

Session 3: The Great High Priest (4:14-5:10; 7:1-28)

Hebrews describes Jesus as our Great High Priest. But is he qualified for the job? In this session we look at how Hebrews contrasts Jesus with Aaron, and we explore what it means for him to be a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus is better than... Aaron (4:14-5:10)

What does it mean to think of Jesus as our Great High Priest?

This is the beginning of the central theological argument of Hebrews, which runs from 5:1-10:18. It is explanation for why Jesus is uniquely able to give us rest in a way that Moses couldn't (3:1-6) and Joshua couldn't (4:1-11). It explains why returning to Judaism is not a viable option for the recipients of the letter. And it also explains the basis of the author's confidence that the recipients of the letter will have strength to persevere and will ultimately enjoy salvation (6:9)

Qualification	Aaron (5:1-4)	Jesus (5:5-10)
Solidarity	Selected from among men (v1) Able to empathise due to his own weakness (v2-3)	Days of life = days of flesh (v7) Emphasis on humanity: prayer, suffering, learning obedience (v7-8)
Gentleness	Gentle to those who are ignorant and going astray (v2)	Learnt submission and obedience (v7-8)
Purity	Had to make atonement for his own sins first (v3)	Being made perfect?! (v9) Vocational rather than moral
Calling	Nobody takes this calling themselves, they must be called by God (v4)	Psalm 2:7; 110:4

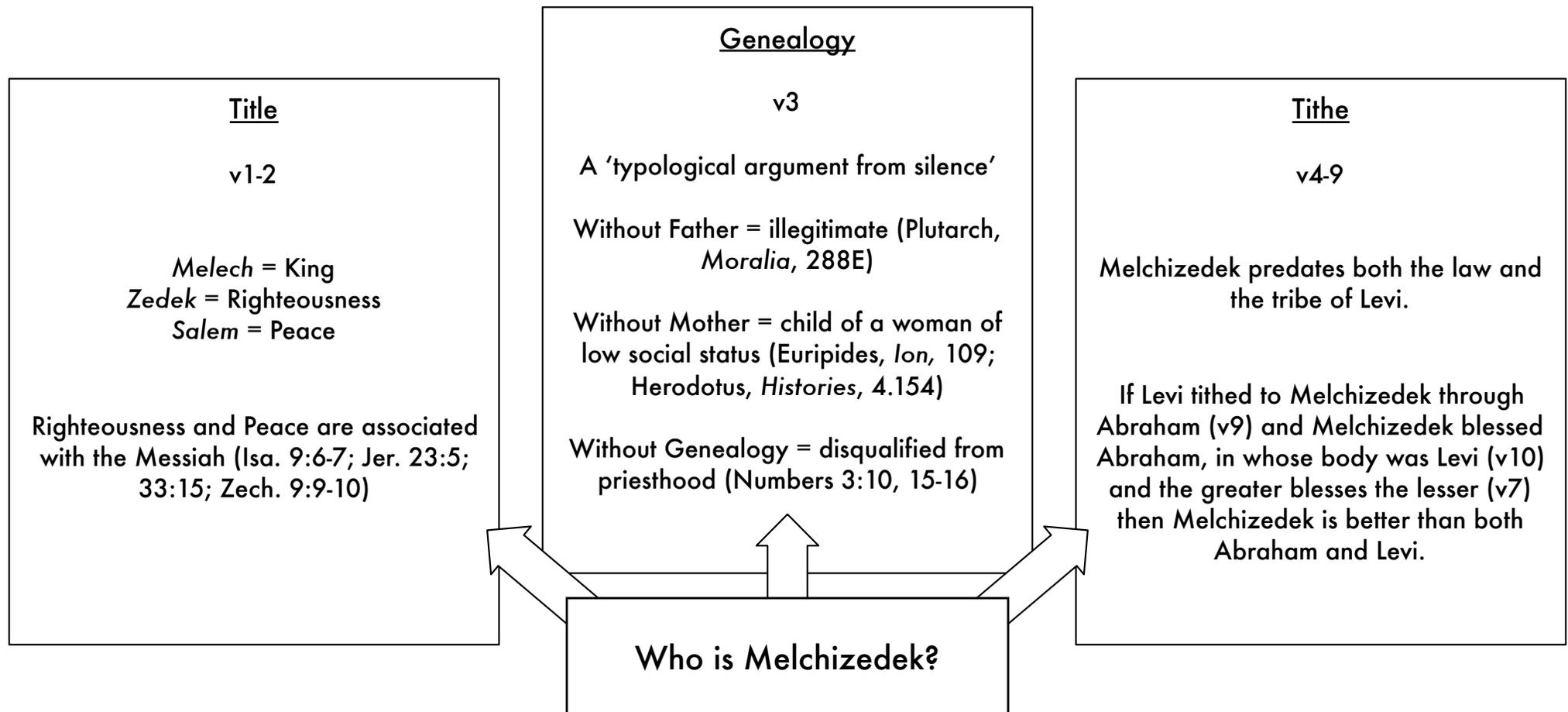
So this comparison shows that Jesus is qualified to be a High Priest like Aaron. But in what sense is he *better* than Aaron?

'...was designated to be a high priest in the order of Melchizedek' (5:10)

Melchizedek is better than Levi (7:1-10)

Who is Melchizedek, and how does Hebrews interpret Genesis 14?

'This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.' (7:1-2, cf. Gen 14:17-20)



The Order of Melchizedek is better than the Order of Levi (7:11-28)

What does it mean for Jesus to be in the order of Melchizedek?

'Why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek?' (v11; cf Psalm 110:4)

