

4 Reasons Why Only Christ Can Hold the Melchizedek Priesthood

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1. Only Christ is Perfectly Sinless

1.1 Hebrews 7:26 (NIV)

26 Such a high priest [Jesus Christ] meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Comment

1. These qualifications for high priest in the order of the Melchizedek priesthood could be met only by Jesus. Nowhere in the Bible are these attributes collectively associated with any other man.
2. It may be argued that Jesus' perfection was a necessary condition for the Atonement, but not for the Melchizedek priesthood in and of itself.

This logic is flawed for the following reason. The only significant distinction between the high priests in the OT and the priests under their command was *authority*, and not *nature*. Here we read that Jesus Christ is perfection incarnate. He is "set apart from sinners" because, as the broader context of the Bible clearly reveals, He is God by nature (e.g. Hebrews 1:8; Philippians 2:6). Jesus is the only man to be considered perfect--not because he *perfectly repented* when He sinned, but because He *never* sinned. He is sinless by nature and "exalted above the heavens"; man is not (e.g. Galatians 3:22).

2. Only Christ is Literally Eternal

2.1 Hebrews 7:3 (NIV)

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

Comment

1. Jesus Christ is "without beginning of days or end of life." Taken at face value this can only mean that He is literally eternal; He is self-existent and is therefore God by nature. Moreover, eternality of *person* is another qualification for the Melchizedek priesthood that excludes man.
2. Mankind is not eternal and self-existent; he is of the created realm (e.g. Genesis 1:27; cf. Romans 1:23, 25) and, therefore, cannot qualify to hold the Melchizedek priesthood.

3. The LDS doctrine of the preexistence is that all persons, including the Father and the Son, had a beginning in time and are therefore of the created realm. Evangelicals believe that this contradicts biblical revelation.
4. If the LDS doctrine of Christ's eternality contradicts biblical revelation, then the LDS Jesus is a false Jesus. And because there is no salvation in a false Jesus (e.g. John 8:24; Matthew 24:24; 2 Corinthians 11:4) it does not matter if the LDS doctrine that we *can* hold the Melchizedek priesthood *is* correct.
5. This calls for a thorough and necessary investigation of the LDS and evangelical doctrines of the deity of Christ.

3. The Melchizedek Priesthood is Non-Transferable

3.1 Hebrews 7:23-24 (NIV)

23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.

Comment

1. That Christ has a "permanent" ("unchangeable," KJV) priesthood is significant and we must examine its meaning in the Greek for a proper understanding of the word.
2. Permanent (*aparabatos*) here in Hebrews 7:24 means that Christ's priesthood is non-transferable and is therefore unavailable to us. Consider these statements on Hebrews 7:24 by authorities on biblical Greek.
 - "priesthood unchangeable and therefore **not liable to pass to a successor**" (Joseph H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1963, p. 54).
 - "In the New Testament Hebrews 7:24 says that Christ has an eternal and imperishable priesthood, **not just in the sense that it cannot be transferred to anyone**, but in the sense of 'unchangeable'" (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, 1985, p. 772).
 - "God placed Christ in this priesthood and no one else can step into it" (A.T. Robinson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, CD-ROM).
3. One of the primary practical reasons there were multiple holders of the Levitical priesthood was because "death prevented them from continuing in office" (Hebrews 7:23). When the high priest died a new one had to be appointed. But because "Jesus lives forever" (v. 24) there is no need for additional holders of the Melchizedek priesthood. This is exactly why the

writer of Hebrews, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, chose the word *aparabatos* to describe Jesus' priesthood; it is *non-transferable*. Therefore, we cannot hold the Melchizedek priesthood.

4. Only Christ and Melchizedek are Explicitly Shown to Hold this Priesthood in the Bible

- 4.1** If man is not perfectly sinless and "set apart from sinners" as is Christ (Hebrews 7:23); if man is not literally eternal "without beginning of days" as is Christ (Hebrews 7:3); and if the Melchizedek priesthood is non-transferable (Hebrews 7:24), then we would expect that no one besides Christ and Melchizedek would be shown in the Bible to hold this priesthood. This is in fact the case.
- 4.2** It might be argued that if Melchizedek held the priesthood, and he was a man, then so can we.

Comment

1. This logic is flawed for the following reason. Melchizedek is a *type* of Christ. A *type* is a theological term representing a figure that points forward to something or someone to come and is therefore prophetic. In other words, what Melchizedek represented in a figurative sense, Christ *is* in reality.
 - Melchizedek was not *literally perfect* and without sin, although "his name means 'king of righteousness'" (7:2) in a figurative sense. Jesus, however, is literally without sin (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21) and "set apart from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26).
 - Melchizedek was not *literally eternal*, although he was "without genealogy" (7:3) in a figurative sense. Jesus, however, is literally eternal and "without beginning of days" (7:3).
 - Hebrews 8:1-5 depicts similar *typology* with regard to the OT tabernacle that was "a copy and shadow" (v. 5) of "the true tabernacle" (v. 2) in heaven.

Therefore, to believe that we can hold the Melchizedek priesthood simply because he did not only fails to address sections 1-3 above, but it fails to recognize the prophetic and figurative intent of biblical typology.

- 4.3** It might be argued that because believers are called "priests" in the NT we may hold the Melchizedek priesthood.

Comment

1. This logic is flawed for the following reasons. First, it is not only an argument from silence, but it fails to address sections 1-4 above.

Second, believers are called *priests* not in the OT sense of offering animal sacrifices, but in the NT sense of offering sacrifices of "praise" (Hebrews 13:15) and "holy" living (Romans 12:1).

2. Latter-day Saints are often taught that other persons in the Bible such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus' apostles were holders of the Melchizedek priesthood. Unfortunately, no one in the Bible is *explicitly* shown to have held the Melchizedek priesthood other than Jesus and Melchizedek. Latter-day Saints should be pressed to prove otherwise.

3. It is, however, *explicitly* shown in non-biblical Scripture that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were to have the Melchizedek priesthood conferred on them. **(See *Joseph Smith—History* 1:72.)**

Tragically, LDS must depend upon non-biblical, LDS Scripture to make the Bible support something it in fact rejects; namely, that believers can hold the Melchizedek priesthood.

4. **Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-22** informs us that without the Melchizedek priesthood "no man can see the face of God and live."

Joseph Smith allegedly saw God the Father in his "First Vision" in 1820 when he was 14 years old. **(See *Joseph Smith – History* 1:3-7.)**

However, Joseph Smith did not receive the Melchizedek priesthood until *after* May 1829. **(See *Joseph Smith – History* 1:72.)**

Latter-day Saints should be pressed to reconcile this apparent contradiction.