

## 9. Understanding Why Christ Is Compared to Melchizedek

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children fully understand what it means to have Christ speak to the Father for us as our Great High Priest. We saw that Christ is a greater high priest than Aaron, the first high priest of Israel. That is why we can come to Christ with boldness. Today, we are going to see that Christ is compared to Melchizedek instead of Aaron in order to show this greatness.

In Hebrews 5:1-4, we read, “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*.” In the Old Testament, we see that Aaron was selected by God to be the high priest of the nation of Israel. From that time, the high priest of Israel was a descendent of Aaron. All of those who served as the high priest of Israel were selected to serve and offer sacrifices for the rest of the people.

Through the years, there were many descendants of Aaron who served as the high priest of Israel. Hebrews 7:23-24 says, “Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.” These priests could not have a continuing priesthood because of death. The reason that they could not be a priest forever was due to the fact that they were also sinners and all eventually died. Hebrews 7:27-28 says, “Who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever.” All of these priests had to first offer a sacrifice for their own sins before they could offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people. In contrast, Christ only offered Himself once because He was without sin.

The high priests from the family of Aaron could have compassion on the people as they offered sacrifices for the sins of the people because they first had to offer a sacrifice for their own sins. This continually reminded the priests of their own weakness. They could understand the ignorance and the fact that the people were going astray because those priests experienced that same weakness in their own lives. Because Christ became a man, He faced the same temptations that every other priest faced. However, Hebrews 4:15-16 says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, *yet* without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Christ could sympathize with the sins of every high priest because He faced the same temptations. At the same time, Christ was greater than Aaron or any of his descendants because Christ did not sin. That is why Christ could offer himself as the sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

We are also reminded that none of the Old Testament priests could appoint themselves as priests.

Instead, they were chosen and called by God. Exodus 28:1 says, “Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron *and* Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.” Here, we see that God was the One who chose Aaron and His sons to serve as the priests of Israel.

As a result, Hebrews 5:5-6 says, “So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, *but it* was He who said to Him: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’ As *He* also says in another *place*: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’.” Christ is eternal with the Father. However, He chose to place Himself under the Father to carry out the will of the Father when He came to this earth. In Psalm 2:7-8, we read, “I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, ‘You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give *You* the nations *for* Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.” All of Psalm 2 talks about the fact that the Father appointed Christ as the King over all the earth because He is the Son. This showed the fact that Christ did not appoint Himself when He came to this earth but instead He came to do the will of the Father.

However, Christ could not be like Aaron or his sons even though He was appointed by the Father to become our Great High Priest. That was due to the fact that Aaron and his sons were limited in their priesthood by the fact of their own sins. As a result, Psalm 110:4 says, “The LORD has sworn and will not relent, ‘You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” Here, we see that Christ was a priest like Melchizedek instead of a priest like Aaron.

Hebrews 7:15-17 helps us to understand why it was necessary for Christ to be appointed a priest after the order of Melchizedek instead of being a priest after the order of Aaron. Those verses say, “And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” Aaron and his descendants were made priests according to the law. The other Old Testament priest of God was Melchizedek.

Genesis 14:17-20 says, “And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that *is*, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who *were* with him. Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And he gave him a tithe of all.” Then, Hebrews 7:1-3 explains, “For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated ‘king of righteousness,’ and then also king of Salem, meaning ‘king of peace,’ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.” In these verses, we see that Melchizedek was both king and priest. There is also no recorded beginning or ending to his life. As a result, Melchizedek provided an example of the ministry of Christ as our Great High Priest. Abraham showed that He recognized that Melchizedek was greater.

Since Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek instead of after the order of Aaron, Hebrews 5:7-10 goes on to say, “Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest ‘according to the order of Melchizedek’.” The New Testament says many times that Christ spent a great deal of time in prayer as He communed with the Father.

The particular prayer that is mentioned here is found in Luke 22:42-44 where we read, “Saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’ Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” As Christ faced the cross knowing that all of our sins would be placed on Him and it would be necessary for the Father to forsake Him for that time, Christ prayed in great agony. He dreaded the separation from the Father during the time that our sins would be placed on Him. However, Christ was ready to do the will of the Father even though it meant that time of temporary separation.

Christ was equal with the Father. However, He chose to humble Himself and learn obedience in all things. He chose to humble Himself and become a baby. He showed that humility again when He was tempted by Satan and defeated Satan. Philippians 2:8 says, “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.” In this way, He chose to show obedience to the Father by humbling Himself and becoming the perfect sacrifice so that He could take our sins upon Himself. Christ is able to fully understand what we face because He faced the same things and was victorious in every way. Christ showed that He was perfect in every way as He carried out the will of the Father.

As a result, Christ became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. The word translated “author” means *cause*. Christ was the cause of our eternal salvation. That is why salvation is available to all who will come to Christ by faith. Those who place their faith in Christ are immediately given a desire to obey Him. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” We also know He is continually making intercession for us at those times when we fail to obey Him. That is why He had to be a priest like Melchizedek instead of a priest like Aaron. As we help our physical and spiritual children understand these things, it will help them to understand more fully why Christ is our Great High Priest and is compared to Melchizedek. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why Christ is compared to Melchizedek.