

The Letter to the Hebrews: Our High Priest According to Melchizedek

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The video version of this teaching is at: <https://youtu.be/Ldf-1JUQbWQ>

The reading is Hebrews 5:12-7:28

As the Jewish believers face being cut off from the Temple in Jerusalem, the writer of Hebrews encourages them to continue in their faith. He explains that their faith was in Yeshua who he identified clearly as being the Son of God with an inheritance and testimony greater than that of the angels. In spite of the trials the believers were going through, they also had an inheritance waiting for them. That inheritance is described as the entering into the "rest of God" which will be found in the world to come of which this whole letter to the Hebrews is about!

The author explained that in the world to come, Yeshua is the High priest.

Hebrews 4:14 NKJV 14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

However, Yeshua is not of the lineage of Aaron, and, therefore, according to the Aaronic priesthood, Yeshua cannot be a priest. How is that Yeshua is a priest in the world to come? This understanding requires that a believer pass beyond the basics in his or her foundation in scripture and delve a little deeper.

At the beginning of chapter five in the letter to the Hebrews, the author explains that any high priest who serves God must also be called by God. This was true of the Aaronic priesthood established at Mt. Sinai.

Exodus 28:1 NKJV 1 "Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron and Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

Before acting in the role of priest, Aaron and his sons had to be ordained and purified. They, also, had to bring an offering for their sins as described in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8. The calling of Yeshua was through the order of Melchizedek and the dedication of Yeshua was through His own obedience even to death.

Hebrews 5:6-11 NKJV 6 As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek"; 7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, 8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, 10 called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," 11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

Instead of needing a sin offering for Himself like the sons of Aaron require; Yeshua's death was a sin offering for all who come to Him in obedience as High Priest. This concept was and is a difficult one to grasp. The author expresses his frustration that these Jewish believers brought up in the scriptures and taught by no other than James the Just are still struggling with putting aside the physical world and embracing the world to come. He explains the importance of maturing in the faith.

Hebrews 5:12-14 NKJV 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid

food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Those who are mature in faith are able to discern both good and evil. They are able to discern between true and false doctrine. Paul writes to Timothy that he should continue in the scriptures and pay attention to his teaching or doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:13 and 16 NKJV 13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine... 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

However, in this letter to the Hebrews, the author indicates that the recipients of his letter have moved backwards! Instead of growing, they have lost or forgotten the basics and are in danger of losing their faith! Before continuing to explain about the priesthood of Melchizedek, the writer lays out six fundamental principles. These basics are the foundation for both maintaining faith and obtaining a deeper understanding.

Hebrews 6:1-3 NKJV 1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits.

The word perfection in this passage is the Greek word “tel-i-ot-ace,” number 5047 in Strong’s Greek Concordance meaning completeness. The writer is telling his readers that he will go on to explain the completeness of the principles of faith while reminding them of the fundamentals. Before doing so, he issues a strong warning.

Hebrews 6:4-6 NKJV 4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, 6 and who have fallen away; it is impossible, I say, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify the Son of God afresh to themselves and put Him to an open shame.

This is a difficult passage. It seems to say that anyone who has a lapse in their walk of faith can no longer be saved. Many of us know from our personal experience that we can repent and turn back to God. The continuing message of all the prophets was to repent and return to God. The prophet Micah testifies to God’s mercy.

Micah 7:18-20 NKJV 18 Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not keep His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. 19 He will turn again; He will have pity on us. He will trample our iniquities. Yea, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. 20 You will give faithfulness to Jacob, mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

John tells us that when we sin, our repentance will lead to forgiveness.

1 John 1:8-9 NKJV 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So what exactly is the writer of Hebrews trying to convey when he uses the phrase "fallen away?" The Greek word for this phrase is "par-ap-ip'-to," number 3895 meaning to fall aside, to apostatize, to fall away. Is this falling away merely a lapse or a deliberate turning away? The Greek Septuagint uses this word in two places in the Tanach. One of which is Ezekiel 18:24.

Ezekiel 18:24 NKJV 24 "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.

This turning away here and again in Ezekiel 20:27 is a deliberate turning away from God! This is an outright rejection of God and deliberate turning to doing evil. John writes of this rejection of Messiah as being the spirit of Antichrist.

1 John 2:22 NKJV 22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

The author of Hebrews is telling his readers that those who fall back from the six elementary principles that he calls the milk are in danger of rejecting the entire gospel message of salvation! They are in danger of denying the Father and the Son. This may seem a harsh rebuke, but that is exactly what the Sanhedrin and the ruling priests were telling the believing Jews that they needed to do in order for their access to the Temple to be restored. But, if they reject Yeshua, it is as if they are back at the cross where Yeshua was crucified and joining in with those gathered around who shouted out for Yeshua's death!

After this severe rebuke, the writer goes on to remind the believers of their faith and the actions supporting that faith. He reminds them of the promise to Abraham and Abraham's patience while waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. He reminded them that the promise to Abraham was guaranteed by nothing less than the oath of God.

Hebrews 6:17-18 NKJV 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

This surety of the promise to Abraham secured by God's oath is the anchor that kept and continues to keep the believer safe from the storms that rage around them and us!

Hebrews 6:19-20 NKJV 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

The writer, then, returns to the deeper principles one of which is that Yeshua is a priest of the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek makes his appearance after Abraham saves Lot from Chedorlaomer and the kings allied with him.

Genesis 14:18-20 NKJV 18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all.

This account of Abraham's meeting with Melchizedek is quite short including only a few points. Melchizedek was the human king of Salem. He was also a priest of the Most High God not of the false gods of the other Canaanite cities. He greeted Abraham or Abram as he was then known with bread and wine indicating a shared meal. He pronounced a blessing on Abraham. Abraham gives a tithe of all the spoils of the battle to Melchizedek. The writer of Hebrews enumerates the points of comparison with Yeshua.

Hebrews 7:1-3 NKJV 1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," 3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Melchizedek is both priest of the Most High God and king of righteousness and peace. However, contrary to the line of Abraham, Melchizedek's lineage is not included. The lineage of the Aaronic priesthood was kept meticulously. When the Israelites returned to Jerusalem at the end of the Babylonian captivity, only the priests who could prove that they descended from Aaron were allowed to function as priests when the new temple was built. The writer of Hebrews pairs this with Psalm one hundred ten verse four.

Psalms 110:4 NKJV 4 The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

With this verse, it is as if Melchizedek continues forever.

Abraham, who himself was a priest for his family bringing offerings to the LORD, gave Melchizedek a tithe. By doing so, he acknowledged that Melchizedek was a priest of a higher order than he was.

Hebrews 7:4-7 NKJV 4 Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. 5 And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; 6 but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.

Since Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek and Levi descended from Abraham, it is as if the Levitical priesthood owed tithes to Melchizedek. This makes the priesthood of Melchizedek of a higher order than that of the Levitical priesthood which was and is imperfect.

Hebrews 7:11-12 NKJV 11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.

Taken by itself, this seems to say that both the priesthood and the law or Torah have been changed or done away with. However, we must keep in mind that the writer is referring to the world to come! Yeshua is not a priest here in this world.

Hebrews 7:14-16 NKJV 14 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. 15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

It is because Yeshua comes with this greater power that He is able to bring His followers to perfection or completion.

Hebrews 7:18-19 NKJV 18 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Once again, it bears repeating; this will be in the world to come. Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians that we will continue to be perfected until the day of Yeshua.

Philippians 1:6 NAS95 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

The work and the priesthood began at the time of Yeshua's death and resurrection but neither will be in full force until the world to come. At that time, not only will we be perfected but all things will, then, be subjected to the authority of Yeshua.

Hebrews 2:8b NKJV 8b For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

The Aaronic priesthood, unlike Yeshua's priesthood, is not an eternal priesthood in that one man continues to hold the office. Instead, each man dies and the mantle passes on to the next priest.

Hebrews 7:23-25 NKJV 23 Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. 24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

It is through Yeshua's identity as Son of God and His position as higher than the angels that uniquely qualify Yeshua for the role of the High Priest in the world to come. Unlike the Aaronic priesthood, Yeshua never needed to bring a sin offering for Himself.

Hebrews 7:26-28 NKJV 26 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.

God's oath is a guarantee that He will fulfill His promises. He swore to Abraham that He would bless him after Abraham offered up Isaac as God asked of him.

Genesis 22:16-17 NKJV 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - 17 "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

The author of Hebrews quotes this passage as an example of the surety of God's oath. The same God who swore to Abraham, swore also through David in a Psalm that the priesthood of Messiah would be forever.

Hebrews 7:20-22 NKJV 20 And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath 21 (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn

And will not relent, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek'), 22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

The Aaronic priesthood was established by a perpetual covenant with God that only those of the line of Aaron could minister in his dwelling place on Earth. Yeshua's priesthood was established by an oath of God through David that, in the world to come when all things are under Yeshua's feet, He will be a priest forever. It is through His priesthood that the Jewish believers who could no longer bring their sacrifices to the Temple in Jerusalem could still and can still approach God in His heavenly Temple.

Study Questions:

1. What are the six fundamental principles outlined in Hebrews 6:1-3? Why are these six principles fundamental to our faith?
2. There seems to be a difference between a lapse in our walk of faith and a falling away. What is this difference? Who are some examples of each of these situations in the Bible?
3. The author of Hebrews cites two events in Abraham's life, the meeting with Melchizedek in Genesis 14 and the oath God gave Abraham after he offered up Isaac in Genesis 22:15-19. How do these two events point to Yeshua as our high priest?
4. Psalm 110 is quoted or referenced by Yeshua, Peter, Paul as well as the author of Hebrews. How does it prophesy about Yeshua and the world to come?
5. In the video, we showed that Yeshua's priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek does not do away with the Aaronic priesthood. Do you agree with this conclusion? What additional evidence can you find in the Bible that supports this conclusion?
6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

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