

ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

PART 24

KINGDOM PROPHECY, PART 5

The author of Hebrews compared the order of Melchizedek with the order of Aaronic priests.

Hebrews 7:4–10 ⁴Now observe [θεωπέω] how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. ⁵And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. ⁶But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. ⁷But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. ⁸In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. ⁹And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, ¹⁰for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

The author is commanding his readers to observe how great this man Melchizedek was. The word θεωπέω means, in this context, to understand, to perceive. They are to pay careful attention to the details being related to them concerning Melchizedek. This isn't a suggestion; it is an imperative, a command. These Jewish Christians need to know and understand these things. That is no less a truth that is applicable to us.

Tithes are paid in recognition of the superiority and worthiness of the one receiving them. In fact, Abraham paid a tithe to Melchizedek that consisted of the very best of the spoils he appropriated in the war. Abraham is acknowledged to be the great patriarch which is an acknowledgement of his superiority, yet he acknowledged the superiority of the king/priest Melchizedek. The Levitical priests collected tithes from the Israelites but Melchizedek received tithes from the patriarch of Israel. In terms of who is giving and receiving tithes, Melchizedek is superior to the priestly order of Aaron and Levi.

As an aside, many people use this Scripture to command tithes today. Some of them recognize that tithing was a specific command to the Jews, but, based on this Scripture, they claim that tithing predates the Mosaic Law's command to tithe; therefore, it remains a command apart from the Mosaic Law. The first problem with this doctrine is Abraham paid this tithe one time only and never tithed to Melchizedek again. Secondly, Abraham tithed the spoils of war and not his ordinary income. The situations are not the same and no doctrinal commands applicable to the church can be found in this Scripture. We give strictly on the basis of grace giving as presented in the New Testament.

The person blessing another is in the position of superiority. This concept is of immense importance to the Jews because Abraham had the Covenant promises. The assertion that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham would be real shock to them.

The Aaronic order of priests were all mortal men; they all died and they were all replaced by other mortal men who themselves died. Melchizedek was a priest forever.

The patriarchal head of the Aaronic order of priests, Levi, paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham. "Abraham, as a representative of all his descendents [sic], including Levi, by means of the concept of corporate solidarity [Fruchtenbaum calls it the principle of imputation, which emphasizes a seminal relationship], contained in his body the seed of all his offspring. Levi, who centuries later would receive tithes from the people, paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham, since he was considered by the author to be 'still in the body of his ancestor.' For the author of Hebrews, since Levi was reckoned as still in the body of his ancestor, actions taken by Abraham were actions taken by Levi as well." [David L. Allen, *The New American Commentary: Hebrews*, p. 418].

The point is that since the patriarchs recognized the superiority of the order of Melchizedek, then those who are descended from the patriarchs should also recognize the superiority of that priestly order.

The Aaronic order of priests was temporary and subject to change.

Hebrews 7:11–19 ¹¹Now if perfection [τελείωσις] was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another [ἕτερος] priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? ¹²For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. ¹³For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. ¹⁴For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. ¹⁵And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷For it is attested of Him, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." ¹⁸For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness [ἀσθενής] and uselessness [ἀνωφελής] ¹⁹(for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

There was no perfection, or spiritual maturity, inherently attached to or produced by the Levitical system. If there was, a new order of priests would have been unnecessary. Because the priesthood had changed, the Law had to undergo change, in this case, it

was replaced. In other words, the Mosaic Law was rendered inoperative by Jesus who was superior to the old order of priests. Perfection is God's goal but the Mosaic Law and its priesthood could not bring about perfection. Perfection, τελείωσις, means to cause perfection or fulfillment and accomplishment. The Law and its priesthood could not do this; therefore, a priesthood would be established that could do it. The prophecy in Psalm 110:4 is an indication that the Levitical priesthood would one day be replaced by a priest belonging to the order according to Melchizedek. Obviously, this means the priest according to the order of Melchizedek will not be a priest descended from Levi and Aaron.

Another, ἕτερος, means another of a qualitatively different kind. Once a new order of priest was appointed, the old order of priests was obsolete and set aside. This new order of priests is an order that is qualitatively different and distinct from and superior to the old order. It is still an order of priests but it is a completely different order in form and function. The old order was based on physical descent and no inherently spiritual qualifications were necessary. Jesus, who was raised from the dead and lives forever, will enjoy the power of an indestructible, perpetual life. The Law is set aside because it is weak and useless. It is weak because it has a limited capacity to produce God's desired results and it is useless because it is unprofitable and of no special benefit; they cannot provide justification. There is no advantage to the Mosaic Law and the Aaronic priesthood. But there will be great benefit to the ministry of this Priest who ministers according to the order of Melchizedek. The author reiterates that perfection, spiritual maturity, could not come through the Law of Moses. The Law could only point to the One who could make perfect; it was a tutor as Paul put it. Christ is a better hope and through Him we can draw near to God because as our High Priest He provides access for us.

The priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek is unchangeable and perpetual.

Hebrews 7:20–25 ²⁰And inasmuch as it was not without an oath ²¹(for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER'"); ²²so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. ²³The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, ²⁴but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. ²⁵Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

The Melchizedek priesthood is established on the oath of God and that renders it unchangeable and eternal. The Aaronic Priesthood was based on physical descent and it was not established on the basis of an oath of God. Christ is the guarantee that a better covenant between God and man is not only possible, it will come about. As the guarantor, Christ bears the responsibility that the obligations of the covenant will be fulfilled. The New Covenant will be fulfilled because the High Priest will insure it. The

Levitical system of priests had to have thousands of priests throughout the years because they had a finite number of years to minister and then they had to be replaced. They could not perpetually serve because they died. But the Lord lives forever and therefore His priesthood is perpetual. We have no need of many priests in a line of priests; we have one High Priest who lives and serves forever. He is the eternal Priest who is able to save forever and He is available to intercede forever. His ministry has no end and it cannot be terminated by infirmity and death. He has the power of salvation and He is the means of salvation which is by grace through faith. Through Him and through His ministry as their Priest, believers can draw near to God. The believer is eternally secure because salvation is dependent on Him and not on the individual person. Not only are we saved by Him but He keeps us saved as well.

Hebrews 7:26–28 ²⁶For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. ²⁸For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

The priests of the Aaronic order were sinful men who needed to offer sacrifices for their own sins but humanity needed a sinless Priest and Christ Jesus is that Priest. Christ was the perfect sacrifice in five ways. He is holy and incapable of committing sins. He was innocent and there was nothing in Him that could even remotely be considered evil or hateful to mankind. He was sinless and morally pure. Sin could not stain Him because He never sinned in any way. There is nothing that can or would defile Him in such a way that He could be disqualified from the priesthood. The Aaronic priests were concerned with outward appearances and obsessed with ritual purity which could not fix their sin problem. They could not attain to the sinless purity Christ possesses. He is now separated from sinners as He ministers in the true Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle in heaven. He is separated from sinners by virtue of His presence in the Third Heaven at this time.

Due to the work of Christ, there is no longer any sacrifice sufficient or necessary for atonement. The daily offerings are no longer necessary and the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement are no longer necessary.

Dr. Merrill believes that David also acted as a priest in the order of Melchizedek when he supervised the transport of the Ark into Jerusalem in 1 Chronicles 15-17. "Psalm 110 likewise speaks of David's kingship in a manner that transcends the occupation of a mere political office. This time, however, it is not his sonship that is stressed but rather his priesthood. The importance of this is not only its tie-in to Melchizedek, a contemporary of the patriarchs, but the complete by-passing once again of the whole Mosaic covenantal and worship institution. David functioned as both king and priest not by virtue of his Israelite citizenship but because he stood in the direct continuum of Abrahamic promise and fulfillment. This is clearly seen in the initiation of the Davidic

Covenant as recorded in 1 Chronicles 15–17. Having prepared facilities for the ark and having appointed personnel to serve as its ministers, David, clothed in the priestly ephod, brought the ark to its new resting place (1 Chron. 15:25–28). He then officiated at a sacrifice (16:1–3), an act which, of course, would be entirely inappropriate were he undertaking the duties of an Aaronic priest. Then, in celebration of the establishment of both ark and throne, David composed and sang a thanksgiving hymn (16:8–36) in which he made direct reference to the Abrahamic Covenant (16:15–17) but avoided any mention of the Mosaic. Even in the account of the revelation of the dynastic covenant to David and his prayerful response he made no explicit appeal to the Mosaic Covenant though Israel as God's people and David's nation held a prominent place (16:7, 9, 22, 24). Equally impressive is the patriarchal-Davidic association in the New Testament where, of course, there is the extra dimension of the fulfillment of Davidic dynastic claims in Jesus Christ. Matthew commenced his genealogy with the rubric, "The genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1). What is emphasized is the fact that the Messiah has His historical roots in Abraham and that He has come as a Davidic king in response to the promises to the patriarchs. That this was Israel's messianic expectation is clear from the acclaim of the multitudes when Jesus rode in triumph into Jerusalem: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 21:9). Jesus Himself confirmed this when He pointed out to the Pharisees that when they identified the Messiah as the son of David they were at the same time conceding Messiah's anteriority to and lordship over David, a matter patently clear from Psalm 110 (Matt. 22:41–46). The son of David is David's Lord, an observation that heightens the significance of David's priestly and regal roles. This same psalm describes the messianic King as a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. The author of Hebrews made much of this point and though he nowhere mentioned David in this connection he spoke of Jesus Christ as such a Priest precisely as the psalmist did of David. David and Jesus Christ, as Melchizedekian priests, functioned outside the Mosaic priestly order and in an inherently more universal and comprehensive way since, as Hebrews argued, even Levi in Abraham's loins paid tithe to Melchizedek. The continuum Melchizedek-David-Christ was thus uninterrupted by Mosaism in the priestly role just as that of Abraham-David-Christ was in the regal. A major purpose of the Book of Ruth is to establish this very continuity, at least between Abraham and David." [Eugene H. Merrill, "The Book of Ruth: Narration and Shared Themes," in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146, no. 566 (April-June 1968), p. 136-137].

The Bible contains many prophecies that deal directly with the Messianic King and His Kingdom. We will examine some representative prophecies in order to understand what the Bible means by the Messianic Kingdom.

The Kingdom is an important element in the Covenants God made with Israel. These Covenants are unconditional. They promise Israel land, a King, and spiritual renewal. We will specifically study them later.

Promises of a Messianic King abound in Scripture. Psalm 2 reveals God plan for God the Son to be the King on Mt. Zion. This Psalm contrasts with Psalm 1 which begins with those who delight in the Law as opposed to these kings in Psalm 2 who despise it.

Psalm 2:1–12 ¹Why are the nations in an uproar [רָגַז] And the peoples devising a vain thing [רִיק]? ²The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ³“Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!” ⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. ⁵Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, ⁶“But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.” ⁷“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. ⁹‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’” ¹⁰Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. ¹¹Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. ¹²Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

In context, this Psalm was a celebration of the Davidic kings despite the opposition of the nations around Israel. It was an exhortation to the pagan nations to abandon their plans to overthrow Yahweh and His anointed king, because it was futile to do so, and submit to the Son, the Davidic king, who was been appointed to rule those nations with a rod of iron. It is also clearly a Messianic prophecy of the King and His Kingdom. This Psalm was applied to the early church in Acts 4:25-26 when Peter and John were persecuted for their faith.

This Psalm is full of eschatological revelation. Verses 1-3 are a perfect description of what is happening in the world right now. Be ever mindful that Satan is the god of this world at this time. Every nation on the earth answers to him to the degree allowed by God. He can only operate within the confines God has set for him, but he seems to have a pretty long leash to plot and attempt to subvert God's program for history. Not only is he subverting the nations of the world, but he is continuously, deliberately destroying the lives of billions of people.

1 Peter 5:8 ⁸Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Uproar, רָגַז, means to be restless or in rebellion. It is to conspire to be in open defiance of a king at a coronation implying tumult and disorderly conduct in the activity of attempting the overthrow of government. That is exactly what is happening now. The Son is away receiving His Kingdom from the Father (Luke 19:11-27) and the nations of the world, under the leadership of their god, Satan, are trying to prevent His assumption of the throne. This is not just a recent phenomenon of recent history; there have always been despots, dictators, and evil rulers in rebellion against God who have launched

coordinated attacks against God and His program for history. It may be more coordinated now with the advances in travel and communications we enjoy today, but that is a matter of degree and not a matter of recent occurrence. The word translated “vain thing,” רִיק, means emptiness, vanity, or nothingness. It is a state or condition not having any advantage, benefit, or result. The point is the nations and the world's people are always in rebellion against God but their plans will not be successful. They may look successful along the way, but they will ultimately fail. All of their plotting and planning will be completely futile in the end. Not only will their plans fail, but they will be destroyed in the end.

In verses 2 and 3, the rebellion is further described. The kings of the earth, Satan's minions, take a stand against God. They conspire together in this effort and these plots seem to be serving to bring the nations of the earth together unifying them. Progress is being made to advance the concept of a one world government and bring it into reality. These kings and rulers and their subjects are earth bound and their influence is limited but the omnipotent God they are fighting is in the heavens.

“Take a stand” translates יָצַב and it has an antagonistic meaning in this context; these kings and rulers are taking a stand against God. This is the same word used in 1 Samuel 17:16 to describe Goliath's arrogant challenges to the army of Israel. It may or may not be significant, but consider that Goliath lost his head over the stand he took!

1 Samuel 17:16 ¹⁶The Philistine came forward morning and evening for forty days and took his stand [יָצַב].

These kings and rulers are engaging in an exercise in futility but the death and destruction they ultimately bring about, far beyond the time of David, will be like nothing ever seen in history.

These kings and rulers are fighting against God and they know it. They do not want to be under the dominion of their Creator God. They have totally bought into Satan's lie that they can be like God and therefore be their own god and do whatever they desire without consequences. That's a lie, of course, but people want to believe the lie. These Scriptures are specifically referring to God the Father, יהוה, and God the Son, His Anointed One, מְשִׁיחַ. In the original context, the kings of Israel were anointed ones or messiahs. To be in rebellion against the Father is to be in rebellion against the Son and vice versa. They believe that to live under the rule of God is to live in bondage, that is to be slaves or prisoners. The word translated “fettters,” מוֹסָר, refers to a band, chain, or fetter and here it refers to what they think is God oppressing, and controlling them, even imprisoning and enslaving them. The word “cords,” עֲבוֹת, means a rope, cord, or line and here it refers to figuratively being bound as a political or military prisoner. This is a continual, ever present mindset; many people believe God is like a prison warden keeping them down. Those people are ripe for following these kings to their destruction.

The truth is life as a believer is the freest life a person can possibly live.

Luke 4:18 ¹⁸“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, [quoting Isaiah 61:1]

John 8:36 ³⁶“So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

It is startling to realize how many people have become entangled in Satan's lies. Good has become bad and bad has become good. Worshiping Satan has become good and worshiping God has become bad. But this is nothing new.

Isaiah 5:20–21 ²⁰Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! ²¹Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!

People fall for Satan, overtly or not, because they think they are in charge and Satan's lie supposedly confirms that for them. It allows them to do whatever they desire without the moral, ethical constraints God has imposed upon His creation. The Satanist motto, which I believe was coined by Alistar Crowley, the founder of modern Satan worship, is “Do what thou wilt.” Couldn't that just as well be the motto of the world today?

Dr. David Reagan developed an explanatory paraphrase for these verses to use as a sermon in which he showed how the situation in David's time is still the situation today. “Lord, why is it that everywhere I look in the world the nations are in turmoil? Why are they always devising some vain thing to the glory of man—things like the tower of Babel, the Roman Empire, the League of Nations, and the United Nations? Why is it, Lord, that the presidents, and prime ministers, and kings of the earth are always conspiring against You and Your Anointed One, Jesus? Why is it that the world's political leaders are always saying, ‘Let's put aside the limitations of God's Word and cast away His laws and do what we please!’” [David R. Reagan, *Psalm 2: The King is Coming!* pp. 7-8].