

Melchizedek and the Levitical Priesthood: A Comparative Theological Study

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the theological significance of Melchizedek and the Levitical priesthood within the broader framework of biblical theology. Melchizedek, an enigmatic and profoundly significant figure who briefly appears in Genesis 14 and is later invoked in Psalm 110 and the Epistle to the Hebrews, embodies a form of priesthood that both predates and transcends the Levitical order. The Levitical priesthood, by contrast, was instituted through the covenant at Sinai and is characterized by hereditary succession, ritual sacrifice, and adherence to covenantal law. This comparative study explores the scriptural depictions, theological functions, and interpretive traditions surrounding both priesthoods, elucidating their areas of convergence and divergence. Particular emphasis is placed on the typological role of Melchizedek in the New Testament, where he is portrayed as a prefiguration of Christ's eternal and superior priesthood, one that surpasses the inherent limitations of the Levitical system. By juxtaposing these two priestly paradigms, the analysis sheds light on key themes of continuity and discontinuity within salvation history, offering deeper insight into early Jewish and Christian conceptions of divine mediation, covenant, and atonement.

Keywords: Melchizedek, Levitical Priesthood, Comparative Theology, Biblical Priesthood, Covenant, Typology.

INTRODUCTION

The priesthood constitutes a central locus in biblical theology, functioning as the mediatory institution between a transcendent God and His covenant community. Within the priestly orders attested in Scripture, two stand out as distinct yet deeply interrelated (Stivason, 2020). The Levitical priesthood instituted under the Mosaic covenant, and the mysterious figure of Melchizedek, who appears without ancestry or successor in Genesis 14 and is later elevated in Psalm 110 and the Epistle to the Hebrews. These two orders of priesthood not only stand in contrast regarding their form and function but also intersect in their theological import, finding their ultimate convergence in the person and priestly office of Jesus Christ (Sklar, 2007).

Melchizedek's brief encounter with Abram has long perplexed and fascinated theologians, largely because his priesthood appears apart from the Levitical order, predating it, and is portrayed as a superior and eternal order (Gane, 2005). The Levitical priesthood, in contrast, is established with great detail in the Pentateuch and is the normative priestly system of ancient Israel. The puzzling figure of Melchizedek occupies a pivotal yet mysterious place within biblical theology, particularly in the study of priesthood. Because Jesus Christ is identified as "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4; Hebrew 5:6), a proper understanding of Christ's priesthood and mediatorial ministry necessitates a careful examination of Melchizedek himself (Baker and Carpenter, 2003). Melchizedek is mentioned only three times in the canonical Scriptures, in Genesis, Psalms, and Hebrews, yet the Epistle to the Hebrews accords him exceptional theological significance. The author of

Hebrews underscores both the superiority and permanence of Melchizedek's priesthood in contrast to the Levitical order, presenting him as a typological precursor to Christ's eternal priesthood. The brief yet profound appearance of Melchizedek in the biblical narrative invites enduring questions: Who was this priest-king of Salem, and why is he portrayed with such theological weight and mystery?

Consequently, researcher attempts to investigate the theological contrast and continuity between Melchizedek and the Levitical priesthood, especially as developed in Hebrews 5–7. The research seeks to understand how the biblical authors use these two figures to communicate God's redemptive plan and how their comparison culminates in the person of Christ. The significance of this inquiry lies in its implications for Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and worship in both historical and contemporary Christian thought.

The Figure of Melchizedek in Old Testament Theology

In this section, the researcher seeks to examine the identity and significance of Melchizedek within the Old Testament, beginning with his portrayal in Genesis as both priest and king, and concluding with his appearance in Psalms, where he is presented in a Messianic context.

Melchizedek: The Priest-King of Salem in Genesis

In Scripture, Melchizedek is mentioned only in three books, Genesis (14:18-20), Psalm 110:4, and Hebrews 57. It is in the Genesis account that the offices of priest and priesthood first appear within the biblical record:

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all” (Gen 14:18-20, KJV). In line with Stivason (2020), Melchizedek emerges as an mysterious figure within the biblical narrative, whose historical account is preserved in Genesis 14:18-20. Nottingham (2021) explains that, “Melchizedek is one of the mystery figures in the Bible, a character whose evocative splendor is all out of proportion to the brevity of space devoted to him.” His story is told in a mere three verses (Gen 14: 18-20). As Likte (2011) indicates, “scripture does not yield much personal information about this mystery man, even intense searching yields few facts, so for the most part, this character will have to remain one of the great unsolved mysteries of the Bible. Yet the facts we do have make some important points.”

Melchizedek's appearance and disappearance in Genesis are somewhat mysterious. Melchizedek and Abraham first met after Abraham's defeat of Chedorlaomer and his three allies. Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, in conjunction with three other Mesopotamian kings, raided a vassal confederacy of five kings near the shores of the Dead Sea (George, 2013). Following his victorious return, Abraham encountered Melchizedek, the King of Salem and priest of El Elyon (God Most High). Melchizedek's presentation of bread and wine symbolized covenantal fellowship and religious solidarity. He proceeded to invoke a blessing upon Abraham, attributing the triumph to divine providence. In acknowledgment of Melchizedek's priestly stature, Abraham rendered a tithe of the spoils of war (Baker and Carpenter, 2003). According to Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman (1998), “In the original text Melchizedek gains additional meaning by being a foil to the king of Sodom, who also interacts with Abraham after his military conquest. Whereas Abraham accepts Melchizedek's hospitality, he refuses to accept the offered gift of the king of Sodom.” According to the Global Concise Dictionary (1999) Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham took place approximately 2085 B.C.

The Meaning of His Name

As noted by Burdick (1986), the designation Melchizedek appears to have functioned as a Canaanite royal appellation, comparable to Adonizedek (Josh 10:1,3), a subsequent monarch of Jerusalem vanquished by Joshua. The Hebrew form of the name conveys the meaning “my king is righteousness” or “king of righteousness.” In Genesis 14:18, Melchizedek is identified as “king of Salem,” a title associated with shalom, peace, thereby ascribing to him a dual theological identity as King of Righteousness and King of Peace. The New Testament, particularly Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 7:1-3, appropriates these titles to present Melchizedek as a Christological

type, prefiguring Christ's eternal priesthood characterized by righteousness, peace, and non-hereditary perpetuity (Hunter, 2022). The name Melchizedek is not just a title but a theological symbol of righteous and peace-bringing kingship and priesthood, pointing forward to the person and work of Christ. Tatu (2014) explains, "'Melchizedek' is composed of the words 'melek,' which means 'king,' and 'sedeq,' 'righteousness.'" Although each of these terms was frequently used in West Semitic names, only here are they found together." Paul, who hundreds of years after Moses expounded on Melchizedek, explains in the book of Hebrews that the meaning of 'Melchizedek' to be 'king of righteousness' (Heb. 7:2). Horton (2005) further explains "Philo's explanation that it means 'the righteous king' confirms that this was the first-century understanding of the term."

The Priestly Role of Melchizedek

According to the Genesis account, Moses identifies Melchizedek as "the priest of the Most High God" (Gen. 14:18). In acknowledgment of Melchizedek's priestly authority, Abraham presented him with a tithe, a tenth of all the spoils obtained from battle (Gen. 14:20). Through this gesture, Abraham demonstrated his recognition of Melchizedek both as a fellow worshipper of the one true God and as a priest of superior spiritual standing. The existence of Melchizedek thus signifies that individuals beyond Abraham and his household were devoted to the worship of the one true God (Hyde & Amurao, 2019). Similarly, Desilva (2012) notes that, like Abraham, Melchizedek was a monotheist. Also, Nickelsburg (2005) speaking of the "Most High God" mentioned in Genesis 14:18-20, explains clearly, "El Elyon is not the pagan deity of Canaanite worship by the same name but rather the title of the true God who created heaven and earth, an idea foreign to Canaanite religion. Melchizedek correctly viewed Abraham as worshipping this same God and praised God for giving victory to Abraham. Abraham identified himself with the worship of the one true God represented by Melchizedek in that he received his gifts and blessing and 'gave him a tenth of everything' (v 20), thus recognizing Melchizedek's higher spiritual rank as a patriarchal priest." (Levine, 2008).

Melchizedek as King

Moses first introduces Melchizedek as "Melchizedek, king of Salem" (Gen. 14:18). According to Siegfried (1960), "Salem is most probably an abbreviated form of Jerusalem, as Psalm 76:2 indicates." Burdick (1986) further affirms this interpretation, noting that "the identification of Salem with Jerusalem is confirmed by its use in Psalm 76:2, where it appears in synonymous parallelism with 'Zion.'" Consequently, Melchizedek is portrayed not only as a priest of the Most High God but also as a king whose domain was Jerusalem, a city that would later assume profound theological and historical significance for God's chosen people. Within his brief appearance in Genesis, Melchizedek emerges as a figure of considerable authority and spiritual stature, yet notably without any recorded genealogy or lineage. The biblical narrative attributes to him several key roles and actions: 1) he was king of Salem; 2) he served as priest of the Most High God; 3) he brought forth bread and wine for Abraham and his companions; 4) he pronounced a blessing upon Abraham; 5) he offered praise to the Most High God; 6) he received tithes from Abraham; and 7) his identity remains shrouded in mystery (Merrill, 2006).

Melchizedek and the Royal - Priestly Motif in the Psalms

The second reference to Melchizedek in the Old Testament appears in the Book of Psalms. In this passage, the Psalmist records the divine declaration from the Father to the Son: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). According to Stuckenbruck (2018), unlike Genesis 14, Psalm 110 is not presented as a narrative account but as a royal psalm. He explains that the psalm reflects the enthronement ritual associated with David. Nevertheless, Stuckenbruck notes that, "a sizable group of scholars have refused to associate the psalm with any activity of the human Davidic king and regard it as eschatological and messianic from the outset. Furthermore, Stuckenbruck (2018) observes that the psalm conveys "a solemn pledge of the king's sacred role in Yahweh's purposes." He interprets this as signifying the establishment of a divinely appointed successor to the dynastic line of Jebusite priest-kings, one whose reign would not be subject to termination as theirs had been. From his Jebusite predecessors, this figure inherited the title priest of the Most High God, serving as a sacred mediator between God and His people. From historical and biblical background, the Jebusite were an ancient Canaanite tribe mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as the original

inhabitants of Jerusalem, then known as Jebus (Na'aman, 2014). They are frequently listed among the groups living in Canaan before the arrival of the Israelites (Gen. 10:16; Exo. 3:8; Deut. 7:1). The city of Jebus (Jerusalem) was described as a fortified stronghold that resisted Israelite control for several centuries after Joshua's conquest (Lewy, 2019). According to 2 Sam. 5:6-9, it was King David who finally captured the Jebusite city and made it his capital, the city of David (Jerusalem).

In essence, David or the author of this psalm portrays his own enthronement upon the Jebusite throne in Jerusalem, a seat previously occupied by a succession of King-priests. Melchizedek, who served as king and priest of Jerusalem during the time of Abraham, was likely succeeded by a lineage of priest-kings that the Mosaic narrative in Genesis does not record. Consequently, Melchizedek may be identified as a Jebusite or as an ancestor of the Jebusite priestly line (Hyde & Amurao, 2019). Therefore, as David ascended to this dual office of king and priest, he recalled God's covenantal promise in 2 Sam. 7:13,16 to establish his throne forever, inspiring the declaration: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). Nevertheless, the psalm transcends the immediate historical context and assumes a messianic dimension. As Sigvartsen (2023) explains, it serves as "a basic witness to the heavenly exaltation of the ascended and risen Christ," and, within the Epistle to the Hebrews, functions as "a testimony to his eternal priesthood."

To fully comprehend the reference to Melchizedek in the Psalms, it is essential to consider several historical and theological factors. First, Melchizedek was both king and priest of Jerusalem during the time of Abraham. Second, David later conquered Jerusalem and assumed kingship over the city, which had previously been ruled by Jebusite king-priests. Third, God promised David that his throne would be established forever, contingent upon the faithfulness of his descendants (Nickelsburg, 2005). This covenantal assurance may provide the context for David's declaration: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). However, this statement is best understood as Messianic in nature for several reasons: 1) the broader psalm carries a distinctly Messianic tone; 2) David himself did not occupy a priestly office; 3) the Apostle Paul explicitly interprets Psalm 110:4 as a reference to the Messiah; and 4) the act of God swearing an oath, an uncommon occurrence in Scripture, underscores the significance of this pronouncement (Hyde and Amurao, 2019).

Activities of the Levitical Priesthood in Old Testament

The Levitical Priesthood occupies a central role in the religious and cultic life of ancient Israel. Instituted by divine command through Moses, its functions and regulations are comprehensively delineated in the Pentateuch. Deriving its name from Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, this priestly order was constituted from his descendants, who were consecrated for sacred service (Horton, 2005). The tribe of Levi was divinely chosen to minister in the tabernacle and, subsequently, in the temple, with Aaron and his sons designated as the inaugural priestly lineage (Exodus 28:1). The origins of this priesthood are firmly rooted in the Exodus narrative, wherein God instructed Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons for perpetual priestly service (Exodus 28:1-3). As the first high priest, Aaron established the hereditary line of priestly succession (Klawans, 2006). The Levites, as a supporting tribe, were appointed to assist the priests and to perform a variety of functions related to the maintenance and operation of the tabernacle (Numbers 3:5-10). The principal activities and responsibilities of the Levitical priesthood in the Old Testament are outlined below.

Sacrificial and Cultic Duties

The primary function of the Levitical priesthood was the performance of sacrificial rituals within the tabernacle and, subsequently, in the Jerusalem temple. The Aaronic priests, in particular, were responsible for the daily administration of burnt offerings and various ritual sacrifices outlined in Leviticus 1-7, such as sin, guilt, grain, and fellowship offerings. According to Gane (2005), these rites were more than ceremonial; they served to maintain covenantal atonement and community sanctity before God. Milgrom (2007) asserts that, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to perform ritual acts designed to expiate the sins of the

nation and to purify the sanctuary (Lev. 16). Sklar (2007) argues that this sacrificial system embodied Israel's theological framework of holiness, sin, and divine mercy.

Instruction in the Law

A vital dimension of the Levitical ministry was their role as teachers and interpreters of the Torah. In Deuteronomy 33:10, Moses blesses the Levites, saying, "They shall instruct Jacob in your ordinances and Israel your law." The priests functioned as legal authorities, clarifying the Law and guiding both individuals and society in covenantal fidelity (Merrill, 2006). Meyers (2005) contends that the priestly role gained heightened significance during and following the exile, exemplified by Ezra's public proclamation of the Law (Neh. 8). In alignment with this, Malachi emphasizes that the priest's lips are to "guard knowledge" (Mal. 2:7), thereby underscoring their vocation as custodians of divine instruction (Meyers, 2005).

Temple Maintenance and Ritual Administration

The non-Aaronic Levites (the broader tribe) assisted in the maintenance and operation of the tabernacle and temple. Numbers 3 and 4 assign duties among the Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites to carry, guard, and care for the sacred furnishings (Levine, 2008). In the temple period, they functioned as musicians, gatekeepers, storekeepers, and assistants in preparation for sacrifices. Their service was essential for ensuring the ritual integrity and daily operations of the sanctuary (Willis, 2001).

Purity and Ritual Diagnosis

Klawans (2006) explains that the Levitical priesthood was to enforce and regulate ritual purity. Priests examined individuals for diseases such as leprosy (Lev. 13–14), determined periods of uncleanness, and oversaw purification rites following childbirth, sexual discharges, or contact with the dead (Lev. 15; Num. 19). These practices underscored the relationship between holiness and wholeness, and the priests mediated this dynamic by ensuring that the community remained in a condition fit to approach the divine presence (Milgrom, 2007).

Blessing and Intercession

The priests also served as mediators and intercessors, standing between God and the people by representing the former to the latter and vice versa. The priestly benediction in Numbers 6:24–26 ("The Lord bless you and keep you...") exemplifies this mediatory function, illustrating their role in invoking and transmitting divine favor. The high priest, adorned with the breastplate bearing the names of the twelve tribes (Exod. 28), symbolically bore the people before the Lord in intercession (Anderson, 2009). Gane (2005) affirms that the use of incense during worship also symbolized priestly intercession (Exod. 30:7–10).

Judicial Functions and Discernment

In addition to ritual duties, priests served as judicial figures, particularly in matters requiring divine discernment. Deuteronomy 17:8–13 mandates that unresolved legal cases be brought before the priests and judges at the central sanctuary. Fiahbane (2005) opines that they interpreted difficult legal cases, applied the Torah to complex situations, and ensured covenantal justice. Freedman and Myers (2005) further express that they were also entrusted with the Urim and Thummim; sacred lots used to discern God's will (Exod. 28:30).

Comparison of Contemporary Priesthood and Its Decadence

This section of the study examines the theological and functional distinctions between the Levitical and Melchizedekian priesthoods and juxtaposes them with the modern Christian priesthood, highlighting patterns of continuity, divergence, and decadence.

The Levitical Priesthood: Earthly Mediation under Mosaic Covenant

The priesthood, drawn from the tribe of Levi and more precisely from the lineage of Aaron, was responsible for

performing sacrificial rites, upholding ritual purity, and instructing the people in the Law (Lev. 10:10-11). Their role was deeply embedded in the covenantal structure of Israel's theocracy (Gane, 2005). Milgrom (2007) underscores that the Levitical system revolved around "holiness in space and time," and that priestly activities were essential to preserving Israel's moral and ceremonial purity. Gane (2005) adds that the priesthood's function was not merely ritualistic but profoundly theological, serving as a tangible bridge between God's holiness and human sinfulness.

Melchizedekian Priesthood: A Typological and Eternal Order

In contrast to the Levitical order, Melchizedek emerges in Genesis 14 as a mysterious figure (both priest and king) without genealogical record or tribal identity. His priesthood is subsequently interpreted in Psalm 110 and elaborated in Hebrews 7 as a assortment forerunner to Christ's eternal priesthood, describe as "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 7:17) (Nickelsburg, 2005). The Melchizedekian priesthood is distinct in several respects:

Eternality: It is described as having "no beginning of days nor end of life" (Heb. 7:3), signifying Christ's eternal mediation. The concept of Melchizedek's eternity, derived primarily from Genesis 14:18-20 and Hebrews 7, has been theologically interpreted as prefiguring Christ. Consequently, Melchizedek is often regarded as a typological representation of Christ, foreshadowing an eternal priesthood that transcends genealogical descent, unlike the Levitical order, as is characterized by its everlasting and universal nature. While some traditions interpret Melchizedek as a historical figure symbolically pointing to Christ, others see him as a mysterious, possibly divine figure who embodies timelessness (Fishbane, 2005).

Universality: It transcends tribal lineage and national covenant, indicating a priesthood open to all nations. In Hebrews 7, this universality is highlighted again: Melchizedek's priesthood is presented as a pattern for Christ's, which transcends Israel and extends to all humanity. Thus, Melchizedek represents a priesthood not confined to lineage or geography but pointing to an inclusive, universal access to God through Christ (Desilva, 2012).

Integration of Kingship and Priesthood: In contrast to the Levitical model, Melchizedek embodies a dual role as both king of Salem and priest of the Most High God (Gen. 14:18), thereby prefiguring Christ's united offices of kingship and priesthood (Kaiser, 2005). According to scholars such as Allen (2006), Melchizedek represents a "pre-incarnate typological revelation" of a priesthood that transcends and ultimately fulfills the Levitical order. Thus, Melchizedek is not to be understood as a historical counterpart to Levi, but rather as a theological archetype of Christ's superior and eternal priesthood.

Contemporary Priesthood: Continuity and Crisis

The contemporary Christian priesthood, especially in ecclesial traditions like Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Anglicanism, claims lineage from the apostolic and, indirectly, Levitical models. Protestant theology, particularly in the Reformation tradition, affirms the "priesthood of all believers" (1 Pet. 2:9), arguing that all Christians are spiritual priests in Christ (George, 2013). However, modern expressions of priesthood often diverge both from biblical standards and from the ideals modeled in Christ. Several issues underscore this decline:

a. Moral and Ethical Decadence

Clerical abuse scandals, financial misconduct, and moral complacency across various denominations underscore a profound deviation from the priestly ideal of holiness. Similarly, Holloway (2006) incisively observes, "the sacred has been replaced by the strategic, the prophetic by the performative," highlighting the erosion of spiritual authenticity within contemporary religious leadership. Uche and Ngozi (2017) expatiates that, moral and ethical decadence among ministers of God refers to the decline in character, integrity, and holiness among spiritual leaders. It is seen when ministers compromise biblical values through dishonesty, greed, sexual immorality, abuse of authority, or neglect of their pastoral calling. Ujata (2024) asserts that such failures not only damage their personal witness but also bring reproach upon the church, weaken the faith of believers, and hinder the spread of the gospel. The root often lied in pride, lack of accountability, love of money or power, and failure to

maintain spiritual discipline. Scripture consistently warns against this (Ezek. 34; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1), calling ministers to be examples of humility, integrity, and faithful stewardship. True ministry demands moral uprightness and ethical consistency that reflect Christ's character.

b. Loss of Theological Depth

The postmodern church often downplays doctrinal precision in favor of relevance and popularity. Vanhoozer (2005) warns that the pulpit has become a stage and theology a performance, echoing a broader spiritual decay. This trend undermines the priestly role of teaching sound doctrine, which was central to both Levitical and apostolic practice. Scholar like Wells (2024) in his book "No Place for Truth" argues that contemporary ministers are often trained more in leadership techniques, management, and motivational speaking than in Scripture, doctrine, and church history. This shift reduces theological literacy and weakens preaching. Hunter and Hauerwas (2022) suggests that ministers have adapted too much to consumer culture. Churches prioritize relevance, branding, and growth metrics over doctrinal depth, which leads to thinner theological reflection in ministry. Aside this, theologians such as Vanhoozer (2005) points out that seminary curricula have shifted toward practical skills, pastoral care, and administration at the expense of rigorous theological study, producing leaders less equipped for complex doctrinal issues. Wells (2024) warns that when ministers lack theological depth, congregations become theologically superficial, more vulnerable to cultural trends and false teaching, and less able to articulate or defend the Christian faith.

c. Absence of Sacrificial Living

While the Levitical priests offered literal sacrifices, and Christ offered Himself, many contemporary clergy avoid sacrificial living, opting instead for convenience and status. Wells calls for a return to "cruciform ministry" as the only antidote to priestly decadence (2008). Peterson and Willard (2023) argue that ministry in many contexts of this present day has become a "career" rather than a vocation of self-giving service. Contemporary ministers prioritize status, security, or institutional success over costly service to people. In the view of Platt and Piper (2021) notes that some ministers mirror the culture's emphasis on comfort and personal advancement, which contrasts with the New Testament model of shepherds laying down their lives for the flock. Yerokun and Soneye (2025) points out that when ministers avoid personal sacrifice, they also lose credibility to call congregations to sacrificial discipleship. To him, a minister who does not model costly service weakens the church's counter-cultural witness. In addition, Hunter and Hauerwas (2022) observes that many churches reward managerial efficiency, charisma, and growth metrics more than pastoral self-denial, unintentionally discouraging sacrificial patterns of life in ministry.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Melchizedek and the Levitical priesthood represent two distinct yet complementary strands of biblical theology. The Levitical priesthood, rooted in the Mosaic covenant, emphasizes lineage, law, and ritual meditation, while Melchizedek's priesthood unbounded by genealogy and preceding the law, foreshadows a universal and eternal priesthood fulfilled in Christ. By comparing the two, it becomes clear that the Melchizedekian order offers a theological horizon beyond the limitations of the Levitical system, highlighting God's provision of a superior, once-for-all priesthood. This comparative perspective enriches our comprehension of the coherence of Scripture and the continuity of God's redeeming plan, thereby emphasizing the enduring significance of priestly motifs for contemporary theological reflection and ministerial practice.

For contemporary ministers, this comparison is more than an academic exercise. It challenges them to move beyond a purely institutional or hereditary view of ministry and to embody the Christlike qualities of Melchizedek's priesthood, serving from grace rather than status, and offering intercession and blessing rather than mere ritual performance. In a time when theological depth and sacrificial living are often diminished, the Melchizedekian model calls ministers to a deeper, more self-giving practice of leadership rooted in God's eternal purposes (Yerokun, Abodunrin, Soneye and Akinleye 2025). Thus, the study not only illuminates Scripture but also summons today's ministers to recover the theological depth, holiness, and sacrificial service that the

priesthood of Christ demands. It must be noted that, the Levitical priesthood was sacred but temporal; the Melchizedekian priesthood is eternal and fulfilled in Christ. The contemporary priesthood, while meant to reflect Christ's ministry, often falls short due to spiritual, moral, and theological failures. Only by reclaiming the character and calling of Christ's Melchizedekian order can today's Christian leadership overcome its decadence and fulfill its divine mandate. As the Church seeks reform and renewal, the eternal priesthood of Christ offers both a model and a means for redemptive transformation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research work above, this study therefore recommends that:

1. The contemporary priesthood must reorient itself toward its foundation in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, the eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:23-28). Accordingly, clergy formation programs should intentionally incorporate Christological understandings of priesthood as the paradigmatic framework for shaping pastoral identity and vocation.
2. Church denominations should reinforce vigorous biblical and theological training for all clergy and ministry leaders. Emphasis should be placed on expository preaching, biblical ethics, and the theology of priesthood from both Old and New Testaments.
3. Christian leaders should promote moral accountability and ethical oversight. This promotes transparency, trust, and purity in leadership.
4. Contemporary ministry must recover its prophetic voice; speaking truth to power, confronting societal sin, and interceding on behalf of the people.

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