

Text: Heb 7.8-10

Have you heard the saying, “There are only two things certain in life...” One of them is taxes, what is the other one?

The other one is death.

We all know that we all must die, one of these days. Have you ever wondered why that is? Death is universal in our world.

Every living thing eventually dies.

In sixty years, almost every one of us in this room will have died if the Lord has not returned by that point. Some of the youngest among us may still be around in sixty years, but they will be nearing the end, knowing that death is coming for them as well.

Why is this so?

When you think about the beauty of creation, the wonderful world we live in — the marvel of living things, especially the human body, with a mind, will, and spirit, all created in the image of God — why does it all end? Is this what God made us for?

The testimony of Scripture is that when God created the world, it was very good. Is death “very good”?

Many people will go to great lengths to prolong their lives. Some old people will even try to imitate youth, seemingly to attempt to hold back the inevitable.

Why must we die? **Why must you die?**

Our text today is not directly about this subject, but it provides an analogy to the answer to my question.

In Hebrews, we are talking about the priesthood of Jesus, after the order of Melchizedek. The author is proving the superiority of Christ’s priesthood to Aaron’s by virtue of Christ’s connection with Melchizedek. We’ve covered most of the argument on this point already.

Today’s text we touched on briefly last week. I want to explain the text carefully, apply it to our question, then come back to Hebrews to show that Jesus is the answer to our question.

Read Heb 7.1-10, text 8-10

Proposition: Our hope of victory over death lies in the Great High Priest who is altogether better than Aaron.

I. Understanding Levi in Abraham (Heb 7.8-10)

A. The comparison between Levi and Melchizedek continues (8)

1. Construction: “on the one hand ... on the other hand”
2. Similarity: they receive tithes, both Levi and Melchizedek
3. Key words:
 - a. Mortal men
 - b. Testified
4. Point of comparison:
 - a. Mortal men receive tithes
 - 1) That is, everyone in Aaron’s line must die, and be replaced
 - 2) Aaron died before the Promised Land, Phinehas took his place
 - 3) Priest after priest in this long line died, someone else took his place
 - 4) All of them received tithes
 - b. The tithe represents devotion to God
 - 1) A tithe is a token, an acknowledgement
 - 2) God owns us all, lock stock and barrel
 - 3) We give a tithe, which acknowledges God’s ownership
 - 4) In the OT, the Levites collected the tithes, and they and the priests lived off the tithes
 - c. The man who lives on also received a tithe
 - 1) The wording is significant: not that Melchizedek is an immortal being
 - 2) Rather, as far as the testimony of Scripture is concerned, no death is recorded
 - a) His priesthood has never come to an end

b) His category is a “priesthood forever” (Ps 110.4)

Ps 110.4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.”

3) No doubt, the man Melchizedek eventually died

4) But as far as Scripture is concerned, no death is recorded, he “lives on”

Heb 7.1 This Melchizedek ...³ Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

“The writer recurring to the exact form of the record in Genesis, on which he has dwelt before (v. 3), emphasises the fact that Melchizedek appears there simply in the power of life. So far he does not die; the witness of Scripture is to his living. What he does is in virtue of what he is.”¹

Our first point: both the mortal and the living priests received tithes.

B. The superiority of Melchizedek over Levi demonstrated (9-10)

1. Key word: “So to speak”

a. Lit. “as a word to say” – idiom with various trans. “so to speak,” “one might even say,” “we could say”

b. The author acknowledges that his point is made, not strictly literally, but is in the realm of typology

2. The logic of the point

a. Abraham paid the tithe to Melchizedek

¹ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 180.

b. Levi, not yet born, also paid the tithe to Melchizedek *through Abraham*

- 1) Levi is the great-grandson of Abraham
- 2) Abraham never even met Levi or any of his brothers
- 3) Yet through Abraham's action, the tithe receiver was also a tithe payer

3. The rationale for the point (10)

a. "For" — this is a reason or proof

b. Levi was in the loins of his father

- 1) That is, biologically, Levi's life owes itself to his father
- 2) Levi was literally "in the loins of Jacob"
- 3) And Jacob was "in the loins of Isaac"
- 4) And Isaac was "in the loins of Abraham"
- 5) And Abraham paid tithes 14 years before Isaac was born

c. Consequently, typologically speaking, Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek

- 1) The tithes receiver, Levi
- 2) Typologically offers tithes to Melchizedek

An illustration: we are all affected by the decisions and actions of our forebears.

My grandfather was raised in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He got mad at his dad and moved to Alberta.

Consequently, I was raised in Alberta.

You could say, typologically, that I moved to Alberta from Halifax. I was "in my grandfather" when that happened.

The second point: the mortal man (Levi) is inferior to the living man, because the mortal man paid tithes to the living man (Melchizedek) who represents Christ who is superior to Aaron.

So far so good, we are talking about the superiority of Christ's priesthood, but now let's shift gears

II. Comparing Us in Adam (Rm 5.12-14)

Read Rm 5.12-17

A. Notice the one-to-many relationship in Rm 5.12

1. Through one man sin entered the world
2. Through one man death (by sin) entered the world
 - a. That answers the question, “Why must you die?”
 - b. Answer: by one man who sinned, therefore you must die
 - c. Also, all death entered the world by the one man — all death

B. Notice the arrival of the law in Rm 5.13

1. Sin was in the world before the law
2. The Law demands death for sin
3. But Law-guilt is not imputed before the law exists

C. Nevertheless, death preceded the law, Rm 5.14

1. Death was in the world before Moses (the Law)
2. Even on those (everyone) who had not sinned in exactly the same way as Adam

D. How it is that death reigned in all because of the sin of Adam

1. As Levi in the loins of Abraham paid tithes
2. So you and me in the loins of Adam sinned against God
3. Everyone is guilty before God, condemned in Adam

¹ Cor 15.22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

4. Many people will acknowledge that they are sinners
 - a. They mean, “well, I’m not perfect”
 - b. They mean, “well, yeah, I’ve told a lie or two”
 - c. But they also mean, “yeah, I’m a sinner, but I’m not that bad, I’ve got a lot of good in me too”

d. The issue for them is this: *you must die* because you are in Adam

Going back to the illustration of my grandfather... he made a decision to come west because he was angry with his father — his wealthy father. He came out and homesteaded and lived in poverty most of his life. That decision set his succeeding generations back a few years on their start in life (I'm not bitter!) ... my point: we are affected by our ancestors' bad decisions.

We are even more affected by Adam's bad decision in the garden, we all die. We all must die.

III. Relying on Me in Christ (Rm 5.15-17, Heb 7.23-25)

A. There is the matter of the free gift (Rm 5.15-17)

1. The analogy of grace (15)

a. By the transgression many (that is, all,) died

b. By the grace of God (and of Christ) many can have the free gift

2. The difference between the gift and the transgression (16)

a. One sin equaled many deaths

b. Many transgressions made the one gift necessary

3. The difference between the representatives (17)

a. Death reigns through one (Adam)

b. Much more grace and righteousness reigns through one (Christ)

What is the difference between the death for the many and the life for the some?

B. The key is who you are related to (Heb 7.23-25)

Read Heb 7. 23-25

1. The former priests (tithe receiving, tithe paying) were prevented from continuing by death

2. The present priest lives forever, and holds his priesthood permanently

3. And the present priest can save forever those who draw near to God through him

Conclusion:

Why must we die? We are in Adam.

How may we live? If we are in Christ.

Proposition: Our hope of victory over death lies in the Great High Priest who is altogether better than Aaron.

Are you in Christ?