

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 309 – November 5th – Hebrews 7:1-14

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Hebrews

Bruce, FF	<i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964
Guthrie, Donald	<i>Hebrews</i> (Tyndale Commentary), IVP, Leicester, 1983
Hughes, Philip Edgcombe	<i>A Commentary on The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1977
Westcott, BF	<i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Macmillan, London, 1889

Hebrews 7

The theme of the distinctive High Priesthood of Jesus is picked up again with the reference to Melchizedek at the end of the previous chapter and leads into resumption of the argument suspended at 5:11. Chapter 7 begins with a summary of the Genesis account concerning Melchizedek (vv.1-3) leading into an extended argument (vv.4-28) concerning the superiority of this priestly order. In the middle of this argument (vv. 12-19), there is a digression on the subject of how Jesus can be a priest since he is not of Levitical descent.

Verse 1

Οὗτος γὰρ ὁ Μελχισέδεκ, βασιλεὺς Σαλήμ, ἱερεὺς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου, ὁ συναντήσας Ἀβραὰμ ὑποστρέφοντι ἀπὸ τῆς κοπῆς τῶν βασιλέων καὶ εὐλόγησας αὐτόν,

βασιλευς, εως m king
ἱερευς, εως m priest
ὑψιστος, η, ον highest, most high

Cf. Gen 14:18.

συνανταω meet, happen
ὑποστρεφω return, turn back
κοπη, ης f slaughter, defeat
εὐλογεω speak well of, bless

"By the act of blessing, Melchizedek at once assumed the position of a superior. And Abraham on his part freely acknowledged Melchizedek's implied claim to superiority."
Westcott

Verse 2

ὧ καὶ δεκάτην ἀπὸ πάντων ἐμέρισεν Ἀβραάμ, πρῶτον μὲν ἐρμηνευόμενος βασιλεὺς δικαιοσύνης ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ βασιλεὺς Σαλήμ, ὃ ἐστὶν βασιλεὺς εἰρήνης,

δεκατη, ης f a tenth part, tithe
μεριζω divide, assign, apportion
πρωτον adv. first, in the first place
ἐρμηνευω interpret; pass. mean, be translated

δικαιοσυνη, ης f righteousness

ἔπειτα then, afterwards

εἰρηνη, ης f peace

"The meanings of the two names Melchizedek and Salem have been introduced to prove that righteousness and peace are combined in the Melchizedekian order of priesthood (cf. Is 9:6f). These qualities found fulfilment in Christ (1 John 2:1; Eph 2:14)." Montefiore. "In Christ we see the appearance of the expected everlasting king promised to David's line under whom righteousness flourishes and peace abounds (Ps 72:7; cf. Ps 97:2; 98:3,9); he is 'the Prince of Peace,' of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end (Isa 9:6f.); he is the long-awaited king who will speak peace to the nations (Zech 9:9f.), and 'the righteous Branch,' whose name is 'The Lord our Righteousness' and who administers justice in his glorious reign (Jer 23:5f.; 33:15f.). As king he is just, and as priest he justifies all who trust in his atoning sacrifice (Rom 3:26; 5:8f.)." Hughes.

Verse 3

ἀπάτωρ, ἀμήτωρ, ἀγενεαλόγητος, μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων, ἀφομοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές.

ἀπατωρ, ορος without (record of) a father
ἀμητωρ, ορος without (record of) a mother
ἀγενεαλογητος, ον without (record of) lineage

μητε and not; μητε ... μητε neither ... nor
ἀρχη, ης f beginning

ζωη, ης f life

τελος, ους n end

ἀφομοιωμένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom s
ἀφομοιωω be like, resemble

μενω remain, stay, abide

διηνεκης, ες continuous; εἰς το δ. for all time; continually, perpetually

Montefiore says that the writer of Hebrews uses the Alexandrian principle, common in Philo, that "what is unmentioned in the Bible is presumed not to exist." Bruce takes a more balanced view stating that the author would have acknowledged that Melchizedek was *historically* a man who belonged to a dynasty of priest-kings. However, what was important was the *record* concerning Melchizedek in Scripture. Scripture, by what it includes and what it omits makes Melchizedek a fitting type of Christ.

Neither of these comments, however, does justice to Psalm 110. It is the Old Testament itself which links the Messiah with everlasting priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek.

Verses 4-10

Four arguments are provided for the superiority of Melchizedek:

- i. Abraham paid tithes to him;
- ii. Melchizedek blessed Abraham
- iii. Melchizedek's priesthood, in contrast with that of Levi, is permanent;
- iv. Levi himself (in a manner of speaking) paid tithes to Melchizedek.

Verse 4

Θεωρεῖτε δὲ πηλίκος οὗτος ᾧ δεκάτην Ἀβραὰμ ἔδωκεν ἐκ τῶν ἀκροθινίων ὁ πατριάρχης.

θεωρεω see, observe, notice

πηλικος, η, ον how large, how great

δεκατη, ης f see v.2

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διδομι

ἀκροθινον, ου n spoils, plunder

πατριαρχης, ου m patriarch (one of the noted ancestors of the Jewish nation)

The definite article and the position of πατριαρχης in the sentence provide emphatic force. "The author draws his readers' attention to the remarkable consideration that Abraham, eminent patriarch though he was, gave Melchizedek a *tithe of the spoils* and was *blessed* by him." Hughes.

Verse 5

καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν Λευὶ τὴν ἱερατείαν λαμβάνοντες ἐντολὴν ἔχουσιν ἀποδεκατοῦν τὸν λαὸν κατὰ τὸν νόμον, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τοὺς ἀδελφούς αὐτῶν, καίπερ ἐξελθῆναι ἐκ τῆς ὀσφύος Ἀβραάμ·

ἱερατεια, ας f priestly office

This word occurs in the NT only here and in Luke 1:9. Westcott states that it differs from ἱερωσυνη (7:11,12,24) in that "it expresses the actual service of the priest and not the office of priesthood. The tithes were given to the 'children of Levi' 'for their service' (Num 18:21)."

ἐντολη, ης f command, order, instruction
ἀποδεκατω give a tenth, tithe, exact tithes from

λαος, ου m people, a people

νομος, ου m law

καίπερ though, although

ἐξεληλυθότας Verb, perf act ptc, m acc pl
ἐξερχομαι

ὀσφυς, υος f waist, reproductive organs

Verse 6

ὁ δὲ μὴ γενεαλογούμενος ἐξ αὐτῶν δεδεκάτωκεν Ἀβραάμ, καὶ τὸν ἔχοντα τὰς ἐπαγγελίας εὐλόγηκεν.

γενεαλογεομαι descend from

δεκατω collect tithes

ἐπαγγελια, ας f promise, what is promised

εὐλόγηκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s εὐλογεω
see v.1

Westcott says of the perfect tenses in this verse, "The fact is regarded as permanent in its abiding consequences. It stands written in Scripture as having a present force." Westcott goes on to list the use of the perfect tense in Hebrews and its significance.

Verse 7

χωρὶς δὲ πάσης ἀντιλογίας τὸ ἔλαττον ὑπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος εὐλογεῖται.

χωρὶς without, apart from

ἀντιλογια, ας f argument, dispute

ἐλαττον Adjective, nom/acc n s (variant spelling) ἐλασσων, ον (comp of μικρος) lesser, inferior

κρειττων and κρεισσων, ον gen ονος better; greater, superior

It is remarkable that God had promised Abraham that in him and his seed, all nations of the world would be blessed, and yet Melchizedek blessed Abraham!

Verse 8

καὶ ὧδε μὲν δεκάτας ἀποθνήσκοντες ἄνθρωποι λαμβάνουσιν, ἐκεῖ δὲ μαρτυρούμενος ὅτι ζῆ.

ὧδε adv here

δεκατη, ης f see v.2

ἀποθνησκω die, face death, be mortal

Levitical priests were mortal but Melchizedekian priests immortal (Ps 110:4).

ἐκεῖ there, in that place, to that place

μαρτυρεω bear witness, testify
ζῆ Verb, pres act indic, 3s ζαω live, be
alive

Of the phrase 'that he lives' Bruce says that it is true "of Melchizedek in the sense that we never read of him otherwise than as a living man; of Christ absolutely – in the sense that, having died once for all and risen from the dead, he is alive for evermore (see vv 16, 23-25 and cf. Rev 1:18; Rom 6:9)."

Verse 9

καὶ ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, δι' Ἀβραάμ καὶ Λευὶ ὁ
δεκάτας λαμβάνων δεδεκάτωται,
ἔπος, ους n word; ὡς ἔπος εἰπειν so to
speak

"This classical phrase does not occur elsewhere in the NT." Westcott

δεδεκάτωται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s
δεκατοω collect tithes; pass. pay tithes

Verse 10

ἔτι γὰρ ἐν τῇ ὀσφύϊ τοῦ πατρὸς ἦν ὅτε
συνήνητησεν αὐτῷ Μελχισέδεκ.

ἔτι still, yet

ὀσφυς, υος f see v.5

πατὴρ Noun, gen s πατηρ, πατρος m
father

ὅτε conj when, at which time

συνανταω see v.1

"In this historic encounter, then, what was established was not simply a precedent but a whole relationship, the significance of which is permanent: namely, that the order of Melchizedek, fulfilled in Christ, is superior to the order of Levi, which with the advent of Christ is superseded and superseded." Hughes.

Verses 11-28

The writer now argues that the Levitical priesthood has been replaced by Jesus' Melchizedekian priesthood. The argument is similar, in some respects, to that of Paul in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 where he argues that the law was transitory in nature.

"The Levitical priesthood and the Law, which it represented, were alike transitional and transitory... If ... there had been a bringing to perfection through the Levitical priesthood – if in other words there had been a bringing to perfection through the Law – there would have been no need for another priesthood." Westcott.

Verse 11

Εἰ μὲν οὖν τελείωσις διὰ τῆς Λευιτικῆς
ἱερωσύνης ἦν, ὁ λαὸς γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτῆς
νενομοθέτηται, τίς ἔτι χρεία κατὰ τὴν τάξιν
Μελχισέδεκ ἕτερον ἀνίστασθαι ἱερέα καὶ οὐ
κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Ἀαρὼν λέγεσθαι;

τελειωσις, εως f fulfilment, perfection

I.e. perfection of the worshipper or in respect of the worshipper's relationship with God.

Λευιτικός, η, ον Levitical

ἱερωσυνη, ης f priesthood

See the note on verse 5.

λαος, ου m people, a people

νενομοθέτηται Verb, pluperfect pass indic, 3
s νομοθετεομαι be given the law

ὁ λαὸς γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτῆς νενομοθέτηται on the basis of it or in association with it (the Levitical priesthood) the people were given the law. I.e. the institution of the Levitical priesthood was laid down as part of the body of Mosaic law.

ἔτι still, yet

χρεία, ας f need

τάξις, εως f order, division

"The appearance of Melchizedek on the stage of patriarchal history is fleeting and dramatic. He is identified as king of Salem and priest of the Most High God, but nothing is said in Genesis 14 about an *order* of Melchizedek. Only in Psalm 110, in the mainstream, as it were, of the history of the Israelites, is there an isolated, and for this reason cryptic mention of one who is 'a priest after the order of Melchizedek.' The psalm, which expresses the expectation of the establishment of a messianic priesthood and kingdom, was written some hundreds of years after the inauguration of the Levitical order... Thus the plain implication of this flash of revelation is that the old and inferior order is to be superseded by a new and superior order, which, compared with the inadequate and temporary nature of the former, will be distinguished by full and abiding efficacy." Hughes.

ἕτερος, α, ον other, another, different

ἀνίστασθαι Verb, pres midd infin ἀνιστημι
raise; midd rise, arise

Cf Acts 3:22

ἱερευς, εως m priest

"If God had intended the Aaronic priesthood to introduce the age of perfection, the time when man would enjoy unfettered access to Him, why should He have conferred on the Messiah (in Ps 110) a priestly dignity of His own – different from Aaron's and by implication superior to Aaron's?" Bruce

Verses 12-19

The mention of the Levitical nature of the priesthood (v.11) leads into a digression on how Jesus can be a priest since he is not of Levitical descent. Two arguments are used:

- i) The words 'order of Melchizedek' imply an abandoning of the old order, i.e. that involving Levitical descent;
- ii) The old order required a principle of descent because of the transitory nature of those who hold office. In Jesus we have an eternal priesthood and an everlasting Priest.

Verse 12

μετατιθεμένης γὰρ τῆς ἱερωσύνης ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ νόμου μετάθεσις γίνεται.

μετατιθημι remove, take back
ἀναγκη, ης f necessity
μεταθεσις, εως f removal, change

Since the priesthood formed part of the Law, it could not be changed without a change in or removal of the Law.

Verse 13

ἐφ' ὃν γὰρ λέγεται ταῦτα φυλῆς ἐτέρας μετέσχηκεν, ἀφ' ἧς οὐδεις προσέσχηκεν τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ·

ἐφ' ὃν γὰρ λέγεται ταῦτα i.e. Ps 110, speaking of the Messiah from David's line, from the tribe of Judah.

φυλη, ης f tribe, nation, people
ἐτερος, α, ον see v.11
μετέσχηκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s μετεχω share in, belong to
οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing
προσέσχηκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s προσεχω pay close attention to, watch
θυσιαστηριον, ου n altar (of incense)

Verse 14

πρόδηλον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξ Ἰούδα ἀνατέταλκεν ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν, εἰς ἣν φυλὴν περὶ ἱερέων οὐδὲν Μωϋσῆς ἐλάλησεν.

προδηλος, ον very obvious or evident
Ἰούδα Noun, gen s Ἰουδας

This and Rev 5:5 are the only references, apart from the nativity genealogies, that refer to Jesus' descent from Judah.

ἀνατέταλκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s ἀνατελλω rise, dawn, shine

Cf. Mal 4:2. The use of this verb carries a distinctly messianic connotation.

λαλεω speak, talk