>, Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. <b>And being made perfect</b>, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,</p>
<p><b>REGULARLY:</b> <b>Hebrews 7:27</b>, He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices <b>daily</b>, first for his own sins and then for those of the people,</p> <p><i>Here the "daily" morning and evening offering of lambs is in view (Ex. 29:38-42), although the annual Day of Atonement will be discussed later (Heb. 9:25-10:4).</i></p> <p><b>Hebrews 9:25-26</b>, Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places <b>every year</b> with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer</p>	<p><b>ONCE FOR ALL:</b> <b>Hebrews 7:27</b>, He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this <b>once for all</b> when he offered up himself.</p> <p><b>Hebrews 9:26</b>, But as it is, he has appeared <b>once for all</b> at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.</p>

<p>repeatedly since the foundation of the world.  <b>Hebrews 10:11</b>, And every priest stands <b>daily</b> at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.</p>	<p><b>Hebrews 10:12</b>, But when Christ had offered <b>for all time a single sacrifice</b> for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,</p>
<p><b>MORTAL:</b>  <b>Hebrews 7:23</b>, The former priests were many in number, because they were <b>prevented by death</b> from continuing in office,   <b>Hebrews 7:8</b>, In the one case tithes are received by <b>mortal men</b>,</p>	<p><b>IMMORTAL:</b>  <b>Hebrews 7:23</b>, The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but <b>he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.</b>   <b>Hebrews 7:15-17</b>, This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, <b>but by the power of an indestructible life.</b> For it is witnessed of him, ñ<b>You are a priest forever</b>, after the order of Melchizedek.ò   <b>Hebrews 5:6; 6:20; 7:17; 7:21</b> ñ<b>You are a priest forever</b>ò [citing <b>Psalm 110:4</b>]</p>
<p><b>LAW:</b>  <b>Hebrews 7:11</b>, Now if perfection had been attainable <b>through the Levitical priesthood</b> (for under it the people received the law),   <b>Hebrews 8:4</b>, Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there</p>	<p><b>OATH:</b>  <b>Hebrews 5:5</b>, So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was <b>appointed by him who said to him</b>, ñ<b>You are my Son, today I have begotten you</b> (cited <b>Psalm 2:7</b>)   <b>Hebrews 7:20-21</b>, And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was <b>made a priest with an oath</b> by the one</p>

<p>are priests who offer gifts <b>according to the law.</b></p> <p><b>Hebrews 7:28</b>, For the law <b>appoints</b> men in their weakness as high priests,</p>	<p>who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever."</p> <p><b>Hebrews 7:28</b>, For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, <b>but the word of the oath</b>, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.</p>
<p><b>AARON:</b> <b>Hebrews 5:4</b>, And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, <b>just as Aaron was.</b></p>	<p><b>MELCHIZEDEK:</b> <b>Hebrews 5:13-14</b>, For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. <b>For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah</b>, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.</p> <p><i>The Lord Jesus descended from the kingly line of David, who descended from Judah. "To call a descendent of Judah a high priest' would have been wholly unacceptable to Jewish tradition."</i></p> <p><b>Hebrews 5:6</b>, as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, <b>after the order of Melchizedek.</b>" [Ps. 110:4]</p> <p><b>Hebrews 5:9-10</b>, And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest <b>after the order of Melchizedek.</b></p> <p><b>Hebrews 6:20</b>, here Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever <b>after the order of Melchizedek.</b></p> <p><b>Hebrews 7:15-17</b>, This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the</p>

	likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, <b>after the order of Melchizedek.</b> "
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### C. CHRIST, A HIGH PRIEST IN THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK

Without a high priest, for sinners, there is no atonement and reconciliation with God. A high priest is mandatory for the purification of sins.

**Since Christ is not from the Levitical priesthood, in the order of Aaron, how is His priesthood justified? It is in the order of Melchizedek. Who was Melchizedek?**

**Hebrews 7:4, See--**[a command to pay careful attention] **how great this man was**

**Everything we know about Melchizedek comes from Genesis 14:18-20, Psalm 110:4, and Hebrews 7.**

**Genesis chapters 12-13:** When God called Abraham to leave his country, he left for the land of Canaan. His nephew, Lot, also went along with him. After their cattle started to grow and multiply, there was strife between their shepherds. So Abraham gave a choice to Lot to choose whatever land he preferred, so Lot chose Sodom and Gomorrah.

**Genesis 14:** Four kings of certain countries waged war against the five kings, from these five kings were kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. These four kings defeated all these five kings, including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. Since Lot stayed in this place, he was also taken captive with all his possessions.

When Abraham heard this news, he immediately took his trained men, 318 of them, and fought against the enemies who took his nephew, Lot, as their captive. He defeated them and brought back Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

This is what the Scripture records in **Genesis 14:17-20,**

After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said,

Blessed be Abram by God Most High,  
Possessor of heaven and earth;  
and blessed be God Most High,  
who has delivered your enemies into your hand! **[Consider the acknowledgment of God rather than praising Abraham]**

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

**This is the only information that we have about Melchizedek. Then the author of Hebrews picks up in Hebrews 7:1-3, For this Melchizedek,**

- ▶ **king** of Salem,
- ▶ **priest** of the Most High God,
- ▶ **met Abraham** returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything.
- ▶ He is first, by translation of his name, **king of righteousness**, [In Hebrew, *Melchi* means "my king," and *zedek* means "righteousness."]
- ▶ and then he is also **king of Salem**, that is, king of peace.
  - Melchizedek is the king of peace because he is the king of righteousness.
  - **Psalm 85:10**, "righteousness and peace kiss each other."
- ▶ He is **without father or mother or genealogy**,
  - Levitical priesthood was based on recorded lineage. Melchizedek didn't have a family line of priests. There is no account of his parents or children.
  - Genesis is a book structured by genealogies in which births and deaths, fathers and (among the patriarchs) even mothers are listed [Tracing from Adam to Abraham]. But it does not tell us about Melchizedek, which makes him exceptional.
- ▶ having **neither beginning of days nor end of life**,
  - All Levitical priests served limited terms of office—no more than thirty years. Simon J. Kistemaker, says a priest could assume his priestly duties "as soon as the first signs of manhood made their appearance," but according to rabbinical tradition "he was not actually installed till he was twenty years of age." The period of service for a priest might cover twenty to thirty years, but the end would come.

- **Luke 1:23**, And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

**Dennis E Johnson, Bible commentary:** Melchizedek is set apart from ordinary human experience by these **five missing pieces**— **father, mother, family tree, birth, and death**. Some have understood this description as teaching that the priest-king who met Abraham was a supernatural manifestation of God in human form (theophany)— specifically, an appearance of God the Son in human history before his incarnation (Christophany). However, it is more probable that our preacher does not view Melchizedek as a Christophany. **Rather, he treats the silences of Genesis 14**— **facts about the historical Melchizedek** that Moses omitted from the narrative of his encounter with Abraham— as intended by the Holy Spirit, Scripture’s divine author, **to portray that ancient priest-king as resembling [aphomioiō] the Son of God**. It also fits the natural reading of the Genesis account, which presents Melchizedek as holding an established political position as king of Salem, unlike theophany accounts in which God’s appearances are brief and extraordinary (Gen. 18:1–33; 32:22–32; Ex. 3:1–4:17; Josh. 5:13–15).

**Steven Cole:** A few have interpreted Melchizedek’s lack of genealogy and the next phrase, that he had “neither beginning of days nor end of life,” to mean that he was superhuman, either an angel or a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. But the vast majority of commentators reject that interpretation and agree that Melchizedek was simply a great man who lived at the same time as Abraham.

- ▶ but **resembling the Son of God** he continues a priest forever.
  - Melchizedek existed to point us to the glory of the Son of God.
  - Melchizedek was a high priest without a priestly line. Christ also is a high priest without a family line of priests. He was chosen directly by God.
  - Melchizedek was identified both as king and priest. Similarly, Christ bears the titles of king and priest.
  - Melchizedek was both a king of righteousness and a king of peace. Christ also is the king of righteousness and the king of peace.

### **Argument:**

- ❖ **Hebrews 7:7**, It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.

### **Two reasons why Melchizedek was superior to Abraham:**

#### **1. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek**



**Hebrews 7:4**, See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils!

**Note:** There was no Mosaic law, and yet Abraham gave a tenth of his earnings.

- **Levi, who received tithes, actually paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham**

**Hebrews 7:5**, And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham.

**Hebrews 7:8-10**, In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, **paid tithes [to Melchizedek] through Abraham**, for he was still in the loins [still in the body] of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

## 2. **Melchizedek blessed Abraham** [only the greater will bless the smaller]

**Hebrews 7:1-2**, For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything.

**Hebrews 7:6-7**, But this man [Melchizedek] who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and **blessed him who had the promises**. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.

**Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, and Melchizedek blessed him. His argument was that:**

- ▶ Melchizedek is supreme to Abraham,
- ▶ Melchizedek's high priesthood was superior to the Levitical priesthood that came through Abraham.
- ▶ Melchizedek had no priestly line and was unique in his priesthood.
- ▶ Hence, Christ is the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, whose high priesthood is supreme over the Old Testament priests.

**Encouragement:**

- ❖ **Hebrews 4:16**, Let us then with confidence **draw near to the throne of grace**, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- ❖ **Hebrews 7:25**, Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who **draw near to God through him**, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

**Invitation to unbelievers:** You are in the bondage of sin. Christ alone saves you. He went to the cross for your sins.

**Invitation to believers:**

1. Draw near to God in your sin and suffering. You need God the most when you are weakest.
    - ▶ You receive nothing that God offers if you don't draw near to God.
  2. Draw near to God through Christ
  3. Believe that Christ is able save you
  4. Know that Christ is interceding for you
    - ▶ OT priests only atoned. Christ the high priest not only atoned but also intercedes for us.
- ❖ **Romans 8:34**, Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that, who was raised who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.
    - **Interceding** [present continuous tense]: speaks to His Father on our behalf

**Robert Murray McCheyne** (1813-1843), pioneer missionary to America, testified, "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me!"

**Next sermon:**

- ❖ **Hebrews 7:22**, This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

**Note:** Please read Hebrews chapters 7-10.