

## Chapter 7

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

For he testifieth, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.' For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, 'The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:') By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

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### Commentary

Among the notable historic figures with whom any practicing Hebrew would be familiar, Melchizedek is certainly the most mysterious. The forefather of the Hebrews, Abraham, had one single encounter with him, but it was an encounter that established the "everlasting priesthood" of Jesus.

Melchizedek arrived on the stage of Jewish history immediately after God's first mention of the Abrahamic promise, but before the covenant act of passing through the severed animals. In Genesis 12, God called Abram to leave his country, his kindred, his father's house, and his land, and walk until God said to quit.

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 12:2-3)

Being 75 years old and childless, Abram took his nephew Lot, his wife Sarai, all their substance and indentured people, and journeyed to Canaan.

“And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.” (Gen.12:7)

Due to famine, Abram journeyed down into Egypt. While he was there, Pharaoh added to Abram's bounty “sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels” (Gen.12:16). When Pharaoh ordered Abram to leave, all those riches went with him (12:20). In Genesis13:2, we find that Abram "was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold." He journeyed back to where he had pitched his tents, in Canaan between Beth-el and Hai. Meanwhile, Lot had amassed quite a fortune himself.

“And the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.” (Gen.13:6)

So, they decided to split up. Lot chose the plain of Jordan because it was well watered. Abram remained in Canaan. However, in choosing the more favorable land, Lot gained neighbors who “were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly” (Gen.13:13). They were the infamous residents of Sodom and Gomorrah.

“And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.” (Gen.13:14-17)

As is the way with people and kings, wars broke out in the surrounding territories. One particular battle engaged the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, with three compatriot rulers, against five kings banded together. But, the kings of Jordan were overthrown and the wealth of Sodom and Gomorrah was taken as spoil. As well, Lot was among the men who were captured and taken, along with all his wealth and goods. One lone escapee found Abram and told him the sorrowful news. Abram, however, was not a man to be trifled with. He had in his household 318 armed trained servants (Gen.14:14).

Abram descended on the enemy camp near Dan at night, killing and pursuing the armies all the way to Hobah. In the end, Abram returned with all the wealth that had been stolen and all the wealth of the armies he destroyed. He returned with Lot, all his goods, the women, and all the people.

As this mass of humanity and goods came near Jordan, the king of Sodom led the rest of the kings out to meet Abram at the valley of Shaveh. There, they were met by an imposing presence -

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.” (Gen.14:18-20)

And, that's it. That's the entire story of Melchizedek - four sentences, more or less. But every phrase is jam-packed with meaning and symbol. Pay attention to the details:

- 1) He arrived carrying bread and wine.
- 2) He was a priest of the most high God.
- 3) He was the King of Salem.
- 4) He blessed Abram, using language that was a blessing from God.
- 5) He praised the most high God for giving Abram the victory.
- 6) Abram gave Melchizedek tithes, or tenths, of everything he had.

After these events, the king of Sodom offered to give Abram all the goods from the victory if he would just return the people. Abram refused, saying he had vowed to the Lord that he would not take so much as a shoelatchet. That way the king of Sodom could never boast that he'd made Abram rich (Gen. 14:23). Abram wanted everyone to realize that his wealth had come from God, alone.

Now the chronology of events that followed this meeting is very important. The Lord appeared to “Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen.15:1). Abram responded by asking, for the first time, how it was that he would have such great progeny when he was childless and his entire fortune would go to his steward, Eliezer of Damascus.

“And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” (Gen. 15:4-6)

It is that very belief, counted for righteousness, which would earn Abram the moniker "father of the faithful."

“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they that are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” (Gal. 3:6-9)

God, knowing that He would gather people from all nations to Himself through the vehicle of faith, preached the good news to Abram that through his descendants (and one particular “seed”) all the nations of the Earth would be blessed. The promise of salvation by faith was wrapped intrinsically into the promises that God swore to Abram on the veracity of God's own Self. It was formed into a covenant when God walked through the parted animals with Himself. But - and, here's the point I'm driving at - when did all of this take place?

The promise was made back in Genesis 12; it was repeated and added to, but Abram did not savingly believe and have the faith that was accounted as righteousness until he had both heard the promise and had an encounter with this king/priest, Melchizedek.

It was not sufficient to merely hear the promise. Abram had to be blessed by God through the intermediary agency of one who knew God and could speak for God - the one with the wine and bread. Then, and only then, do we find the language of faith.

The very next thing that happened was that Abram asked for an assurance.

“And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?”  
(Gen.15:8)

That simple question began the killing of animals and the answer that spanned the history of the nation of Israel.

But first there was this priestly king.

The next reference to Melchizedek shows up in Psalms 110. It is a great Messianic Psalm. Jesus quoted David's psalm, declaring that David was speaking by the Spirit of God when he penned the first verse,

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (Mat.22:44)

That's pretty high vindication! So, I'm inclined to say that the entire Psalm was God-breathed. The third verse of Psalm 110 is a favorite of theologians

defending irresistible grace, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." But, in the 4th verse, this very mysterious declaration is made -

“The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

That's a remarkable declaration. You see, in between Abram and David, Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt and received the law of God at Mt. Sinai. God instructed Moses that Aaron, his brother, was to fill the office of High Priest, and his descendants, alone, would continue in that estate. The tribe of the Levites was set aside for service in the tabernacle and received no land inheritance in Canaan as a result. So, the temple of God was only to be served by the order of the Levites, and the high priests had to be of the order of Aaron.

But David announced a new order - the order of Melchizedek. Plus, the Messiah would be a priest forever as a part of this new and separate order. After all, Jesus wasn't born a Levite; He was of the tribe of Judah. That would have barred Him from serving as a priest, unless, of course, there was another, higher, priestly order.

Okay, that was all introduction. We can finally get to the Hebrews verses.

{1} ~ For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

This is an introductory statement, recounting the details we are familiar with. But I want to point out the same extraordinary fact the author accentuated - Melchisedec was both a priest and a king. No other figure in the Bible is referred to as holding both offices at once --- except Christ, of course.

God established three offices through which He dealt with Israel: prophets, priests, and kings. No man ever held all three offices. But, this Melchisedec was a forerunner of Christ, complete with "last supper" elements - bread and wine - which would make him a prophet. So, he was truly prophet, priest and king. But, no one in Scripture is said to hold all three of those titles --- except, once again, Christ.

And he was crowned the "king of Salem." That's an English translation of the word "*shalom*," the Hebrew word for "peace." According to the *Nelson Bible Dictionary*, the name Jerusalem means:

Possession of peace - the sacred city and well-known capital of Palestine during Bible times. The earliest known name for Jerusalem was Urushalem. Salem, of which Melchizedek was king, was a natural abbreviation for Jerusalem and probably referred to the city. Thus, Jerusalem appears in the Bible as early as the time of

Abraham, although the city had probably been inhabited for centuries before that time." <sup>i</sup>

Melchizedek was the king of Jerusalem. He was a forerunner of Christ, the true King of Jerusalem, crowned at His triumphal entry before the crucifixion. But, on the eternal scale, Christ is the King of the New Jerusalem of Rev. 21:2, which comes down out of Heaven. The author was going to great pains to make sure we noticed the parallels.

{2} – To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also, King of Salem, which is, King of peace:

The author interpreted Melchizedek's name for us - King of Righteousness. Only one person in Scripture can rise to that title. If all men are born sinners after Adam's fall, then only one who is not of Adam's heritage could truly be called King of Righteousness. And, as we just noted, as King of Salem, he is the ruler who establishes peace. Isaiah saw such a man when he prophesied,

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” (Is. 9:6)

Think about this. Abram was powerful, victorious, wealthy, and superior to all the other kings. He defeated the kings who had defeated the kings. Yet, Abram worshipped this King of Salem. He gave a tenth part of everything, an admission that the King of Salem was superior to all the kings. Before he returned the substance and people to their rightful rulers, he gave a tenth part of everything to Melchizedek, and the other kings did not object. His superiority must have been axiomatic, self-evident. He was the King of kings.

{3} – Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

One of the primary characteristics of Scripture is the preponderance of genealogies. So-and-so begat so-and-so, who begat some other guys, etc. If you were anyone at all in Israel, you could trace your genealogy back to your forefathers. That was very important. After all, God proportioned the land of Canaan to the tribes and every Jubilee year the land reverted back to the original owners God had designated. So if you wanted to keep your inheritance, you had to be able to recite your lineage. And to be a king - especially such a notable king - your pedigree would be an absolute requirement.

But, not Melchizedek. Isn't that odd? According to the Hebrews author, Melchizedek had no known mother or father. He had no order of descent to give him credibility. But, even more astounding, he is said to have neither an earthly beginning nor end, neither being born nor dying. So, the author drew a direct correlation – "but made like unto the Son of God."

That's about as direct as you can get. The author declared Melchizedek to be an eternal priest/king who had no earthly parents and had never died. The only person who could be his equal was the very Son of God.

As such, his priesthood had never ended. That's important, because in order for a man to be a priest he had to be part of a continuing order. If Aaron's descendants had died out, there would have been no more high priests. But the other, higher order of priests, belonging to the order of Melchizedek, didn't have generations of descendants because the originator never died.

Sounds strange, eh? But, that's the author's argument.

{4a} – Now consider how great this man was, ...

Yes, lets!!!!

{4b} – ... unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

As I mentioned before, the Levites were given no land inheritance in the Mosaic economy. They lived off the tabernacle. They ate the sacrifices and they received tenths, or tithes, from all the remaining tribes. They also received first fruit offerings, sin offerings, freewill offerings, and every other source of income that was not burned or destroyed. In order to guarantee that the Levites would always have sufficient means to live and continue to serve, God imposed the mandatory tithes on the Israelites.

But, Abram met Melchizedek hundreds of years before Sinai. Abram had yet to sire Isaac, who would father Jacob, who would father Levi, the progenitor of the Levites. In fact, the fathers of all twelve tribes were yet "in the loins" of Abram. Nevertheless, this priestly king took the tenths of everything accumulated by all these kings, and he took it at the hand of Abram.

{5} – And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

Though each tribe of Israel could trace their lineage back to Abraham, the one tribe of Levi was given the command to take the offerings of the other eleven.

God elected Israel as his special "peculiar" people, and even within that elect group He elected those who would serve before Him on behalf of their brethren. And, He chose to support them wholly and completely at the expense of mandatory sacrifice and portioned giving.

{6} – But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

The author reiterated this amazing fact. Though he was not a Levite and the Levites did not yet exist as an earthly tribe, Melchizedek was bold enough, and considered himself worthy enough, to take the tithe offering which would later be designated as "Holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27:30).

{7} – And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

It is without argument. It is a plain and simple fact. The superior person blesses the lesser person. That was a known article of Biblical behavior. The author's point was obvious, then. As great as Abraham was, and as mighty as the kings of Jordan were, Melchizedek was superior to them all. The "father of the faithful," the forefather of all the tribes of Israel, the progenitor through whom the "promised seed" would spring, recognized that there was one clearly superior to himself.

Still, given these astounding facts about this exceedingly great and wonderful person, why is history so stiflingly silent about him? Why do both the scriptures and secular history books know so little of someone who was superior to Abram, of whom we know plenty?

Perhaps he was not here long enough to have a history. Perhaps he appeared just long enough to bless Abram - the purpose of his visit - and institute the faithful heritage of Christ. Then went back where he came from.

{8} – And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

Oh, well here is the crux of the whole tithing issue. By the law of Moses the Levites received tithes of their fellow countrymen and brethren, though they, themselves, were fallible sinners who died in succession, one after the other. That was part of their inheritance and service before God. But back there at the valley of Shaveh, Melchizedek received them, giving evidence of his priesthood and superiority.

But, notice closely the contrast! The Levites died. The Hebrews' author contended that Melchizedek continues to live! And, there is evidence to that fact! He claimed, "it is witnessed that he liveth"! This may have been in reference to David's Psalm, which the author mentioned back in verse 3.

But, whatever his proof, he clearly declared that, in stark contrast to the Levites who died, the priestly king never died! He "abideth a priest continually." (!!!)

{9} – And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

There was the proof that the priesthood of Melchizedek was in every way superior to the Mosaic/Levitical priesthood. Levi, in his forefather's loins, paid tithes to Melchizedek, acquiescing to the higher stature of the eternal king/priest. In fact, all the nation of Israel was in Abraham's loins. The first child had not yet been born to barren, elderly Sarah. Yet, the priest who was superior to them all blessed their father prior to the nation being conceived. Then the miraculous lineage began.

Whew!

Okay, let's say it plainly. Melchizedek was a Christophany. He was a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. In simpler language, Jesus appeared on the stage of human history prior to his incarnation as a flesh and blood man. It is not a completely uncommon occurrence. However, no other Old Testament appearance of Christ is explained, exegeted, and declared as completely and obviously as is Melchizedek by the Hebrews author. To view these verses any other way is to ignore his carefully constructed argument.

Now, let's say it's true. Let's, for a moment, agree that Melchizedek –

- the King of Righteousness,
- the King of Peace,
- the King of Kings,
- the Eternal Priest,
- the recipient of the tithes of Israel,
- the one with the bread and wine,
- the one without father, mother or descent,
- the one with neither beginning of days or end of life,
- the one "made like unto the Son of God"

- actually **IS** Christ, Himself. What are the implications of such an appearance?

Glad you asked, because this is where it really gets good.

Remember how God wanted to swear to Abraham that the promises would be made good, and He could find nothing greater than Himself by which to swear the oath? Likewise, Christ could only be a High Priest after an order that He, Himself, instituted and to which only He could attain. Plus, He instituted the eternal priesthood before Israel was established as a theocratic nation at Mt. Sinai. Hence, His priesthood was not done away with when the law was done away with.

Secondly, Israel as a nation began with a miracle - the impossible birth of Isaac. That miracle happened after Abram met Christ and was blessed of Him. Think about that - Jesus blessed the nation of Israel and was the miracle working power behind their existence.

Thirdly, Christ inspired the faith of Abraham. It was only after Melchizedek's blessing that Abraham is said to have believed, becoming the example of everyone who would be saved by faith apart from the works of the law. Christ instituted salvation by faith, even way back at Abram -

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; ...” (Heb.12:2)

The word "our" is in Italics in that verse, it was added by the translators. The truth conveyed in that verse is that wherever you find faith - past, present, or future - Jesus is the author who created it and the finisher who completed it. That would have to include Abram.

Fourthly, as I've mentioned a couple of times, Melchizedek brought Abram wine and bread, the very elements by which we remember the New Testament of His shed blood. Through Melchizedek, Christ preached in symbol the necessity of His death to atone for the sins of those who had faith in Him.

And, really, that's the point. Christ has always been actively involved in His creation. He started the whole thing, and it will wrap up with resounding praise to Him, alone. He instituted every facet of His ministry, from the mode of worship to the means of salvation. He established His own priesthood and indwells His own Church. He brought down the law at Mt. Sinai, and He purchased the freedom of His elect at Mt. Calvary. He took flesh and became the perfect man, humble and obedient, and He has risen to the heights of Heaven to sit on His throne, judging fleshly men for their arrogance and pride.

So, really, His appearance as Melchizedek, the King of Righteousness, isn't all that surprising. It is how He has always been and will continue be --- THE ALL AND IN ALL.

### **A Brief Defense of the Christophany View**

This entire preceding section of chapter seven constituted the author's commentary on the Genesis account. So we must ask ourselves why the author went through so much trouble to extrapolate the amount of information he did

from three mysterious verses. If Melchizedek was not Christ, what was the author driving at?

If Melchizedek was simply a man - say, Shem or Job - then the author's argument is full of moot points. For instance, think about the phrase, "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (v.3). Shem had a father, Noah. Job had children aplenty who would have known his heritage and descent. Certainly both Shem and Job had a birthday and they both died.

“And Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.” (Gen.11:11)

“So Job died, being old and full of days.” (Job 42:17)

In fact, any man who can be said to have a family, a heritage, a birth, and a death is disqualified from these statements. So, why did the author make them?

Or, how about, "but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually"? In what way is Melchizedek "like unto the Son of God"? Some would say it was because he had no earthly heritage. But, that does not make him like Christ. Christ had a very specific earthly heritage; it is well known and meticulously chronicled in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. The answer is - he had neither mother nor father, beginning of days, or end of life. Those were the characteristics which make him "like unto the Son of God."

There is one more vital similarity - he "abideth a priest continually." Now some will argue that the structure of that sentence implies that the phrase is a reference to Christ, a priest continually. But, read the various versions of Hebrews 7:3 below -

- "... but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest perpetually." (NAS)
- "... but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually." (NAU)
- "Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever." (NIV)

Each of these versions of the text point out that it is Melchizedek who remains a priest forever and is like the Son of God in that manner. What mortal man can be said to have attained such status?

Or, what about the titles "King of Righteousness" or "King of Peace"? How can any sinner ascend to the height of such glorious titles? And, what about the kingship, itself? Is any man in Scripture ever given the title of king and priest concurrently? The answer is no. Certainly if there were some historic figure who was indeed a priestly king, Scripture would have given some account of it! But, it is silent --- with the exception of Melchizedek and Christ.

Or, what about the contrast in verse eight? "And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth." The translators added the words "receiveth them" for clarity. The essence of the statement is - Here men that die receive tithes, but there he, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

The contrast is built around the words "here" and "there." "Here" obviously points to the time when the author was writing, the time during which the Levites were in power and received the tenths. "There," then, must refer to the time when Melchizedek was receiving tithes from Abraham. The primary contrast, though, involved the fact that the Levites die. One by one, each and every Levite priest went to his grave. But, "there" - back at Melchizedek - he received them, and (in direct contrast to the dead Levites) HE LIVES!

"Why?" I ask myself over and again, "Why would the author go to such pains to construct such an obvious contrast? What was he driving at?" Look closely at the contrast again. The Levites - who arrived on the stage of history after Melchizedek - died. But Melchizedek, who appeared prior to the Levites, is said to - present tense - live! Now, in what form or manner can it be said that he is yet alive unless he is the One "who ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb.7: 25) ?

I am aware of some of the arguments that have been offered through the years to explain this contrast away. Some would say that Melchizedek died an earthly death, but still lives in Heaven. I must point out, however, that the contrast to terrestrial Levitical life and death undermines that argument.

Or, let's approach this another way. I said I'd get back to this passage in an earlier study.

"Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:53-58)

Yes, I agree with (and previously expounded) the interpretation of this passage that promotes eternal life for faithful believers. In that way, Abraham would be eternally alive in Heaven and would be witness to Christ's incarnation. But then Jesus flip-flopped His argument and declared that He predated Abraham. So, the entire statement was that Abraham saw Christ's day, and Christ saw Abraham's day. He saw it personally in the person of Melchizedek.

I simply don't know any way to conclude that Melchizedek was a mortal man without doing serious damage to the author's commentary. Only allowing the Christophany view satisfies both his words and his purpose in bringing it all up in the first place.

Christ is the High Priest of a better covenant, built on better promises, based on a better sacrifice, secured by a better surety, and which culminates in infinitely better blessings. Likewise, the history of this priesthood is built on a better heritage, one that is not defiled by sinful men, but is so high and holy that only Christ, Himself, could ever attain to it. Any other interpretation, which insists on imposing sinful men into the heritage of the perfect priest, automatically dilutes the priesthood down to our level. But the whole context of Hebrews refutes such an idea.

Okay, all that being said, let's return to the Hebrews text, and the author's continuing declaration of the superior priesthood.

{ 11 a } ~ If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law),

The author posed a hypothetical statement to make his point. What would be the natural expected outcome if the continuous slaughter of animals, the continuous flow of blood on the altar, and the generations of Levitical priests actually could save anyone? Obviously, there would be no need to replace it! It would be effectual! The Mosaic system would be working and men would be standing before God, purified and cleansed from all unrighteousness. After all, didn't the tribes of Israel receive the law, given at Mt. Sinai, under that priesthood? Who could want for more? If the law could instruct people into consummate holy living and the tabernacle sacrifices could cleanse them from any residual sinfulness, then the ultimate system had been established and there was no need to change it.

#### **A temporary aside for clarification's sake:**

While this only peripherally affects the topic at hand, I just can't let something this obvious slip by without comment. "The law" here is spoken of inclusively. Everything the Levites were responsible to perform and teach was included under the heading of "the law."

Or, to make my point, just today I heard "The Bible Answer Man" on the radio. He divided the law into four categories: moral, civil, dietary, and ceremonial. He said Christ fulfilled three of those legally binding categories and removed them from the Christian. But the author of Hebrews, whom we can assume is intimately acquainted with the law in all of its minutiae, made no such divisions. To him, "the law" was the law in its totality. That is going to be a vital notion to hang on to as we progress through this book.

Okay, back to the matter at hand...

{11b} – ... what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

The whole question begs the answer, "The Levitical priesthood was not perfect, and could not perfect people." The facts bear that out. Israel, under the law, proved themselves to be a rebellious, stiff-necked people, always erring in their hearts (Ps. 95:10, Heb. 3:10). Despite having the law, the high priests of Aaron, and the entire tribe of Levi serving in the sanctuary, no one was saved under that system.

So, what - to restate the original question - was the need for a new, completely different priesthood separate from the Aaronic/Levitical lineage? Well, every need in the world! The dying, condemned world was in desperate need of someone who could "stand in the gap" (Ezek. 22:30) and reconcile God and man. The Mosaic system wasn't cutting it.

And so, declared the author, it was necessary that Christ be completely apart from that ineffective system that could only condemn men to death but never deliver them into life eternal. But, there was a necessary consequence of this fact -

{12} - For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

The Levites ministered under the provisions of the law. Their station and authority were established in the body of the law. Their tenure was dependent on the continuation of the law. The Levites, the Aaronic priests, and the law all stand or fall together.

But, if there is a new, better priesthood - not established by the Levitical law, not dependant on the continuation, sacrifices, or ordinances of that law, and superior in every way to that law - the law itself must also be changed, and not just changed around the edges. Just as the new priesthood was completely independent of the old system, the new law must also be completely independent of the old system.

In fact, in order to be completely new, the superior priesthood cannot be beholding to the old system in any manner or form. It must be established on higher, better principles. And, as we will see, that is the very argument the author is heading toward.

{13} – For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

Jesus was not born into the tribe of Levi. So, to proclaim Him a high priest in any manner automatically recognized a completely different system than was instituted at Mt. Sinai. No man from Judah ever worked in the tabernacle or sacrificed at the altar.

As such, the evidence of Scripture, which proclaimed the new, eternal priesthood after the new, separate lineage and order of Melchizedek, demands a change of the laws and regulations under which this new High Priest rules. He is not here to perpetuate the old order; He came to institute the new, higher, better way.

### **The Law and the Abrahamic Covenant**

In Hebrews 7:5 is found the first occurrence of the word "law" in this epistle. It occurs for a second time in 7:12 - "for under it the people received the law." In order to avoid confusion and understand the balance of the author's treatise, it is important to recognize the difference between "the law" and "the Abrahamic covenant."

The primary difference between them is that the Abrahamic Covenant was not a conditional covenant. Abraham was asleep as God passed through the torn animals; he was the inactive recipient of the deal God made with Himself. The author pointed out the unconditional terms and the unchanging nature of the deal when he wrote,

“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” (Heb. 6:17-18)

However, the law given at Mt. Sinai, the one that established the Levitical system, was completely conditional. God promised blessing and cursing according to any individual's reaction and performance -

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.” (Deut.11:26-28)

The Abrahamic Covenant included promises of land, seed, offspring, possessing the gates of their enemies, and a blessing to all nations. Every detail of that covenant rests on the unchanging, faithful character of God. However, the author argued that the Mosaic Law must, by virtue of the change of priesthood, undergo a dramatic change.

Abraham was blessed with faith - a gift of grace - and it was accounted to him for righteousness. The Mosaic system demanded perfect obedience to a set of external rules and was, ultimately, unable to deliver anyone into righteous standing with God.

The Abrahamic Covenant established the doctrine of imputed righteousness. The law was added because of transgressions but it would only be in effect until "the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (Gal. 3:19). Christ is that seed who was promised an eternal inheritance, Lordship, Kingship, and an unchanging priesthood. Hence, the law was impermanent.

But the Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled, is being fulfilled, and will be fulfilled. It pre-dated the law, survived despite the law, and continued beyond the law.

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” (Gal. 3:16-18)

That's an essential difference.

{14} – For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah – that is the fulfillment of prophecy. Abraham – who has been the focus of much of the early Hebrews letter - had a son named Isaac. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob received the birthright from his elder brother, and was later renamed Israel. He had twelve sons who became the progenitors of the 12 tribes of Israel. As he prepared to die, Jacob gathered his sons to his bedside and pronounced blessings and curses over them.

“And, Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.” (Gen. 49:1)

The eldest son, Reuben, was denied the birthright. Instead, it was given to Jacob's favorite son, the second youngest, Joseph. And, it was to be handed down past Joseph to his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48).

“Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.” (1 Chron. 5:1)

Oh, wait! There's an interesting tidbit! Even though the promise given to Abraham of land, riches, great nationhood, and possessing the gates of their enemies - those things which make up the birthright inheritance - were passed down from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Joseph to Ephraim and Manasseh, the very important genealogy through which the people retained their pedigree of descent was NOT to go through that line.

Why? Well, because in the middle of his prophetic blessings, Jacob made an interesting distinction concerning his son, Judah:

“Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion; and as an old lion: who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.”  
(Gen. 49:9-12)

The sceptre, the sign of kingly rulership, and the power to govern and make laws, would remain within the tribe of Judah. But, even that special designation was not to be permanent. It would only last until "Shiloh" appeared, and all the people would gather to Him.

The description which followed included images of Christ riding the colt of an ass as He entered Jerusalem on what has come to be called "Palm Sunday," where the descendants of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi would declare Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of David, for whom they had been waiting (Matt.21:9).

But, back to the history - certainly enough, after their 430 years of captivity in Egypt and 40 years wandering in the wilderness, the descendants of these 12 brothers settled in Canaan, fulfilling the Word of God to Abraham that He would return them to that very land. They were united under the Benjamite, King Saul and grew to greater prominence under Judahites, King David and King Solomon. But, because of Solomon's involvement with foreign women, which led him to worship strange gods, the kingdom was divided and he was left with one tribe to rule - Judah. However, since Jerusalem was in the area of Benjamin, that tribe remained with Judah along with the Levites who served at the Jerusalem temple. Solomon's servant, Jeroboam, ruled the remaining tribes.

Jeroboam, desperate to keep his rulership position, immediately taught the people to worship false idols, fearing that unity of worship would make the people want to return to their brethren and reunite the kingdom (1 Kings 12:26-30). The Southern Kingdom (ruled by Solomon's sons) took on the name "the house of Judah," and the Northern Kingdom became known as "the house of Ephraim," or Israel.

So, all the descendants of Abraham were Hebrews, and every descendant of Jacob, called Israel, was an Israelite. But, not every Israelite was a Jew. Only the inhabitants of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, were ever called Jews. That is another vital distinction.

Starting around 860 B.C. the nation of Assyria, under King Shalmaneser, warred against Israel and took them captive. Eventually both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were conquered. The Assyrian king gave his own non-Hebrew people residence in the cities of the House of Ephraim:

“And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.” (2 Kings 17:24)

From that point forward, the Northern Kingdom never reunited. After the fall of Ninevah, Judah was re-established for a time before being conquered by Babylon, but the Northern ten tribes never returned to reclaim their inheritance in Canaan. They were dispersed throughout the Asian/European continent. Hence, they became known as "the lost sheep of the house of Israel". (Mat. 10:6)

"Okay," you mutter, "Neat history Jimbo, but is there a relevant point coming up?"

Oh, yeh! Thanks for mentioning it!

From the moment God made His one-sided covenant with Abram, He set about controlling the events of human history in such a way that, even though the majority of the descendants of Israel were scattered, the tribe through which Messiah would come was preserved intact. Now, that's despite captivities, wars, invasions, and persecution. No matter what the kings of the Earth threw at them, the House of Judah remained. And, sure enough, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son..." (Gal. 4:4)

Now, the important matter according to the author was the fact that Jesus was well known as being a Judahite--a Jew. In fact, He is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" in Rev. 5:5, fulfilling Jacob's prophecy –

"Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" (Gen. 49:9)

And, even though a portion of the tribe of Levi remained until Jesus' day, it was clear that nowhere in Scripture was a descendant of Judah spoken of as serving in the priesthood.

{15} - And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

The very fact that a new, separate order of priests had to be established made obvious the fact that Christ's priestly authority did not come from Moses, Sinai, or any previous covenant. In other words, it is plain that Scripture was stone silent where Judahite priesthood was concerned. But, that was okay because it clearly told of the establishment of a completely separate priesthood after the order of the one who received tithes from Abram.

To engage in a bit of necrophilious equine sadism (beating a dead horse), that is why Melchizedek was such a key player in this section of the author's treatise. He was the solitary figure upon whom the extra-Levitical priesthood of Christ was established. He was not merely a figure or type of Christ to come, he was the king/priest who established the existence of a priesthood dedicated to the worship of the Most High God.

Christ is not said to be a high priest who is merely reflected by Melchizedek, but rather "after the order" of Melchizedek. That means that the separate order of priesthood actually existed in Melchizedek's time and continued to exist as sacred and legitimate in Christ's time.

{ 16 } – *Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.*

The "who" in this sentence is a reference to "another priest" who rose up "after the similitude of Melchisedec." It was a reference to Christ. His authority to take on the priestly garments, enter into the Holiest Place, sacrifice blood to the Most High God, pouring it onto the mercy seat and interceding on behalf of His people, was not established by a set of commandments imposed by force on fleshly men.

Let me say that simpler. ("Yes, please do!")

The Levitical priesthood was established and authorized by the law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, but the author referred to that law as "a carnal commandment." Carnality has to do with the lusts of the flesh.

*"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. 8:7)*

The commandments were set in place to control and convict the actions of fleshly, carnal men. But, Christ did not draw His authority from that series of rules and regulations. His authority was established by the fact that He died and rose again. His authority is unquestionable by the fact that He rose into the Heavens to sit at the Father's right hand. His authority is without compromise or failure because it is based on the power of His unending life. So, the fact that the law of Moses said nothing about a Judahite serving as high priest was an unimportant matter.

Jesus followed a different line of priests who were "without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life."

As a result, He "abideth a priest continually."

{17} – For he testifieth, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.'

Our intrepid author quoted, yet again, from Psalm 110:4. He was making sure that his audience understood that these revolutionary ideas were not from his own imagination, but were firmly rooted in Old Testament, Hebrew Scripture.

{18} – For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

Think about how difficult that phrase must have been on the original recipients of this letter. Their entire life, religion, morals, and government were established on the commandments that came down from Mt. Sinai. But, here was the inspired writer saying that those rules were weak and of no lasting value.

We, after two thousand years of theological debate and education, can see the several references throughout the New Testament that declare that the law was unable to save anyone. It could only stand to condemn those who failed to keep it. But, to the first century audience this must have been a stunning revelation.

The point, however, is without dispute. Only Christ's death and resurrection has ever been effective before the judgment bar of Heaven. Hence, since the perfect way to approach the "unapproachable" God has been revealed, there is no reason to prop up the old system and pretend that it has any lasting redemptive ability.

{19} – For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

The law made nothing perfect. Man, I'm glad I didn't say that! There are some, even today, who cling zealously to the law as a means of justifying themselves before God. To announce to them that the law made nothing perfect is to pull the rug out from under their self-assurance. But, that's a good thing, actually. After they tumble they may recognize their need for a helper, an advocate with the Father, a means of standing before God and being "accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

That's what the "better hope" accomplished. Notice the contrast and look deeply at what the author said. The law made nothing perfect --- but the better hope did! Perfect! Complete!

Everything we need to secure our eternal salvation and Heavenly standing is found in the better hope! I like how simple and obvious the language is. The better hope did not just make perfection a possibility and leave it up to us to fill in the blanks. The better hope actually makes men and women perfect before God!

Hooray!

And, now we can draw near! Look again at the contrast. At Sinai, only Moses was allowed to step onto the hillside. Anyone else would be killed for the most minor encroachment. But, now we are invited to press close to our Father. We are able to everlastingly draw near to the omnipotent, Holy Judge of the universe because of the better hope we have in Christ. That, in a nutshell, is the gospel.

{20} - *And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:*

Not only did God declare Christ as His chosen, elect priest – superceding and ending the Levitical line of priests – but God declared an oath to His Son that the Levites never shared.

{21} - *(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, ‘The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:’)*

The law established the Levites, but they were never promised a continuing priesthood. Only Christ was given the unalterable oath that He would be “a priest forever.” The Lord God swore it and He will never repent of it.

{22} - *By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.*

That is how much better the New Covenant hope of salvation by grace through faith is than the Old Covenant Law of fleshly regulations and the ineffective parade of slaughtered animals – the surety on whom the whole New Covenant rests is Christ, Himself. God’s own Son is the proof positive and payment-on-account that established and continues the superior covenant.

The only One whose earthly rule and Heavenly priesthood was predicated on the unchanging oath of God stands as the “surety” for all His people. Rather than resting in the futile hope that the blood of bulls and goats might appease God, we have the absolute guarantee of the Son’s vicarious death and miraculous, powerful resurrection to assure us that we will gain an entrance in Heaven that can never be undermined or taken from us.

{23}- And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

That was one of the undeniable traits of the failure of the Aaronic priesthood. No matter how much blood flowed from the altar, no matter how many animals bowed their necks to the high priest's dagger, no matter how many offerings were waved, sprinkled or burned before God, the priests died, one after the other. Death is the proof of sin. Sinful men die. The priests who stood in the Holiest Place and offered God the very sacrifices He required could not prevent their own deaths. The service they performed could never perfect themselves, any less the mass of people on whose behalf they performed the sacrifices.

No matter how righteous any individual priest was, he was eventually replaced. Death took a toll on everyone of Aaron's lineage.

{24}- But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

When Christ rose from the grave, he conquered death. He rose not only out of the belly of the earth, but all the way to the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. So, said the author, considering that He will continue forever, we know that His priesthood will never end or change. There is no need for a succession of priests. The one and only High Priest, chosen of God, has established His unending position of eternal authority, pleasing God and successfully redeeming His people.

{25} - Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Being unchanging, unending, and ever living, He is able to save "to the uttermost" those who approach the unapproachable God through Him. Now, it's that "to the uttermost" I want to camp on for a moment.

How far did Christ come to get us?

- All the way from Heaven's throne room, down into the depths of the Earth.
- All the way from glorious light down into the darkness of men's hearts.
- All the way from eternal spiritual life down into a tired, hungry, thirsty, weary, painful physical body.
- All the way from absolute holiness and perfection down to bear the sin of every last one of His people.
- All the way from Heaven down into Hell.

But, He rose again. He conquered the forces of evil that would have kept Him in the grave - and He began to ascend –

- All the way from the "belly of the earth" up to the Father's right hand.
- All the way from the grave up to the clouds of glory.
- All the way from a dead, decaying body of flesh up to a victorious, resurrected form who could transverse the gulf from Heaven to Earth in an instant, who could pass through sealed stones and locked doors, and rise uncontested to the throne of Majesty.

He is able to reach as far down as you are. And, He is able to bring you all the way up to where He is.

Let me put it another way - what horrible misdeed can we do that our Redeemer did not know we would do when He spilled His blood for us? How far must we run in order to be completely beyond His reach? How corrupt must our hearts be in order for Him to write us off as beyond hope? How deeply blood-red must our sins be before it is impossible for Him to make them "white as snow" (Isa.1:18)?

"To the uttermost!" That is how capable our King is of saving us.

"To the uttermost!" It is not just a partial salvation, or a hopeful salvation. It is not a possible salvation, or an "almost" salvation.

"To the uttermost!" All the way and completely! Body, soul and spirit! Now and forever! Without fear of failure!

"To the uttermost!"

You see, the reason I'm so hung up on this phrase is that I am (I was tempted to say, "I was," but that wouldn't be true) a sinner "to the uttermost." I have sinned "to the uttermost." I have rebelled against God "to the uttermost." I have denied Him "to the uttermost." And, I know down in my heart of hearts that I deserve judgment "to the uttermost."

But that is not what my gracious Lord has declared for me! No, instead He is exercising His power and capability of saving me "to the uttermost," as I come to God through Him. I, far and away, prefer His "uttermost" salvation to my "uttermost" sin.

Thank God our Savior saves utterly and completely. Not a single, little trespass will be retained on my record. Not the slightest hint of my rebellion will be found in the high court of Heaven. Not a single word of my treason will be recounted. I will stand before the throne of the brilliant God clean and undefiled. I will be redeemed "to the uttermost!"

Why? How is this possible?

Because my eternal Priest is ever alive to intercede on my behalf! Every time I fall, my faithful Priest reminds the Judge of the entire universe that I have been bought and paid for.

With His nail-scarred hands, He pleads my case, and He always wins!

My Advocate only takes the impossible cases, and He has never lost.

My Lawyer is the Judge's Son.

My Priest sacrificed His own blood.

My Older Brother sits on the King's throne.

My God died for me.

That, my friends, is "to the uttermost."

{26} ~ For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

The NIV renders this verse, "Such a high priest meets our need." Our need was so deep and our condition was so desperate that we needed a priest who embodied the very essential character of God in order to satisfy God on our behalf.

He was "**holy.**" He retained a Heavenly perfection.

He was "**harmless.**" He was blameless and completely innocent.

He was "**undefiled.**" He was pure and spotless.

He was "**separate from sinners.**" He did not share in Adam's fallen nature and common bloodline. He was born in perfection and remained separate from the bondage of sin that had engulfed mankind.

He was "**made higher than the Heavens.**" He reigns supreme over the residents of glory. He has attained a position of authority over the angelic host and the armies of Heaven. He is the Creator who made all things and He sits above the highest Heaven, holding all things together by the power of His word.

That is what it took! That is what kind of priest was required to save creatures as despicable as we. But, what a blessed reality - God provided just such a One.

{27} – Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

The contrast continues. The Levitical priests offered animal sacrifices daily, weekly, monthly. Every High Day, every Feast, and every Sabbath, they slit the necks and drew the blood. As the sins of Israel flowed, the blood flowed continually over the Mercy Seat. But even before the high priest could enter the tabernacle to make the sacrifices for the people, he was required to sacrifice for his own sins. He had to be ceremonially purified before He could enter service on behalf of anyone else.

But not our Priest! He had no need of a personal sacrifice. He was pure and undefiled. He was spotless and holy. So, the final sacrifice on behalf of His people was made when He laid down His own life.

And, how effective was it? It was so complete that it only had to be done once. That's it - just once.

{28} – For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

The Mosaic Law established an order of priests who suffered the guilt of sin, became weak and sickly, struggled to continue their fleshly service, and ultimately died. It was inadequate to save the least person and offered no hope to the priest, himself. Something more rigorous was required. Something with a firm foundation was necessary. Something wholly acceptable in Heaven had to be found if any sinner was going to stand unpunished before God's Holy Righteousness.

I don't want to miss this point - It was the very same God who stood as unbending Judge in accordance with the Levitical Law who promised, by an oath, to supply a way of reconciliation. The same God, who set the standard that could never save, declared the eternal Priest who would never fail to save.

First came the law at Sinai, and then came the oath at the pen of David. That oath "consecrated," or appointed, the Son as High Priest forevermore. That was the plan from the beginning. "The lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8) was the eternal surety for His people.

So then, at the risk of being redundant, how sure is our salvation? It is based on an eternal priesthood, bought with an eternal price and guaranteed with an unchangeable oath from God, His own son being the "surety." Sounds pretty secure to me.

It's a great plan we're part of, eh? It's a great God who devised it.

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<sup>i</sup> Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Thomas Nelson Publishers. © 1986