

Hebrews 7:1-10 – A Partial Picture – Lesson Summary

As an identical twin I am used to comparisons. I can't tell you how many questions I've gotten about who's smarter, faster, better looking, etc. In fact, it's exhausting at times. When you think about it, my brother and I are very similar. Our DNA is close to a perfect match as are our fingerprints. We've enjoyed success in school and on the athletic fields with nearly identical accomplishments. We are not clones however. There are distinct differences in our personalities, career paths, and families. In many ways we resemble each other but not completely. The author of Hebrews begins a comparison in Chapter 7 as well. In the beginning verses he introduces his audience to Melchizedek in order to emphasize the superiority of Christ. In the second half of the chapter he compares Christ to Melchizedek and we come to realize that Melchizedek is simply a partial picture of our Savior Jesus Christ.

The author of Hebrews emphasizes **3 main characteristics of Melchizedek** as he sets up his comparison to Jesus. The first characteristic is **Melchizedek's joint priestly and kingly roles**. This is an important point because the role of priest and the role of king are distinctly different in OT Scripture. In fact, Melchizedek is the only priest and king that we see in the Bible other than Christ. The author's likely intent was to emphasize Melchizedek's "otherness". He becomes one who is outside the bounds of others. Melchizedek's name and kingdom also communicate something about this mysterious man. His name means king of righteousness and his kingdom Salem means peace. Essentially we have a "righteous king and priest of peace".

The second characteristic that the author emphasizes is that **Melchizedek has neither genealogy nor age**. This is not to say that he was without a family of origin or that he's existed forever. It's likely that the author phrases these characteristics this way in order to highlight his timelessness. His wording will set his audience up for his ultimate comparison to Christ in the final verses of this chapter. As we expand our description of Melchizedek we now have "a timeless righteous king and priest of peace".

The final characteristic that is emphasized is **Melchizedek's greatness**. The wording in these verses can be a bit confusing, but taken in smaller pieces, paint a clearer picture of the author's intent. By drawing the audience's attention to the fact that Melchizedek received tithes, he is emphasizing the fact that he is greater than the line of priests instituted through Aaron. Due to the audience's familiarity with the OT Scriptures they would recognize this to be an important reality. Melchizedek is a greater priest. The author also draws our attention to that fact that Melchizedek gave blessings to Abraham. Heb. 7:7 reminds us that the one who gives blessing is superior to those he blesses. Again, this emphasizes Melchizedek's greatness. When we consider these three characteristics now we have "a great timeless righteous king and priest of peace who receives offerings and bestows blessings".

At this point in the chapter it would be hard to deny that the author is drawing a clear comparison between Melchizedek and Jesus. As he concludes the chapter in verses 11-28 we will see that Jesus is described as "the superior eternal righteous king and priest of peace who receives or offerings of worship and bestows blessings on His people". Melchizedek is simply a partial picture of Christ. He's a representation of Jesus but should never be considered an equal. They are distinctly different. Jesus is superior in all things. Because He is superior, He should be the King and Priest of our life.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Read Deut. 17:14-20 and portions of Ex. 28-29. What were some of the roles of kings in the Old Testament? What were some of the roles of a priest?
- 2) What are some of the characteristics of Melchizedek that are seen in Christ and where do they differ?
- 3) Scripture is filled with individuals who are a "picture" of Christ that point to His coming. Who are some of those individuals and how does it encourage you that God uses broken people to declare His glory?