

# Christ a Priest After the Order of Melchizedek.

by John Gill

*The sermon explores the significance of Christ's priesthood in the order of Melchizedek, emphasizing its eternal nature and divine authority.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 110:4, Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 22:42-43, John 14:27, Hebrews 5:6, Hebrews 7:3, Hebrews 7:17, Hebrews 7:21, Hebrews 7:24, Revelation 5:12

**Topics:** "The Priesthood of Christ", "Melchizedek as a Type of Christ"

## Description

John Gill expounds on Psalm 110:4, emphasizing that Christ is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, distinct from the Levitical priesthood due to its imperfections. He illustrates Melchizedek's significance as both king and priest, highlighting that Christ embodies these roles perfectly and eternally. Gill argues that Christ's priesthood is established by God's unchangeable oath, ensuring its everlasting nature and superiority over the Levitical order. He concludes by affirming the importance of recognizing Christ's unique priesthood and the blessings it brings to believers.

## Transcript

CHRIST A PRIEST

AFTER THE

ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.

A Sermon

PSALM 110:4.

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.

I have in a late discourse shown you that Levi's Urim and Thummim are to be found with Christ, and I shall now endeavour to make it appear, that notwithstanding that, he is not a priest of Levi's order, but of the order of Melchizedek; there was a weakness and an imperfection in Levi's priesthood, therefore it was necessary that another priest should rise, not after his order, but after the order of another, who is here mentioned in these words. This Psalm was not wrote by Melchizedek, as some of the Jewish Rabbis have imagined; for he was a greater person than Abraham, he blessed him, and received tithes from him, and therefore could not call him Lord: nor by Eleazar, as others of them have thought: for though it is true he

might call him his Lord, but then he could not assign unto him session at the right hand of God; nor say of him, that he had an everlasting priesthood after the order of Melchizedek: nor is it a composure of David's concerning Abraham, and that victory which he obtained over the kings, for the same reasons as before: nor was it wrote by David, or by any of the singers in his time concerning himself, for David had nothing to do with the priesthood, it is true David was the penman of it, as is manifest from the inscription, A psalm of David; but then he did not write it concerning himself, but concerning one that was greater than he, even one whom he acknowledges to be his Lord; for if God never said to an angel, Sit thou at my right hand, &c., certainly he would never say to a mere man.

The person who is the subject of this psalm is the Messiah, as is acknowledged by many of the ancient Jewish Rabbis; though many of the modern ones, observing how manifestly some places in this Psalm are applied to the Lord. Jesus Christ in the New Testament, have endeavored, as much as in them lies, to wrest it to any other person; but we have a more sure word of prophecy, and a better rule to go by, than their glosses and interpretations: for the first verse is evidently referred to the Messiah by Christ himself; in Matthew 22:42, 43, where he puts this question to the Scribes and Pharisees, What think ye of Christ?

Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in Spirit call him Lord? Saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, &c., now as they were not able to answer this question, so neither do they charge him with a misapplication of the text; which, no doubt, they would have done, had they not been convicted in their own consciences that it was right. It is also applied unto him by the apostle Peter, in Acts 2:39, and there the words of my text, in all those (Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17, 21) places where they are cited in the epistle to the Hebrews, are manifestly referred unto Christ.

The three first verses of this Psalm speak of the glory of Christ's kingdom, in his being placed at the Father's right hand, in the subjection of his enemies to him, and in the mighty conquests of his grace over his own people; and in this fourth verse there is an easy transition from his kingly to his priestly office; both which offices were eminently conjoined in him, of whose order he is here said to be. Three things are here said of Christ's priesthood; First, That it is after the order of Melchizedek.

Secondly, That it is an everlasting one. Thirdly, That its stability and firmness is in the immutable and unrepealable oath of God. Each of which I shall consider in their order. First, Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek: And in speaking to this, it will be necessary, 1st, To give you some account, who and what Melchizedek was; 2dly, How Christ may be said to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek: In treating of the former, I suppose that; I shall gratify the curiosity of some; and in considering the latter, I hope to bring out something, for the edification of others; but, in the 1st place, Let us consider who and what Melchizedek was.

The first mention that is made of him, is in Genesis 14:18. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. His name, by interpretation, is, King of righteousness; and it is very probable that he was called so, because that he was a king who reigned in righteousness, and executed justice in his realm; as he does, of whom he was a glorious type. In Joshua's time, we find that there was a king in Jerusalem, which is supposed to be the same with Salem, whose name was Adonizedek: which is, by interpretation, Lord of righteousness: a name of much the same signification with this, and perhaps it was a common name of the kings of this place; even as Abimelech was a common name of the kings of Gerar, and Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt.

Now this inquiry of ours consists of two parts, 1st, Who he was. 2ndly, What he was. 1st, Let us consider who he was; there has been a variety of opinions concerning him, which may be reduced to these two heads: 1st, Such who have thought him to be more than a man; 2ndly, Such who have thought him to be but a mere man: of those who have thought him to be more than a man, Some have imagined that he was an angel, which appeared in a human form to Abraham: this was the opinion of Origen; which, though not approved of by a learned author, yet is preferred by him to that which Jerom, and many others, both of the ancient and modern writers, have embraced; of which hereafter.

That angels have appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, Genesis 18 and are there called men: are in the 19th verse called angels; but then we never read of angels being priests, or of this office being ascribed to them; for every high priest is taken from among men, and not from among angels. Others have thought him to be a divine power, superior to Christ: this was the heresy of those who were called Melchisedecians: the first author of this was one Theodorus, a silversmith, a disciple and follower of one Theodorus, a tanner, who lived under Zepherinus, Pope of Rome, and Severus, Emperor, about the year of Christ 174.

This heresy consisted of two parts. 1st, That Christ was a mere man. 2dly, That Melchizedek was not a man but the power of God; more powerful, august, and happy, than the Son of God; after whose image Christ was made by God. This heresy arose from a mistaken sense of Christ's being said to be after the order of Melchizedek; but rather the contrary follows from hence; for if Melchizedek, was a type of Christ, and Christ the truth of that type, then Christ must be greater than Melchizedek, because the truth is greater than the type.

Others have fancied, that he was the Holy Ghost; this was the notion of the Hieraclites, as appears from Epiphanius; though Augustine, in treating concerning those heretics, makes no mention of this tenet of theirs: yet Danæus, in his commentary upon him, does; by whom we are informed, that they were so called from Hieras, or Hieraela, an Egyptian monk, who lived under Dionysius, Pope of Rome, and Gallieus, Emperior, about the year of Christ 234. That the Holy Ghost appeared once in the form of a dove, and descended on Christ at his baptism, is well known; but that he ever appeared in the form of a man, the scripture does not furnish us with one single instance of, nor is he ever called a priest, or that office assigned unto him, in all the word of God.

Others have supposed that he was the son of God himself: which opinion as defended by a learned author who supposes that Christ appeared to Abraham when he returned from the slaughter of the Kings, in the shape and form of that body which he afterwards dwelt in here on earth; and hence he is said to be *afwmoiwmenoV de tw uiw tou qeou*, "made like unto the Son of God:" and that because Abraham saw him in the likeness of that body which when incarnate he really assumed, therefore it is said by Christ, that Abraham rejoiced to see his day, and he saw it, and was glad (John 8:56): he argues, that if Melchizedek, and the Son of God, is not one and the same person, then it follows, that there are two priests, whose priesthood is everlasting; for the apostle says of Melchizedek, that he abides a priest continually (Heb. 7:3): he lays some stress upon his blessing so great a patriarch as Abraham, which the apostle observes as an undeniable evidence of his being "greater and more excellent than he:" but his chief argument is founded on Hebrews 7:8 where the apostle, comparing Melchizedek with the Levites, says, and here men that die receive tithes: but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth; where two things may be observed of the Levites, which are opposed in Melchizedek's character; one is, that they were men, the other is that they died; but this priest to whom Abraham gave titles, was not a man, nor mortal: for there is a witness of him that he liveth; these priests were made after the law of a carnal

commandment; but Melchizedek, or the Son of God, after the power of an endless life; he cannot see how Melchizedek's priesthood was more perfect than that of the Levites, if he was a mortal man, and a king and priest among the Salemites; those people having not as yet embraced the true Religion; for Abraham was but just come amongst them: and if so be they had, yet, says he, every one knows that religious worship, even in the families of the patriarchs, was but rude and without form, until God instituted the Levitical order; he asks what reason we have, why we should not believe this King of righteousness and peace, to be the same Son of God, who appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre?

Genesis 18 accompanied by two angels, who, with him, are called men; he thinks there is a greater evidence of divinity in this King of righteousness, who on a sudden came from above, as out of a machine, and met Abraham on the road, and blessed him, and refreshed him with bread and wine; than there is in that person who appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, and was hospitably received by him only, as he observes, there is this difference, that he in Genesis 18 is expressly said to be The Lord, but this is not said of Melchizedek in Genesis: but he supposes, that Moses left this mystery to be explained by David and Paul, who he thinks have left us no room to doubt of it.

He thinks that Abraham gave him these names, Melchizedek and Malecsalem; which he thinks are not proper, but appellative names; that salem is no more the name of a place than zedek, but both expressive of the characters of this great person, the one, as the apostle observes, signifying King of righteousness, the other, King of peace: and that the reason of his being called a priest of the most High, is, because that he appeared in the habit of a priest when he met Abraham, This opinion, I must confess, is more eligible, and carries a greater appearance of truth in it, than those before mentioned; yet there are some things which oblige me not to come into it; that the Son of God did appear to Abraham, and to the other patriarchs, in a human form, I do not at all doubt, but that he appeared so to Abraham, in the habit of a priest, when he returned from the slaughter of the kings, I see no reason to believe: when Melchizedek is said to be like to the Son of God, it rather proves him a distinct person from him, than the same; and when an endless life and an eternal priesthood are ascribed to him, it is to be understood of him, not really and properly, but mystically and typically; he having no predecessor nor successor in his priesthood; and when Christ, the Son of God, is said to be of his order; it is evident to me, that he must be distinguished from him.

But let us proceed now to consider the opinions of the latter sort, who have thought him to be but a mere man, and of these, Some have thought that he was Shem, the Son of Noah; and this was the constant opinion of the Hebrew Doctors; which opinion might arise partly from that esteem he was in for his piety and knowledge. Hence the Targumists call him Shem the Great; and frequently make mention of the school of Shem the Great. And Ben Sira says, that Shem and Seth obtained glory among men: and partly from an unwillingness in the Jews to believe that a stranger should be greater than Abraham; that one of another nation should be preferable to him who was the author of theirs.

This opinion has also been embraced by persons of a considerable figure in the Christian world: what has induced them to it, are these considerations, namely, that he was then living, and that he had lived an hundred years before the flood, and there was none born before that time then living; so that his parentage might well be unknown: that God is called the Lord God of Shem, and so he may fitly be called the priest of the most high God; that he was a righteous person, and so justly called Melchizedek: that he was the most honorable in the earth, and so greater than Abraham; that he was the root of the church, and from whence Abraham and his posterity sprang; as also the Messiah according to the flesh; to him the promise was made, Genesis 9:26 and upon all accounts the most proper person then living to bless

Abraham.

This opinion was opposed by Epiphanius, on account of his being then dead, as he imagined: but that was a mistake of his, as is manifest from chronology; for he was then living, and lived some years afterwards: nevertheless, there are some things which may dissuade us from embracing this opinion; for it cannot be said of Shem that he was without father, and without mother, and without descent; no, not in the common sense that is given of the words; for Shem's genealogy is well known, and a full account of it we have in scripture: besides if Melchizedek was Shem, then Levi must be in his loins, as well as in the loins of Abraham; and so the apostle's argument would be of no force to prove the superexcellency of Melchizedek's priesthood to Levi's: nay the apostle tells us, that Melchizedek's descent is not counted of them, that is, the Levites, their descent is different; nay more, it does not seem credible that Shem should come into the land of Canaan, and reign in a country that belonged to his brother Ham and his posterity: nor does it appear probable that Abraham should be a stranger there, if it were so, and be obliged to buy a piece of ground to bury his dead, when he had so near akin to him a king there: nor is it reasonable to suppose, that Abraham should give to him, but rather he to Abraham.

Others have thought him to be of the posterity of Canaan, the son of Ham: that he was a king in Salem, in the land of Canaan that he was a man of great piety and knowledge, whom the Lord had remarkably raised up in that corrupt generation, and endued with the knowledge of him and his true worship his name seems to make it manifest that he was a Canaanite, it being usual with those people to interpose God in compounded names, as in Adonizedek, Abimelek, &c. as also the place of his kingdom, Salem, which was a city in the land of Canaan: and likewise he is said to have a descent different from the Levites and their ancestors: and this seems well to agree with the design of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, to cut off all boasting from the Jewish nation concerning the law of Moses, and priesthood of Levi; as also to magnify the grace of Christ among the Gentiles.

Many, both ancient and later divines, have been of this opinion. Others who think him to be a mere man, of whose genealogy the scripture is silent, on purpose that he might be as fit a type of Christ as the state of a mere man would allow of, not only think it in vain, but sinful to inquire who he was; and I must confess, we ought not to be too nice in our disquisitions, nor too positive in our determinations in this affair; but I cannot see that the last opinion which I have mentioned breaks in upon this; which at present, I am most inclined to embrace.

Thus much in answer to the first part of the question, Who he is? Let us now consider, 2dly, What he was: first we are told in Genesis 14:18 that he was king of Salem; which, according to some, is the same place which afterwards was called Jerusalem: so all the three Targums upon the place carry it: and we find that Jerusalem is called by this name in David's time, (Psalm 76:2) in Salem also is his tabernacle; though others think that it was Salem, a city of the Shechemites, in the Land of Canaan, mentioned in Genesis 33:18, which by another name was called Shechem, and afterwards Salim; near to which John was baptizing (John 3:23), and here Jerom says, in his time, was shown the palace of Melchizedek; the magnificence of which was manifest by its ruins: but this could not be true, for this city was beat down and sowed with salt by Abimelek (Judges 9:45), and I am most inclined to think that it was Jerusalem of which Melchizedek was king; who herein was a glorious type of Christ, who was constituted king over Zion; and in this very city, as our great high priest, offered up himself a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor to God. 2ndly, He is also said to be a priest of the most high God, one that was called by God to that office, was employed in the service of God; and by this title distinguished from the priests of idols: what his sacrifices were, we are not told: but no doubt they were such, which other priests offered who were so by divine

appointment: and certain it is, that the bread and wine which he brought out to Abraham; were not his sacrifice; for he did not do that as a priest, but as a king, out of his royal and princely bounty, to refresh Abraham and his weary soldiers; as will be hereafter shown.

So that Melchizedek was both a King and a Priest; instances of which indeed we have among the heathens, and perhaps they borrowed or rather stole the practice from this instance: yet we find this was not allowed among the Jews; the priesthood belonged to one tribe, and the kingdom to another: neither David, nor any of his posterity, were allowed the exercise of both offices, till the Messiah came, who was prefigured herein by Melchizedek. Thus have I considered both who and what he was: and I conclude that he was neither an angel, nor a divine power, nor the Holy Ghost, nor the Son of God himself, but that he was a mere man; yet not Shem the son of Noah, but a Canaanitish prince, who was remarkably raised up and endued by God with piety and knowledge, and was both king of Salem, that is, Jerusalem, and priest of the most high God, and herein a glorious type of Christ Jesus.

I shall now consider, Secondly, How Christ may be said to be of the order of Melchizedek. Aben Ezra renders it (kata thn omoiotnta), according to the custom, or manner of Melchizedek: and the apostle according to the similitude; and in all those places where these words are mentioned in the epistle to the Hebrews, they are also rendered by the Syriac, in the similitude, or likeness of Melchizedek; so that the sense of the words is, that just in the same way and manner that Melchizedek was a priest, Christ is, or that there is a similitude and likeness between Christ and Melchizedek which we shall consider in a few particulars. 1st, There is a likeness or similitude between them in their names and titles; Melchizedek's name by interpretation, is, King of righteousness; and well agrees with Christ, who loves righteousness and hates iniquity: who is a king that reigns in righteousness, who sits upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice.

The sceptre of his kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness, and his throne is established thereby; he is king of saints, and all his ways are just and true; all his regal administrations are according to justice and truth; for righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. As also he may well be called King of righteousness, because he is the author of one, he has wrought out and brought in an everlasting one, which is commensurate to the requirements of the law; and therefore sufficient for all those, for whom he effected it; this is called the righteousness of God; not that it is the essential righteousness of God, but it is a righteousness, which Christ, who is God as well as man, has wrought out for all his people; for he who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; to this righteousness of his should we submit, on this should we depend, and in it desire to be found living and dying, and then we shall not be found naked.

Again; Melchizedek's title is King of Salem, which by interpretation is, King of peace; which may well be applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose title in Isaiah (Isa. 9:5), is The prince of peace; his kingdom is a kingdom of peace, his government and his peace are of equal duration; as there will be no end of the one, so neither will there be of the other in his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth: which was fulfilled in Solomon, who herein was an eminent type of Christ, and to whom those words are principally to be referred, as the Jews themselves acknowledge.

Also he may be so called, because that he is both the author and giver of peace; he has made peace between God and sinners, a lasting and an inviolable one; he has been at great pain and charges to obtain it, it has cost him his precious blood; he hath made peace by the blood of his cross; the tidings of which are brought unto us in the gospel; and therefore that is called the gospel of peace; he is also the

giver of all the inward, spiritual, conscience-peace, which saints enjoy as he himself said (John 14:27), Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you not as the world giveth, I give unto you; thus is Christ not only king of righteousness, but king of peace; as he is the author of the one, so he is of the other; and from him alone must we expect them both.

Secondly, There is a likeness or similitude between Christ and Melchizedek, in the account that is given of him in Hebrews 7:3, without father, without mother, without descent; having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; not but that Melchizedek had both father and mother, and likewise descent and beginning of days, and end of life; but the scripture gives us no account who were his father and mother, nor of what stock he descended; neither when he was born, nor when he died; and these things are on purpose concealed from us, that he might be a proper type of Christ.

The Syriac renders it thus, "neither whose father nor mother are written in the genealogies; neither the beginning of his days, nor the end of his life;" and another learned interpreter thus, "of an unknown father, and of an unknown mother, the original of whose stock cannot be declared;" now this may be referred both to the person and priesthood of Christ. 1st. To the person of Christ; the several branches of this account given of Melchizedek, may very fitly be applied to Christ.

First, he is said to be without father; this is true of Christ, as man; for as God he has a Father; God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: and frequent intimations did he give of this to the Jews; for which more than once, they took up stones to stone him: as such he made his application to God in his agonies in the garden, and as such he commended his Spirit to him, when ready to expire on the cross; and also ascended to him as his God and our God, as his Father and our Father: but as a man he had no Father; for Joseph was only his supposed, and not his real father; and herein lies the wonderful and astonishing mystery of the incarnation, which was so long prophesied of by Isaiah, Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (Isa. 7:14): and therefore when the tidings hereof were brought to the virgin, it is no wonder that she made the reply she did, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

But the answer which the angel returned unto her, was entirely satisfactory, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. In Christ's incarnation, as there was a surprising display of God's grace, so there was an astonishing instance of his power; it was not after the ordinary way of generation; he was without father. Secondly, He is said to be without mother; this is true of Christ as God; as man, he had a mother, but no father; as God, he has a father, but no mother: he was from all eternity begotten by the father, in a way ineffable and unspeakable to us; the modus of his generation who can tell?

We are not to entertain any carnal conceptions of Christ's generation, nor compare it with that of ours, nor any other creatures; for he is without mother; it is true, the virgin Mary is sometimes called, by the ancients, the mother of God; but this is said by reason of the hypostatical union of the two natures in one person, upon the account of which sometimes what is proper to one nature is ascribed to the other. Thirdly, He is said to be without descent; that is, there is no account of his pedigree, kindred, and ancestors, in any authentic genealogy: this is true of Christ as God; for his genealogy as man is given us both by Matthew and Luke; but as God, without genealogy; and hereby is distinguished from the gods of the heathens, of whom are given long, tedious, and unaccountable genealogies: but he is the first and the last; before him was no God formed, neither shall there be after him. 1st, He is said to have neither

beginning of days, nor end of life; this is true of Christ as he is God; for he is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, from everlasting to everlasting: and he is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; he who was born in Bethlehem, his goings forth were of old, even from everlasting; there never was a time when he began to be, and there never will be one when he will cease to be: and also, though as he is man he had a beginning of days, and an end of life, in this world, yet being risen from the dead, he lives, and will live for evermore; death shall no more have dominion over him. 2dly, These things may be referred to the priesthood both of Melchizedek and Christ: Melchizedek may be said to be without father and without mother, &c., because his father was not a priest, nor did his mother descend from those that were priests; his descent either on father or mother side was not counted from them, nor had he any predecessor or successor in the priesthood; now this was, or at least ought to have been, carefully observed during the Levitical dispensation, that none be admitted to service as a priest, but who appeared from their registers and genealogies, to be of the right line: and therefore we find in Ezra's time, when there was a reformation in the Jewish church state, that those who were not found in the registers and genealogies, were looked on as polluted, and put from the priesthood: and herein Melchizedek was different from the Levites, and was a proper type of Christ; who did not descend from parents of the priestly line, for neither his supposed father Joseph, nor his real mother Mary, were of Levi's tribe, but of the tribe of Judah; of which tribe no man gave attendance at the altar; as also of which Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood; and out of this tribe, it is evident, our Lord sprang, who never had one that went before him, nor ever will have any come after him in the priesthood.

Thirdly, There is a likeness or similitude between Christ and Melchizedek, in the conjunction of the kingly and priestly offices in him; Melchizedek was both king of Salem, and priest of the most high God; and there are some particular actions which are recorded of him, which concern him in both characters; in which he prefigured Christ. 1st, As a king, there is one single action of his in which he typified Christ, and that is, his bringing out bread and wine to refresh Abraham and his wearied soldiers: he did not do this as a priest, but as a prince; here is no sacrifice to God, but an instance of his regard to one of his saints: this royal and generous act of his, is expressive of the great regard which Christ has for his people, who are engaged in a warfare, are fighting the Lord's battles, and are enduring hardness as good soldiers of Christ; What royal entertainments?

What large and rich provisions of grace has he made for them? He feedeth them with himself, the bread of life: whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed; and sheds abroad his love in their souls, which is better than wine; he has made a gospel-feast, and it is a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow; of wines on the lees, well refined; and to this feast does he invite his people, and brings it forth unto them, and bids them heartily welcome; and says, Eat O friends; yea, drink abundantly, O my beloved; and then when the good fight of faith is fought, when the battle is ended, and the victory is obtained, then will he lead them into his banqueting-house above, and bring forth his best wine, which is reserved till last, and cause them to sit down at his table, where they shall feed for ever on those inexpressible joys and everlasting pleasures which are at his right hand. 2dly, There are several actions of his as a priest wherein he was typical of Christ. 1st, He blessed Abraham, and said, Blessed be Abraham of the most high God; this he did as a priest, it being the priest's work to bless the people: it is probable this might be a ratification or confirmation of the blessing of the promised seed to Abraham; for the Apostle says, he blessed him which had the promises (Heb. 7:6, 7); which is introduced by him as an argument of his being greater than he: no Christ in this is represented by Melchizedek, who blesseth his with all spiritual blessings, such as a justifying righteousness, the pardon of sin, adoption, and eternal life: and these blessings are lasting and durable; for those who are blessed by Christ, are blessed for ever; he



never removes them himself, nor is it in the power of men or devils to reverse them: these then are blessings indeed; and happy are those who are possessed of them. 2dly, He gave thanks to God for the victory obtained by Abraham over his enemies: for thus we read he said, and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand (Gen. 14:20): this may very well be referred to Christ's praising his Father in the great congregation, and his paying vows there before them that fear him; he has obtained a complete victory over all his and our enemies, and has made us more than conquerors; and now he is set down at the right hand of God, and is there blessing his father, and giving thanks unto him for strengthening, assisting, and enabling him to do this work, as man and mediator.

He asked of his father, and he gave him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for his possession; and now is praising him for it; he has delivered all our enemies into his hands, and us out of the hands of them all, and now is blessing God for both. 3dly, Another act recorded of him as a priest, is his receiving tithes from Abraham. Christ is our great high priest, by whom we should offer up all our sacrifices to God; and in whom alone they are acceptable to him; and also to him should we prefer our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving for those many blessings wherewith we are blessed by him; he should have not only a tenth of what we have, but even all we have; we should give him our hearts, and present our bodies a living, holy and acceptable sacrifice to him.

Thus we have considered those actions of Melchizedek, which concern him both as king and priest, wherein he was a peculiar type of Christ the royal priest. Samuel was a prophet and a priest, but not a king. David was a king and prophet, but not a priest; nor any of his posterity. Uzziah once attempted the priestly office, but was severely rebuked by God, and struck with a leprosy, which continued with him to his death, Melchizedek alone was king and priest; these two met together alone in him, and therefore more especially on this account, Christ is said to be a priest of his order; that is, he is just such a priest as Melchizedek was, who was both king and priest; but Christ exceeds all his types, for he is prophet, priest and king; he is said to be the faithful witness (Rev. 1:5), which is expressive of his prophetic office; and the first begotten of the dead, which denotes his priestly office; and the prince of the kings of the earth, which directs us to his kingly office; all those three, which meet in one person, are clustered here in one verse; and perhaps the conjunction of the regal and priestly offices is intended in Zechariah 6: 12, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both; he that sits upon the throne is a priest, and there is nothing interferes to hinder the discharge of either office, but an entire harmony between them.

Fourthly, As Melchizedek was a greater priest than Levi, or any of his sons, so is Christ: Melchizedek appears to be greater than Levi, by the account that is given both of his person and priesthood; by his blessing Abraham, from whom Levi sprang, and by his receiving tithes not only from Abraham, but also from Levi, who was then in Abraham's loins. Christ now is greater than Melchizedek, and therefore must be greater than Levi, or any of his sons, 1st, Christ is greater than any of the Levitical priests in his person; for he is truly and properly God; these were but men; hence Christ is fully qualified for this work, which was too weighty for a mere creature: and all he did was effectual; his blood sufficient to cleanse, his sacrifice to atone, and his righteousness to justify from all sin; he is also the Son of God: Melchizedek was made like to the Son of God; but Christ is really the Son of God; in that sense in which none of Levi's tribe were; and as he was the ablest, so the fittest for this work.

He is God's first and only begotten; who has interest in his Father, and who would, no doubt, be as faithful to him as merciful to us: and his assuming human nature added yet to his fitness, for hereby he was made like unto us, as it behooved him, and had something to offer: and what he offered was in our nature, that

so the benefit of it might redound to us he was truly and properly man; and yet herein excelled the Levites; for though he was a man, yet not a mere man: he was united to the Word, the second person in the Trinity, so were not they: he was perfectly holy, so were not they, but had need to offer for their own sins as well as for the people's. 2dly, In his sacrifice he is greater than they: his was perfect; by it a full atonement was made; sin was entirely put away, and his people perfected: but their sacrifices could not take away sin, nor make either them that did the service, or those that came thereunto, perfect: and therefore there was a repetition of them: the priests stood daily ministering, and offering the same sacrifices; but Christ was but once offered, and will never be offered more: there remains no more, neither is there any need of any more or any other sacrifice for sin.

Fifthly and lastly, There is a likeness between them in the perpetuity of their priesthood: Melchizedek is said to abide a priest continually (Heb. 7:3); because we have no account of the end of his priesthood, or that he ever had any successor therein; moreover, his priesthood, as the Syriac renders it, does abide for ever in Christ, who is of his order, and the truth of this type; for what is said mystically and figuratively of Melchizedek, is really and properly true of Christ: but this leads me to consider, Secondly, The everlastingness of Christ's priesthood: Thou art a priest for ever, &c.

There will never be a change of Christ's priesthood, it will never be antiquated. Offering of sacrifices, which is one main branch of the priestly office, began very early: Adam, no doubt, quickly after his fall, was taught by God to offer sacrifice for sin; and he taught his children to do the same: and now every man was his own priest: Abel offered sacrifice as well as Cain: which practice, perhaps, continued until the Levitical order was instituted. Though the Jews say, that before this was set up, the priesthood belonged to the first-born: but however, be it how it will, here is a change of the priesthood now, it is appropriated to a particular tribe; and none of another tribe might exercise this office: and this continued till Christ came in the flesh: and now, he being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle; this priesthood is changed, as also the law thereof, which is disannulled, and abolished, because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof: though sacrifices were of God's own appointing, yet now sacrifice and offering, and burnt offering, and offering for sin, he will not; neither does he take any pleasure in those things that are offered by the law; but now the priesthood is in Christ's hands, and there will never more be another change.

There were frequent changes in the Levitical priesthood, by reason of age and death; they truly, as the apostle observes, were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue (Heb. 7:23, 24). Some by reason of age; for they were not allowed to be in service after fifty years of age: and others not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; or, as it may be rendered an intransible priesthood. A priesthood that does not pass from one to another.

Christ will never have any successors in his priesthood, it will never pass from him to another: there is now no real priesthood among men; ministers of the gospel are no more priests, than the people to whom they minister: for in a metaphorical sense, all the saints are made Kings and Priests to God; there is none a real and proper priest but himself, nor ever will be; for he is a priest for ever. But you will say, Has not Christ performed his priestly office? Does he continue to act as a priest?

Has he not finished his work as such? I answer; it is true Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; and he will never be sacrificed more: he was once offered to bear the sins of many, and he will be offered no more: he has offered one sacrifice for sin, and he will offer no more: for he is set down for ever, having

done his work: but then the virtue and efficacy of his sacrifice will abide for ever; by it he has put away sin for ever; by it he has brought in everlasting righteousness; a righteousness which will last for ever; by it he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified: as the virtue and efficacy of his sacrifice reached the saints from the foundation of the world: and therefore is said to be the Lamb slain from thence: so it will reach the saints in all ages of the world, to the curl of time, and throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Nay further, though he has done sacrificing, yet he has not done interceding for us: now we have an advocate with the Father; now he is pleading the virtue of his sacrifice for us, and this is one branch of his priestly office. But you will say, when all the elect are called by grace and brought to glory, and all the blessing purchased by his blood bestowed on them, will he then continue to intercede? I answer; The apostle tells us, that he ever liveth to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25); and one way by which Christ intercedes, is by appearing in the presence of God for us; and this he will do for ever: and as our being brought to glory, will be owing to his intercession, so our continuance will be owing to the same; and though he may not continue to intercede formally for us, yet the virtue of his intercession will continue for ever.

Moreover also, the glory of his priestly office will be continually given him, both by his father, who after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, set him down at his own right hand, which is a branch of his mediatorial glory, in which he will be continued for ever: and then also this glory will be given to him for ever by all the saints in heaven; who will be continually saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing (Rev. 5:12) all the blessings of grace and glory they enjoy, they will for ever ascribe to his sacrifice and intercession.

But now let us proceed to consider, Thirdly, That the stability and firmness of Christ's priesthood lies in the immutable and irrevocable oath of God; The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest, &c. The priesthood is not only assigned to Christ by the word of God, but by the oath of God; which is no other than an unalterable decree of his, which was revealed to David by inspiration: of which oath or decree he will never repent. God sometimes indeed changes his work, his way of acting; but he never changes his will: for he is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent; and whenever repentance is ascribed to God, it is to be understood in the former, and not in the latter sense: thus when it repented him that he had made man upon earth, he did not change his will, but he changed his way of acting; he changed the dispensation and therefore brought a flood and destroyed man from off the earth: and even this was according to an unalterable counsel of his own will.

So when he repented that he had made Saul king, he did not change his will, but his way of acting, and therefore he cut him off; and gave his kingdom to another: and yet all according to his unchangeable will. Now he has conferred the priesthood on Christ; and as he will never change his will, so he will never change the dispensation, his way of acting in regard hereunto; he will never transfer the priesthood from one to the another. This may show us, 1st, The validity of Christ's call to the priestly office: he was not called to and invested in the priestly office by men; but God called him to, and fixed him in it by his unalterable decree: neither did he take this honor to himself; he did not thrust himself into this office; Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him; Thou art my Son today have I begotten thee (Heb. 5:5): and therefore as God has called him to it and confirmed him in it by his oath, he will never be removed from it. 2dly, The singularity thereof: it might seem somewhat strange and incredible that God's own Son, his only begotten Son, should be made an high priest, to offer sacrifice for sin and to make intercession for transgressors: and therefore he confirms it by his oath, that he shall be a priest: as also, Christ was of another tribe, of which Moses said nothing concerning priesthood; and therefore this

was a singular instance; and, to put an end to all hesitation about it, he swore to it. 3dly, It shews also the dignity of Christ's priesthood; the apostle observes this, and mentions it as an undeniable evidence of the preferableness of Christ's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood; that those priests were made without an oath, but he with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord swear and will not repent, &c. and he also adds, by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better Testament (Heb.7:20-22): they were made priests by a law which is changed and abrogated, but he by two immutable things, God's word and oath. 4thly, It evidently makes it appear, that Christ's priesthood is a matter of moment; an oath is not to be taken by men in matters that are trivial and of no moment; and we may be sure that when God swears it is not in a trivial affair, but in a matter of great importance, such as the priesthood of Christ is; for on his sacrifice and intercession, the whole hinge of our salvation turns: because that he hath an unchangeable priesthood, and ever liveth to make intercession for us; that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; therefore we should set an high value on Christ's sacrifice and intercession, and be careful that we do not let these things slip, or suffer them to be wrung out of our hands. 5thly, This lets us see the durableness of Christ's priesthood; God has called him unto it and bestowed it on him; and his gifts and callings are without repentance: and therefore he shall continue a priest for ever.

The law indeed made men high priests which had infirmity, and therefore they did not continue long; but the word of the oath which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore (Heb. 7:28). 6thly and lastly, God gives his oath in this affair, not so much on his Son's account, who would never have doubted of his call unto, and investiture in the priestly office; but upon ours; therefore God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, concerning this matter, confirms it by an oath; that all doubts and hesitations might be removed, and that we might have strong consolation who have fled unto and laid hold upon Christ our high priest (Heb. 7:17, 18).

Thus have I considered the several parts of the text, and shall close with some brief improvement. First, From hence we learn the excellency and greatness of Christ's person. The Jews vainly asked him this question, Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead; Whom makest thou thyself (John 7:53)? Yes, he was greater than Abraham; for he was greater than Melchizedek, who was greater than Abraham; to whom Abraham paid tithes, and by whom he was blessed.

Christ is great both in his person and office; he is God over all, blessed for evermore; therefore should we entertain high thoughts of him, and have a great value and esteem for him. Secondly, Hence we learn the preferableness of Christ's priesthood to all others; they are changed and abolished, but Christ's is an everlasting and unchangeable one; and therefore seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession, and come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Thirdly, Hence we learn how suitable Christ is for us; all offices meet in him; he is a king, to rule and govern us and to subdue all our enemies, both inward and outward; he is a priest, to atone for our sins, and make intercession to the Father for us; and he is a prophet, to teach and instruct us: whither should we go, but unto him? Such an high priest becomes us, who is after the order of Melchizedek, both king and priest. Fourthly and lastly, Hence we learn, that all our blessings and privileges are secured, and will be continued to us for ever: Christ is a priest for ever; and the virtue and efficacy of his sacrifice and intercession continues for ever: and therefore all the blessings which depend thereon, will be continued to us for ever; we shall for ever be reaping the fruits and benefits of Christ's priestly-office; it affords abundant matter of consolation now, and will be the subject of our wonder to all eternity.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-gill/christ-a-priest-after-the-order-of-melchizedek/>

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