

FROM CHAPTER 8, SECTION 1

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Christ the Elect

Our Confession states that the Lord Jesus was chosen, called and ordained by God to the office of the mediator. He was chosen by God for this office according to the Covenant of Redemption between them (see chapter 7 on the [Covenant of Redemption](#)). We said in chapter 7 that the Covenant of Redemption was the eternal covenant between the Persons of the Trinity, which laid out Their roles in the self-glorification of God and the redemption of God's elect. The Father was to elect a people and give them to the Son. The Son was to redeem the people whom the Father gave to Him. The Spirit was to apply the benefits of Son on their behalf to them and indwell them.

Christ was chosen by the Father from before the foundation of the earth to be the Savior of God's people. God's plans had Him as the center. In Ephesians 1:3-6, we read that before the foundation of the world, we were chosen and predestined in Christ for salvation, meaning that Christ was already then chosen to be the Savior of God's elect. He is the only One Who can save us. We also read about the Servant Messiah in Isaiah's prophecies. In Isaiah 42, we read –

Isa. 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, **my chosen, in whom my soul delights**; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

The Servant of the Lord is none other than the Lord Jesus Who is prophesied about before He came on the scene. He is the Lord's chosen and He is in whom God delights (Matt. 3:17; 17:5, etc). We also read of Christ being the chosen of God and in whom God delights in the New Testament Scriptures often with allusion to the Old Testament (John 6:27; 1Pet. 2:4-6). Christ is the prime elect of God, and all the believers have been elected in Him and when they believe they are united with Him.

Christ the Priest and Mediator

Our Lord is not only the prime elect of God, the Son of God, God the Son, the Savior and Awaited One, but He is also the High Priest of God's people. The task of the priest is to be a mediator between God and man. This was the case in the Old Testament also, for example, when the people would come with their sacrifices to the Levitical priests, or on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest would intercede and make atonement for the people of Israel (Lev. 16). Christ the Lord is the High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6; 12:24). The priests were to stand between God and man, but the problem with the Levitical priesthood was the fact that the priests themselves were not pure. They themselves were full of weaknesses and sin and they were to stand between sinful man (themselves being sinful) and holy God. That's problematic.

After the Order of Melchizedek

The Book of Hebrews (which is now my second favorite epistle after Romans) lays great stress, especially in chapter 7, on Melchizedek and his priesthood. Melchizedek comes on the scene in the life of Abraham after the slaughter of the kings in Genesis 14. He comes at once on the scene and the text tells us that "He was priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18). Even at that time, there were more people who knew God other than the ones we meet in the Bible. Melchizedek was a priest of God the Most High. He comes here on the scene and for centuries we hear nothing about him until we come to the Messianic Psalm 110:4.

Ps. 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Here, Yahweh promises to David's Adonai (Lord) that He would be a priest forever. The vague part is, is that His priesthood would not be after the order of Levi and Aaron, as it was the only acceptable form of priesthood under the Law, but "after the order of Melchizedek." The significance of the Melchizedekian priesthood is in the fact of the various statements about him in the book of Hebrews:

Heb. 7:2-3 and to him [Melchizedek] Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, **king of righteousness**, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, **king of peace**. 3 He is **without father or mother or genealogy**, having **neither beginning of days nor end of life**, but **resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever**.

Heb. 7:5-8 And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. 6 But this man who does not have his descent from them **received tithes from Abraham** and **blessed him who had the promises**. 7 It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the **superior**. 8 In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by **one of whom it is testified that he lives**.

It is not my purpose to give an extensive exegesis of these texts here, but we should notice a few things about this Melchizedek. Let's start with Hebrews 7:2-3. This Melchizedek, at least typologically, points to Christ, if it is not the pre-incarnate Christ Himself! The significance is seen in the meaning of his name and function. His name Melchizedek, which means king of righteousness. It is the Lord Jesus in the New Testament who is the King of God's people. He is the righteous Davidic King whom we adore and await to see fully and visibly reigning in the New Earth. Even now He is reigning, but will more manifestly reign when He comes back to usher in the New Heavens and New Earth. Furthermore, this king of righteousness reigned in the city of Salem, which under David became Jerusalem. Salem means peace and thus he was the king of peace. Again, resembling and pointing to the Lord Jesus Who was prophesied to be the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

We should likewise not forget that Melchizedek was introduced to us as a priest of the Most High. Not only was He the king of righteousness, king of peace, but he was also a priest of the true God. He was a priestly king, just like the Lord Jesus. This was unheard of under the Mosaic Law and Levitical priesthood. Furthermore, in v. 4, we read of Melchizedek's lack of genealogy, which was essential to the Levitical priesthood. You had to prove, through genealogy, that you were a Levite to be able to participate in the priesthood. But concerning the genealogy of Melchizedek, we do not read a single syllable in Genesis or anywhere in the Bible, pointing to our Lord's divine nature, which is without beginning and without end.

Now let us turn to vv. 5-8. Under the Law, the people of Israel were to pay tithes to the priests, but the father of the Israelites, Abraham himself, gave tithes to this Melchizedek. Moreover, Melchizedek blessed the one who had the covenant and the promises. It is obvious, the Author of Hebrews reasons, that this shows the superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham. If Melchizedek was superior to Abraham, then he is superior to Levi and his priesthood.

The Necessity of the Melchizedekian Priesthood

But the Author of Hebrews also gives us the answer as to why Christ was not to be a priest after the order of Levi:

Heb. 7:11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

The Author has just spoken of Melchizedek and of his superiority even over Abraham, but now comes back and deals with the priesthood that his readers are familiar with. The argument is, if the Levitical priesthood was good and through it the people could attain perfection, i.e., righteousness, then why would God speak of the Messiah's priesthood as being according to the order of Melchizedek? Well, the obvious answer is that because the Levitical Priesthood is unable to justify and perfect a sinner (Heb. 7:18-19; 9:9; 10:1). It is because the Levitical priesthood and the covenant under which it was, was faulty (Heb. 8:7-8). It was not meant to justify, but to point to the sinfulness of man and the need of the Savior (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:23-24). The necessity of having a priest not after the order of Aaron and Levi demonstrates the faultiness of the Mosaic Covenant under which the Levitical priesthood was instituted.

Guarantee of A Better Covenant

Heb. 7:22 This makes Jesus the **guarantor of a better covenant**.

The fact that the Lord Christ is the Mediator and High Priest of the New Covenant makes it a better covenant from the Old. But not only that, Christ is the surety (KJV) of the New Covenant. He is the guarantee that this covenant will not fail, but succeed, unlike the Mosaic Covenant (Heb. 8:6-13). This New Covenant is better because Christ is its Mediator. It is Christ Who stands between sinful man and perfectly holy God (1Tim. 2:5). Christ is sinless (Heb. 4:15; 7:26), man is sinful and God is holy. But Christ can stand between God and man because Christ is fully divine and fully human. In His one person, He shares both the nature of man and of God, and He is, therefore, capable to be the go-between of God and man. 1 Timothy 2

lays the stress on the humanity of Christ when it tells us that He is the only Mediator between God and man (1Tim. 2:5).

His mediation and intercession make the New Covenant superior and better than the Old Covenant. The priests under the Old Covenant were many because they died and had to be replaced. On the other hand, this Mediator of the New Covenant has an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16) and continues forever. Death has no power over Him and thus He is able to finish His work and make perfect atonement and intercession for His people. After arguing thus, the Author of Hebrews tells us -

Heb. 7:25 Consequently, **he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him**, since he always **lives to make intercession for them**.

To make intercession is to entreat the favor of God upon us, not based upon our works, but based upon His finished work (Heb. 7:27) on behalf of His people for whom He purchased all the blessings of God. The Lord Christ does not offer Himself repeatedly, rather in His intercession He points to His finished work as the basis of His appeal for us (Heb. 9:24-26). He is able to save—He is mighty to save—all who have boldness in and through Him to come to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). The reason for that is that Jesus intercedes and prays for God's elect that their faith may not fail (Rom. 8:34; Luke 22:32). Their drawing near to Christ is through the work of God in them and does not originate in themselves (John 6:44).

Ministry in Heaven

Heb. 8:1-2 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have **such a high priest**, one who is **seated at the right hand** of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a **minister in the holy places**, in the **true tent that the Lord set up**, not man.

The Lord's priestly ministry is not on the earth and that would have been unacceptable under the Mosaic Covenant (Heb. 7:13-16; 8:4), but it is in heaven. The Lord Christ did not begin His priestly ministry as a priest in the Herodian Temple, rather His priesthood is a heavenly priesthood. He serves in the true Temple in heaven, not the replica and shadow that stood in Jerusalem under the Mosaic Covenant (Heb. 8:5). The Lord Jesus ministers now in the true tent of God, in the true tabernacle and temple in heaven, where God is. He has entered into the holy places and the most holy place (Heb. 9:11-12, 24) in heaven for our sake. But not only has He entered into the holy places in heaven where God is, but He is *seated* at the right hand of power. In the Temple or the Tabernacle, where the Most Holy Place was, there were no seats. This was because the high priest had to finish his job quickly and go outside. But we read here that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, i.e., in the Most Holy Place in heaven, pointing to the fact that unlike the Levitical priests and their sacrifices, Christ's once for all time sacrifice cleanses us from all sin and makes perfect atonement for God's people (Heb. 9:24-28; 1:3). He is seated because He has finished that which He set out to accomplish, namely, procure redemption for His people (Heb. 9:12).

His ministry, moreover, is directly contrasted with the ministry of the Levitical priesthood and it is obvious that Christ's ministry is much more excellent and superior:

Heb. 8:6 But as it is, Christ has obtained a **ministry that is as much more excellent than the old** as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

The line of argumentation goes like this:

1. Christ's ministry is better because
 - the covenant under which He ministers is better because
 - it is established on better promises

What makes the ministry of Christ better is not only the amazing person and worth of the Lord Jesus Christ, our precious and loving Savior, but it is also the New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34. It is a covenant which is not a ministry of condemnation, but of life and righteousness (2Cor. 3:9). The promises of the covenant include, but are not limited to, forgiveness of sins, the personal and salvific knowledge of God for everyone in the covenant, the writing of God's law upon the heart and not stone, the Lord becoming our covenant God and we His covenant people in an intimate way (Heb. 8:10-12).

Summary

Christ is the great High Priest of God's people. He is a priest not after the order of Aaron and Levi, but of Melchizedek, the priestly king. This was necessary because of the failure of the Mosaic Covenant and the Levitical priesthood. He has made

atonement for His people. He intercedes for us and stands as the bridge between God and His people. He intercedes and prays for us and on our behalf before the Father on the basis of His finished work. See [paragraph 10](#) for our benefit from this office.

Christ the Prophet

Deut. 18:15-18 “The LORD your God will **raise up for you a prophet like me from among you**, from your brothers—it is to him **you shall listen**— 16 just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ 17 And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And **I will put my words in his mouth**, and **he shall speak to them all that I command him**. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

Since the time of Moses, who could be called the prime prophet of the Old Testament, God promised His people about the coming of the true and prime prophet of God. Moses prophesied about the coming of the true prophet of God, the One who would reveal to us who God is. He would speak the words of God to us and explain Him to us as He is. In this prophecy, Moses foretells that God Himself, the God of Israel, will raise a prophet like Moses, that is, one that would teach the people the will of God, be a mediator of the covenant and lead the people of God to freedom. This prophet will be raised from among the Old Covenant community. He will not come from outside of Israel, but will come from within Israel. This prophet shall be a brother to the Israelites. Indeed, in Matthew 1 we read of Abraham as the Lord’s ancestor (Matt. 1:1). He indeed was descended from Abraham, the father of the Jews. The prophet that will arise in the time to come (from the perspective of Moses) will speak the very words of God and be obedient to God. This is exactly what we find to be the case with the Lord Jesus:

John 3:31-34 He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. 33 Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. 34 For he whom God has sent **utters the words of God**, for he gives the Spirit without measure.

See also John 5:19; 7:16; 8:28-29, 38, 40; 12:47-50; 14:10.

The Lord did speak all that the Father commanded Him. In fact, John 1:18 says that He has “exegeted,” explained and revealed the Father to us. Whoever does not believe on the Son and obey Him, will face the judgment of God. That likewise is clear in the New Testament. Let’s take for example John 3:36 –

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; **whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life**, but the wrath of God remains on him.

See also John 3:17-18

Not only do we see these correlations between Deuteronomy 18 and what we find in the New Testament, but we also have direct citations and allusions to Deuteronomy 18 concerning the Promised Prophet. Philip’s reaction upon meeting the Lord Jesus was to tell everyone about Him and this is how he did it:

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have **found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote**, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

Philip is happy to finally have seen and met the Awaited One after many centuries. This is the One of whom Moses wrote. This is definitely an allusion to the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. See also John 6:14; 7:40. This promise was perhaps also in the mind of the Samaritan woman when she said that the Christ will tell us all things (John 4:25). The Prophet will declare God’s very words to us. In Acts 3:19-26, the promise is cited as obvious fulfillment in the Lord Jesus who had recently been crucified, raised and ascended to heaven. Most people in His earthly ministry did acknowledge Him as a prophet (Luke 7:16; 24:19; Matt. 21:11; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40). We conclude that indeed the Lord Jesus had and has the office of Prophet. He is the prime Prophet in whom and through whom God is revealed (John 1:18; Heb. 1:3). See [paragraph 10](#) for our benefit from this office.

Christ the King

I would refer you to our discussion of the [Davidic Covenant](#) and its fulfillment in Christ in [chapter 7](#). See [paragraph 10](#) for our benefit from this office.

Christ the Savior

He is the Savior of His church, of His people. He gave Himself up for her, to save and purify her. This point is very clear in the Bible. The purpose of Christ in dying on the cross was to save His church from the deserved wrath of God and to atone for her sins.

Eph. 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as **Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**, 26 that he might **sanctify her**, having **cleansed her** by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might **present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle** or any such thing, that she might be **holy and without blemish**.

It is clear from this glorious passage what effect the death of Christ has. He died for His bride. His love drove Him to give Himself up for her, so that He may be glorified in them, His own people. That He may make them brothers and sisters of His, holy and blameless. The Lord Christ is twice called the Savior of the world (John 4:42; 1John 4:14). He is the only hope that the world has for redemption. He is the only One who can save us from the wrath of God due to our sins. He is the only One Who can reconcile us back to God in a harmonious relationship. In fact, it is through the shedding of His blood that He has redeemed for God definitely and not hypothetically, people from every corner of the world (Rev. 5:9), because He has died for them (John 11:49-52; 1John 2:1-2). It is through His sacrifice and perfect life that we are counted righteous and forgiven all our sins. He is Christ the Lord, the Anointed One to save His people (Matt. 1:21).

It is important for us to remember that when we speak of Christ as our Savior, we speak of Him as our Savior from God's judgment and wrath (Rom. 5:9). The wrath of God was set against us, and the Lord Jesus came to willfully and freely take upon Himself our sin so that the righteous and dreadful wrath of God could be atoned for. Christ did not come to save us from our problems or our miserable lives, but He came to save us from the wrath of God against our sin!

Christ the Head

A handful of texts speak of the Lord Christ as being the head of the Church. In this section, I want to explore what that means. The Confession, following the Reformed tradition and Sola Scriptura, abhors the doctrine that the Roman Catholic Church holds concerning the Pope being the head of the church and denounces it with very strong words:

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner; neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. ([1689 26:4](#))

The Lord Jesus Christ is described as the head of the body, that is, the Church –

Col. 1:18 And he is the **head of the body, the church**. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

The context in Colossians 1 testifies to the Lord Jesus' divinity and greatness. Paul does not forget to mention the magnificent truth that the Lord Jesus is the head of the Church and is preeminent in everything. But what does that mean? The Greek word used in the texts that refer to the Lord Jesus as the head is the noun κεφαλή (*kephale*, G2776). It means literal head whose loss is the loss of life, but metaphorically it also means "anything supreme, chief, prominent."^[2] The Lord Jesus is the Supreme and Chief One Who is over the Church from whom the Church receives its authority and power. This does not only show that the Church's authority is derivative from Christ, but that Christ alone is the head of the Church and thus has authority over it to rule and govern it as He pleases. The way in which the Lord rules His Church is by Word and Spirit.

Ephesians 4:15-16; 5:23-24; Colossians 2:19 speak also of this headship of Christ over the Church. But there are also a

couple of texts which speak of Christ's authority and sovereignty over all creation, not only the Church.

Eph. 1:20-23 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 **far above all rule and authority** and power and dominion, and **above every name that is named**, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And **he put all things under his feet** and gave him as **head over all things to the church**, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Col. 2:9-10 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the **head of all rule and authority**.

Christ the Lord, through His obedience, redemption work, death and indestructible life is seated at the right hand of God, the hand of power and might (Matt. 26:64). All other authorities on the earth derive their authority from God (Rom. 13:1ff; Dan. 2:21). The Lord Jesus, the Lord of glory, is seated, i.e., in the position of ruling and resting from His completed work of redemption, above all the authorities that are in the world. He is above them and moreover, He rules them. Revelation 1:5 describes Him as "the ruler of kings on earth." He is above everything that is created and everything that is feared and esteemed in this world by mortal men. The Father has put on display the everlasting love He has for His Son by putting everything under His feet to do with it as He pleases and carry out God's eternal decree.

Now we come to our word κεφαλῇ (*kephale*) in v. 22. In the previous verses we read of Christ being head of the church, but here we read that He is head over all things *to* the church, for the sake of the church. Indeed, this confirms His promise that He is with us and we are not fear in the discipling of the nations, because first of all, He has all rule and authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18-20). He is given to us as head over all authority, for our sake and for the good of His body, the Church. He is head, supreme, chief and prominent over all the world and everything that is created and exists. He is head over the ungodly world even as He is head over His body, the Church, and He exercises His sovereign reign for the sake of His church and His glory.