



JESUS – A HIGH PRIEST OF A HIGHER ORDER

GOLDEN TEXT

“Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens”. (Hebrews 7:26)

USEFUL PRACTICE

As a High Priest of another order, that of Melchizedek, Jesus has an unchanging, perfect, and eternal priesthood.

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews 7:1-19

7.1 - This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him,

2 - and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.”

3 - Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

4 - Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder!

5 - Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, from their fellow Israelites—even though they also are descended from Abraham.

6 - This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.

7 - And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater.

8 - In the one case, the tenth is collected by people who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living.

9 - One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth



through Abraham,

10 - because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

11 - If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?

12 - For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also.

13 - He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar.

14 - For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

15 - And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears,

16 - one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.

17 - For it is declared: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

18 - The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless

19 - (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To present the typology of the priesthood of Melchizedek with regard to Jesus Christ by expressing the truth that our Lord has an unchanging, perfect, and eternal priesthood.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- I. **To explain** the typological aspect of Melchizedek;
- II. **To emphasize** the nature of the priesthood of Christ;
- III. **To expose** the attributes of the priesthood of Christ.



INTRODUCTION

Chapter seven of Hebrews presents the priesthood of Jesus from a new perspective - He is a high priest according to the Order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4 cf. Heb. 7:17). The author shows that the prophecy of the Psalmist, in which he reveals a priesthood of a different order, higher than that of Aaron and the Levitical one, was fully fulfilled in Jesus (Heb. 7:13). But although He belonged to the same priestly order, the author stresses the prominence of Jesus over Melchizedek when he states that the latter was "made like the Son of God" (Heb. 7: 3) and not the other way round. The author's thought is best understood if we look at the priesthood of Jesus as to the aspects of its typology, its nature, and its attributes. There is a lot of speculation about the person of Melchizedek, but in the light of the biblical context it is best to see him as a historical person of a typological nature. Melchizedek, therefore, must be seen as a type that points to Jesus Christ. In this regard, the sacred writing shows the priesthood of Jesus as eternal, unchanging and perfect in nature

I - AS TO THE ASPECT OF ITS TYPOLOGY

1. A royal priesthood. The sacred author points out that Melchizedek was a priest-king. As a priest, he was given a tithe from Abraham, and as king he ruled over Salem (Heb. 7:2). Although kings somehow participated in the Old Covenant worship service (2 Sam 6:12-14; 1 Kings 3:4,15; 9:25), the Levitical priestly function of offering sacrifices and representing the people before God was incumbent on priests alone (1 Sm 13:9,13; 2 Chr. 26:16-18). They were not kings. The order of the Levitical priesthood did not provide for the existence of a priest-king. The existence of a priest-king, therefore, in the biblical context, could only happen if he were of another order. Jesus, who was of the tribe of Judah, is raised up by God as high priest according to this new order, of which Melchizedek is the type (Psalm 110:4).

2. A priesthood based on righteousness. By showing the typology of Melchizedek's priesthood, the author points out that he was "king of righteousness", and then also "King of Salem", meaning "king of peace" (Heb. 7:2). The historical figure of Melchizedek as king of Salem appears in Genesis 14:18-20 in the context of the War of Four against Five kings, in the King's valley. The name Melchizedek, whose original meaning was "Sedek is king", is interpreted by the author of Hebrews as "king of righteousness" (Heb. 7:2). There is no doubt that Melchizedek is a type of Jesus, who would reign in righteousness and whose reign would have



no end (Is 32:1, 23:5; Luke 1:33).

3. A divinely legitimate priesthood. Verse three of Hebrews seven—"without father, without mother, without genealogy"—is to be seen as a contrast between the Levitical priesthood and that of Melchizedek. The Levitical priesthood depended on genealogy to gain legitimacy. Whoever was not of the tribe of Levi could not officiate as a priest. This is exactly what the author wants to show, for just as Melchizedek's priesthood did not depend on genealogy to show its priestly legitimacy, the priesthood of Christ was also legitimate because it belonged to a higher order, the Order of Melchizedek.

II - AS TO THE ASPECT OF ITS NATURE

1. A perfect priesthood. The word *teleiosis* (perfection) used by the author in Hebrews 7:11 also means a "target". In this context, it is used to refer to the relationship with God. Neither the Law nor the Old Testament priestly system could fix the problem of guilt and produce the forgiveness that God's holiness required. The sacred author stresses that the problem of man's relationship with God can only be solved through a perfect sacrifice, something that the Levitical system could not do.

2. An unchanging priesthood. Chapter seven also highlights that "when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also." (Heb. 7:12). The Holy Spirit had spoken through David that a high priest of another order, the Order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110: 4), would be raised up. If a new order would be established, then the old order would pass away. This prophecy, when fulfilled, would necessarily render Moses' Law and the Levitical priesthood obsolete, thus demonstrating its transitory nature. Only the priesthood of Jesus would be unchanging and everlasting.

3. An eternal priesthood. Thus, the priesthood of Christ "has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life." (Heb. 7:16). The expression "endless life" is a reference to the resurrection of Jesus and his victory over death, thus demonstrating the eternal nature of his priesthood. Christ was not a priest by human imposition or fleshly commandment, but by divine attribution. As verse 17 says, "For He testifies: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 7:17).



III - AS TO THE ASPECT OF ITS ATTRIBUTES

1. A holy priesthood. Holiness is one of the attributes of God (Is. 6:3). In another point of the letter to the Hebrews, the sacred author states that without "holiness no one will see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14). This was one of the requirements of the Mosaic Law, that the high priest had no defect, including physical one (Leviticus 21:16-23). Thus, because of human condition, not only the priests were not perfect, but the whole Levitical priestly system was imperfect. Only Christ could meet the requirements of an entirely holy and perfect priesthood (Heb. 7:26).

2. A blameless priesthood. We have seen that Jesus met all the requirements of a holy life demanded from a high priest. But in addition to this attribute, he should also be "innocent" (Hebrews 7:26). The word *akakos*, translated here as "innocent", also means "not bad" and is described by lexicographers as the absence of all that is bad and wrong. The apostle Peter said about Jesus that "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." (1 Pet 2:22). There was no guilt or imperfection in the priesthood of Christ Jesus.

3. An undefiled priesthood. The sacred author uses the term *amiantos* (Heb. 7:26) to say that Jesus is an "immaculate" priest. This word, which also has the sense of "without a blemish", was used in the biblical context to refer to both ritual and ethical purity. It is to this holy life, in its ethical, not just ritualistic, sense that the author alludes in order to portray the Lord as "separate from sinners." The Son of God became human and was made sin for mankind (2 Cor. 5:21), but without sinning. Christ is the immaculate and unblemished priest.

CONCLUSION

The Letter to the Hebrews is the only New Testament text that presents a systematized doctrine of the priesthood of Christ. The Letter shows readers that Jesus is the High Priest-King foretold in the Scriptures and, as such, higher than the Levitical system. Melchizedek, king of Salem, to whom Abraham gave the tithe, became a type of that eternal priesthood. And not only that, but the entire Levitical system had become obsolete, since the new priestly order had supplanted the old one.