

“The SECRET” [*to mustērion*]

Studies in the later epistles of the apostle Paul

(No. 5 Continued from page 85)

CHAPTER 3
(Continued)

Thus we seek to understand what it truly means that our Lord Jesus Christ

“**ACCORDING to the rank of Melchizedek**”, hath become, a **HIGH-PRIEST** “**unto times age-abiding**” (Hebrews 6: 20, Rotherham).

In seeking to do so, we encounter a most unusual – in fact unique – statement by the apostle Paul, which should alert us, that such a *true* understanding may not be a straightforward matter.

For the first and only time in *all* his teachings and epistles, Paul says this:

“...Christ...became, to all them that obey Him, Author of salvation age-abiding; Being addressed by God as High-Priest—**according to the rank of Melchizedek**.”

Concerning whom **great** is our discourse, **AND OF DIFFICULT INTERPRETATION** to express seeing that slothful have ye become in the hearing;

FOR [*gar*] even when ye ought to be teachers by reason of the time, **again** have ye need that one be teaching you what are the first principles of the oracles of God, and have become such as have need of milk, not of strong food;

FOR [*gar*] **every one partaking of milk** is unskilled in discourse of righteousness, for he is a babe;

But, **to such as are mature** pertaineth the strong food, **to them who** - by reason of habit - **have their organs of perception well trained for discriminating both good and evil**.
(Hebrews 5: 9-14, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

Let us therefore take the time to fully and rightly understand exactly what Paul is saying here, because there are several very important nuances to highlight in the text:

(a) God addressed (“called”, or “designated”) our Lord Jesus Christ as High Priest according to the rank of Melchizedek;

(b) concerning [*peri*] Whom [*hos*, or “this”], Paul has “much”, or “numerous things” (heavily emphasized in the Greek) to say (or “**great** is our discourse” - Rotherham);

[*hos* is a pronoun used either as a demonstrative pronoun: “this, that”, or a relative pronoun: “who, which, what”; here *hos* is in the genitive case, as governed by *peri*, which therefore denotes *around* or *about* (‘enclosing’ or ‘encompassing’, as it were); hence: “concerning”.

BUT: concerning what or whom?

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the absolute central theme in Hebrews chapter 5. In verse 10-11 we have:

“[Christ – namely as spoken of since verse 5] Called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedec *of Whom* we have many things to say...”(e.g. KJV),

OR

“[Christ]...being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. *About this* we have much to say...” (e.g. ESV).

Because of *peri*, and because “*Christ*” being the central subject, there is little doubt that “concerning Whom” is the better rendering.

However, whether we render the text “concerning Whom”, or “concerning this”, the crucial point is that *peri* encloses or encompasses the matter referred to.

In other words: Paul has “much” or “numerous things” to say about this special topic: Christ being called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedec.

(c) and *these* “numerous things” concerning Christ being called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, these things are, according to the Holy Spirit, speaking through His servant Paul:

- “of difficult interpretation” (Rotherham);
- “hard to explain” (NKJV, ESV, NASB);
- “difficult to explain” (NLT)
- “hard to be uttered” (KJV, Webster)
- “hard of interpretation” (ASV)
- “of hard explanation” (Young)

The word *dusermēneutos*: “hard to interpret, difficult to explain” (*Thayer*) occurs only *this once* in all the New Testament, and *not at all* in the Septuagint (LXX), which immediately alerts us to the importance and significance of the Holy Spirit choosing this particular word.

[The other dictionaries (excepting *Vine*, which has no entry) have:

Bauer: “difficult to describe”;

Bullinger: “of difficult interpretation”;

Liddell & Scott: “hard to describe, hard to interpret”;

dusermēneutos is the prefix *dus* together with *hermēneuō*. The prefix *dus* is conveying the idea of difficulty, opposition, injuriousness, similar to the English "mis -" or "un -" prefixes (*Thayer*); we know it from e.g. "dys-functional";

hermēneuō denotes "to explain, interpret" (English "hermeneutics") and is – according to *Vine* - used of explaining the meaning of words in a different language. It occurs only 4 times in the New Testament:

John 9:7: "...the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation *hermēneuō*, "Sent");
literally: "is interpreted", or "is meaning").

John 1:42: "...Cephas which is by interpretation ("meaning") "A stone".

John 1:38: "They said unto Him: "Rabbi" (which is to say, being interpreted) "Master".

Hebr. 7:2: "King of Salem, which is [*hermēneuō*; *literally*: "being interpreted, or meaning"] "King of peace";

Thayer: "to explain in words, expound"; then "to interpret, *including* to translate what has been spoken or written in a foreign tongue into the vernacular".

Bauer: "explain, interpret" (*Bauer* noting that it also means simply "proclaim, discourse on", without the idea of interpreting).

We note that in each instance where *hermēneuō* is used, it denotes more than mere translation, but involves the explaining or expounding of a meaning, including providing the characteristics and sense. Thus e.g. "Rabbi" (*which is to say, being interpreted*) "Master", is explained as meaning "Master".

This is in itself not obvious (hence the need for the explanation) because "Rabbi" derives from the Hebrew *rab*: "much, great, many" and is first used in Genesis 6:5: "... wickedness of man was great". The second occurrence is Genesis 7:11: "the great deep"; hence also used of something particular great e.g. great teaching, i.e. "Master". Thus the 'interpretation' [*hermēneuō*] explains in context the true characteristic and meaning of word(s) employed].

The Holy Spirit's deliberate choice of the unique word *dusermēneutos* tells us, that it is a fact, that what follows in the letter to the Hebrews does contain matters pertaining to our Lord Jesus Christ *being called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedec*, which are particularly difficult to describe and hard to explain.

Since this difficulty self-evidently does not rest with the Divine Author Himself, it must be understood to mean, that it is difficult for us to understand what is described, and hard for us to absorb the explanation.

And this Paul confirms because he says:

"...OF DIFFICULT INTERPRETATION to express seeing [*eipei*; "inasmuch as, because"] **that slothful have ye become in the hearing**".

[*nōthros*: "slow, sluggish, slothful, indolent, dull"; KJV translates "dull" here in Hebrews 5:11, in connection with *akoe*: "hearing" (*literally*: "in hearings"), and "slothful," in Hebrews 6:12:

"That ye be not slothful [*nōthros*] BUT followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises"
(note the implied understanding: being 'slothful' also means falling short regarding faith and patience).

These are the 2 only occurrences in the New Testament.

According to *Vine* the etymology is uncertain; however *Thayer* has the word deriving “from a derivative of *nothos*: “illegitimate, bastard”, which only occurs in Hebrews 12:8: “But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards [*nothos*], and not sons”.

The context is about our Lord Jesus Christ enduring – and so should we, i.e. “if ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”

In the Septuagint (LXX) *nōthros* is only used once, namely in Proverbs 22:29:

“Hast thou seen a man speedy in his business? Before kings he doth station himself, He stations not himself before obscure [*nōthros*] men!”;

nōthros is used to translate the Hebrew *chashok* meaning: “obscure, insignificant, low”.

The root-word of *chashok* is *chashak*: “to be or become dark, grow dim, be darkened” (*Gesenius*).

Tellingly, *this* word is used in Job 38, when GOD says to Job:

“Who is this who darkens [*chashak*] MY counsel with unwise words” (i.e. strives to hinder it – as *Gesenius* has it to mean).

Finally, in Proverbs 12:8 we find *nothrokardios*: *nōthros* with *kardia* (“the heart”):

“A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart [*nothrokardios*] shall be despised”.

In Proverbs 12:8 the *nōthros* part of *nothrokardios* translates the Hebrew *`avah*: “to bend, twist, distort to commit iniquity, do wrong, pervert”; we also find *`avah* – in its first occurrence - in 1 Samuel 20:30:

“Then Saul's anger was kindled against [his son] Jonathan, and he said unto him: Thou son of the perverse [*`avah*] rebellious woman [i.e. son of a perverse etc.], do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse [i.e. David] to thine own confusion...”.

(It may also be indicative that in classical Greek *nōthros* was used about “falling into a *heavy* sleep, *leisurely, gradually, making sluggish*” (*Liddell & Scott*), or a “*lazy and careless* workman” (*Bauer*).

It is somewhat unfortunate that *Vine* in his notes would translate *nothrokardios* with “slow of heart”. This suggests – wrongly – that the Divine Author also employs *nōthros* in the famous passage, when our risen Lord Jesus Christ speaks to the two on the road to Emmaus:

“Then He said unto them: O fools, and slow of heart to believe ALL [*pas*: ALL without exception whatsoever] that the prophets have spoken”.

The word “slow” is here *bradus* (“slow, dull, inactive in mind, stupid, slow to apprehend or believe” - *Thayer*) which differs from *nōthros* in that no moral fault or

blame is necessarily involved in it; *bradus* is also used about being (positively) 'slow' to evil things or 'slow' to rash speaking, or to anger (James 1:19; twice)].

We are now in the same position as one of Paul's Hebrew readers (versed in both the Hebraic and the Greek (LXX) Old Testament), when meeting the word *nōthros* for the first time in Hebrews 5:11.

Noting that Paul says that "*ye have become slothful*" (correctly reflecting the tense in the Greek), we would therefore understand him to say – in so many words

- that they had willfully allowed themselves to slide into a mental and spiritual stupor;
- that the cause thereof being *both* spiritual laziness *and* also allowing outside forces to perversely dull or darken their sense of absorbing spiritual things (becoming spiritually "deaf", as it were)

That this may well be the intended force of the word *nōthros*, accords with the reasons which Paul goes on to state, and which speak for themselves:

"**FOR** [*gar*] even when ye ought to be teachers by reason of the time, **again** have ye need that one be teaching you what are the first principles of the oracles of God, and have become such as have need of milk, not of strong food;

FOR [*gar*] **every one partaking of milk** is unskilled in discourse of righteousness, for he is a babe;

But, **to such as are mature** pertaineth the strong food, **to them who** - by reason of habit - **have their organs of perception well trained for discriminating both good and evil** .

(Hebrews 5: 12 -14, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

Having forcefully made these points, the apostle Paul – as he is wont to do so often – expands on this theme of being "slothful" in a long parenthesis, commencing with "*Therefore*" in chapter 6:1, arguing the dangers of this, until verse 12:

"But we covet that, each one of you, be shewing forth the same diligence, unto the full assurance of the hope throughout:

IN ORDER THAT [*hina*], not slothful [*nōthros*], ye may become, but imitators of them who, through faith and patience, were becoming heirs of the promises".

(Hebrews 6: 12, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

The words: "*were becoming heirs of* (or: "*are to inherit*") **THE PROMISES**", then serve as Paul's platform for setting forth – in one long unbroken chain of arguments and most detailed and wonderful statements – the whole matter of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who

"became, to all them that obey Him, Author of salvation age-abiding; Being addressed [or: called; designated"] by God as High-Priest—**according to the rank of Melchizedek**.

Concerning Whom **great** is our discourse [or: "we have **numerous things** to say"]

AND OF DIFFICULT INTERPRETATION to express...".

This particular exposition by Paul commences at Hebrews 6:13 and ends at 7:28 – and we will indeed earnestly seek to be “*not slothful*”, but intensely alert in trying to understand what we have been warned is difficult to describe and hard to explain.

[In which endeavour we keep in mind at number of things, viz:

- “every Scripture: God-breathed”;
- “the Scriptures...they...testify of ME”
- “knowing the Scriptures AND the Power of God” (or we will be in error);
- “being not slow of heart to believe ALL the prophets have spoken”;
- “every Word – purified seven times”, and “every Word of God is pure”;
- “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man” (and hence we particularly ignore the traditions of men, which “nullify” the Word of God).

Finally: we read like a child, noting exactly what *is* said – and noting exactly what is *not* said (but so often assumed!)

In examining Paul’s exposition here, we will in the main stay with *Rotherham’s* excellent more literal translation].

Let us delight in this:

**“It is the glory of GOD to conceal a thing,
but the honour of kings is to search out a matter”
(Proverbs 25:2, KJV).**

CHAPTER 4

The Holy Spirit sets forth in Hebrews – through His servant Paul – several astonishing statements and hard facts regarding Melchizedek:

1. Melchizedek is “*priest of God Most High*” (Hebr. 7:1), and Melchizedek’s rank is used to designate our Lord Jesus Christ’s rank.

As it is written:

“...even Jesus, Who, according to the rank of Melchizedek, hath become, a High-Priest...” (Hebr. 6:20).

[“according to the rank (or “order”) of Melchizedek”: *kata tēn taxis Melchisedec* is a *formal* phrase and a direct exact quote from Septuagint’s translation of Psalm 110:4.

The word *taxis* is overwhelmingly translated “order”. Rotherham, however, has “rank” (likewise Amplified Bible (margin) and Moffat).

The dictionaries (excerpted) have *taxis* as:

- “an arranging, arrangement, order, due or right order, orderly condition, the post, rank, or position” - *Thayer* (with *Strong* adding the meaning: “official dignity”);
- “an arrangement, order” (akin to *tasso*: “to arrange, draw up in order”) – *Vine*;
- “a setting in order, arrangement, disposition, series” – *Bullinger*;
- “fixed succession or order, position, post” - *Bauer* (who has this note: “*kata tēn taxis Melchisedec* ...the reference is not only to the higher ‘rank’, but also to the entirely different nature of Melchizedek’s priesthood as compared with that of Aaron”);
- “arranging, arrangement
 - (1) in military sense (drawing up in rank and file, order or disposition of an army, battle array, order of battle, a single rank or line of soldiers);
 - (2) generally: arrangement, order, post, rank, position, station” – *Liddell & Scott*.

There are 9 occurrences of *taxis* in the New Testament, 6 of which are in Hebrews in the term *kata tēn taxis Melchisedec*.

The other 3 occurrences are:

Luke 1:8:

“And it came to pass, that while he [Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist] executed the priest's office before God in the order [*taxis*] of his course...” [*en tē taxei*].

1. Corinthians 14:40:

“Let all things [i.e. *pas*: all whatsoever, including the use of *pneuma hagion* in the Corinthian assembly] be done decently and in order” [*kata taxis*; “according to arrangement” (Rotherham margin)].

Colossians 2:5

“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order [*taxis*], and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ”.

Thayer has the meaning in Colossians 2:5 as “orderly condition” and notes that “some give it here a military sense ‘orderly array’”;

likewise *Vine*: “...of due "order", in contrast to confusion, in the gatherings of a local church, 1 Cor. 14:40; of the general condition of such, Col 2:5 (some give it a military significance here)”.

In Psalm 110:4, the LXX Greek *taxis* (“rank, order”) translates the Hebrew *dibrah* with the meaning “cause, manner, reason”, according to *Strong* (and *Brown-Driver-Briggs* agrees with this), whereas *Gesenius* has the primary meaning as “manner, mode” and – citing Psalm 110:4 – thus translates:

“Thou art priest for ever according to the manner of Melchisedec”
(likewise Rotherham, Julia Smith Literal Translation)].

Whether we translate *taxis* with “rank”, or “order”, or “manner” (and later we will see why Rotherham’s “rank” seems particularly inspired), the astonishing statement by the Divine Author stands:

“Christ...designated High Priest **according to** the rank of ***Melchizedek***”.

2. Melchizedek received tithe [*dekatē*] from Abraham:

“***this*** Melchizedek... met Abraham...and blessed him— To whom even a tenth of all Abraham ***apportioned***”
(Hebrews 7:1- 2, Rotherham *with emphasis*);

[*dekatē*: a tenth part of anything, a tithe; occurs only in the New Testament here in Hebrews, 4 times (7:2, 4, 8, 9), all regarding this event.

In the Septuagint (LXX), *dekatē* translates the Hebrew *ma`aser* [“tithe, tenth part”] on the very first occurrence of *ma`aser* in the Old Testament:

“Now ***Melchizedek king of Salem***, had brought forth bread and wine,—***he***, being priest of GOD Most High.

So he blessed him and said,—

“*Blessed be Abram of GOD Most High, possessor of the heavens and earth; And blessed be GOD Most High, Who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand*”

So he [Abram] gave unto him a tenth of all [*ma`aser*]

(Genesis 14:18-20, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

The SECOND occurrence of *ma`aser* (and of *dekatē* in the LXX) is in Leviticus 27:30:

“And ***all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree***, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD” (KJV; *Rotherham emphasis*)].

ABRAM (not yet renamed Abraham),

- called and blessed by God (Genesis 12:1),
- promised by God that his seed would be given the land (Genesis 12:7), and
- promised by God that he and his seed would have the land age-abiding and that Abram's descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:14 *et seq*),

this Abram, who had learned to recognize only God as authority, he gave *tithe* (inherently either an act of worship, or given as commanded by God) to *Melchizedek*?

In fact: this astounding act by Abram is heavily highlighted by Paul in Hebrews as evidence of HOW great *Melchizedek* is:

- “Now consider, **how great**, this man was, to whom, a tenth [*dekatē*], Abraham gave out of the choicest spoils, ***Yea Abraham the Patriarch***” (Hebrews 7:4, Rotherham *with emphasis*);
- “...he [Melchizedek] ***who deriveth not his pedigree from among them***

[namely the Levites who – under the Law - had “commandment to take tithes [*apodekatoō*: *apo* (“from”) with *dekatoō*, the verb of *dekatē*] of the people”–verse 5]

who hath taken tithes [*dekatoō*] of Abraham. And, the holder of the promises [Abraham], hath he [Melchizedek] blessed.

But, apart from all gainsaying, the less, by the greater, is blessed”. (Hebrews 7:6-7, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

Melchizedek is SO great, that not only did Abraham, the Patriarch himself, THE Holder of THE promises made by God Himself, give tithe to Melchizedek, *but Abraham was even blessed by Melchizedek.*

And indeed: it is beyond dispute, that the *inferior* is blessed by the *superior*.

3. “...he [Melchizedek] ***who deriveth not his pedigree from among them*** hath taken tithes of Abraham...

And, **here**, indeed, dying men [the Levites] take tithes, but, **there**, one [Melchizedek] of whom it is witnessed that he liveth”. (Hebrews 7:6-8, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

The Levites (descendants of Levi) were – according to the Law - under

“commandment to take tithes [*apodekatoō*: *apo* (“from”) with *dekatoō*, the verb of *dekatē*] of the people” (Hebrews 7:5).

The Levites, who descended from Jacob's son Levi and were the appointed priests according to the Aaronic Priesthood (established by the Law of Moses and named after Aaron as the first high priest), these Levites were – on the one hand – mortal men taking [*apodekatoō*] tithes.

On the other hand there is Melchizedek

“**who deriveth NOT his pedigree** [*genealogēō*] **from them**” (i.e. Abraham and Levi);

[*genealogēō*: “to reckon or trace a genealogy” (from *genea*, “a race” (connected with *ginomai*, “to become”, primarily signifies “a begetting, or birth”; hence, that which has been begotten, a family; or successive members of a genealogy - *Vine*) and *legō*, “to say, to speak” (whence *logos*).

Thayer: “to recount origin and lineage, trace ancestry, to draw one's origin, derive one's pedigree.

The only occurrence in all of the New Testament]

HE - Melchizedek - received tithes [*dekatoō*] from Abraham (verse 7).

Therefore Paul says further in verse 8 (*literally* in the Greek):

“And **here** [*hōde*] on one hand [*men*] tithes [*dekatē*] **dying men** receive; **there** [*ekei*] on the other [*de*] being witnessed that [*hoti*] **he lives**”.

[the adverb *hōde* (“here, in this place”) - according to *Thayer*, citing Hebrews 7:8 – expresses the meaning (since placed in opposition to *ekei*: “there, in or to that place”): “here (i.e. according to the Levitical law still in force); there (i.e. in the passage in Genesis concerning Melchizedek)”].

“men” is “a conjunctive particle (originally a form of *mēn*, “verily, truly”) usually related to an adversative conjunction or particle, like *de*, in the following clause, which is placed in opposition to it” - *Vine*.

As *Thayer* notes: *men* is a weakened form of *mēn* and hence properly a particle of affirmation: “truly, certainly, surely, indeed”; hence, when used with an adversative particle (*de* or *alla*), it should be expressed as “indeed...but, yet, on the other hand”.

Vine says about *men* that “frequently it is untranslatable”; that is a dubious claim.

Even if so, it is shameful that even in the KJV, *men* is not translated 142 times out of 193 occurrences in the New Testament (i.e. a staggering 73% of the times, when the particle *men* has been employed by the Holy Spirit – and *fallen man* judges that it is superfluous!]).

However, the really deep truth we are allowed to understand, and which is one of the “numerous things” hard to explain, is what absolutely and necessarily follows from the two things the Holy Spirit sets in direct contrast to each other:

A. The Levitical priests:

- (a) they descend from Levi (and ultimately Abraham),
AND
(b) they are MORTAL MEN [*apothnēskontes anthrōpoi*].

B. Melchizedek:

- (a) he does not descend from them;

(in fact: he is “without descent” [*agenealogētos*];
(Hebrews 7:3);
AND
(b) it is witnessed THAT he lives [*hoti zē*]; HE IS ALIVE.

[*zē* i.e. *zaō*: to live, breathe, be among the living (not lifeless, not dead); here in *present* active indicative: statement of simple fact].

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AND MELCHIZEDEK IS THE SAME PERSON.

THIS is why the matter of our Lord Jesus Christ “*being called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedec*”, is so difficult to describe and so hard to explain.

BECAUSE, although the Lord Jesus Christ and Melchizedek is the same Person in character and essence, Melchizedek is our Lord Jesus Christ in one of His manifestations prior to His Incarnation and Him being manifest in flesh

“taking
a servant’s form [*morphē*], coming to be **in men’s** [*anthrōpos*] **likeness** [*homoioōma*] and **in fashion** [*schēma*] being found **as a man** [*anthrōpos*]”.
(Philippians 2: 7-8, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

[We revert later in our studies to this magnificent passage in great detail; for now we consider below the words pertaining to “likeness”, including “coming to be **in men’s** [*anthrōpos*] **likeness**” [*homoioōma*, from *homoioō*].

Regarding Melchizedek: He is “**made like** [*aphomoioō*] **unto the Son of God**”; (the sense which most versions give to Hebrews 7:3 – which is not adequate, as we shall see);

[*homoioōma*: “that which has been made after the likeness of something, including likeness such as amounts almost to equality or identity” (*Thayer*); it derives from the verb *homoioō*;

homoioō: “to be made like, to liken, compare”; according to *Vine* it is used:
(a) especially in the parables, with the significance of comparing, “likening” or, in the passive voice, “being likened” (Matthew 7:24, 26; 11:16; 13:24; 18:23; 22:2 (RV, “likened”); 25:1; Mark 4:30; Luke 7:31; 13:18 (RV, “liken”); Luke 13:20);

(b) of making “like” or in the passive, of being made or becoming “like” (Matthew 6:8); in Acts 14:11: “in the likeness of (men)” it is literally: “being made like” (aorist participle, passive);

in Romans 9:29 and Hebrews 2:17: used of Christ in being “made like” unto His brethren, i.e., in partaking of human nature, apart from sin (cp. Hebrews 2:14) – *Vine* (with our edit and emphasis);

NOW: the word *aphomoioō* (*apo* “from”) together with *homoioō* is used about *Melchizedek* in Hebrews 7:3.

However, and before looking at that later on: we need first to examine both the *literal* Greek and the context which are so important in order to understand *that* which is said by the Divine Author to be “*difficult to describe*”:

“...THIS MELCHIZEDEK...”

- **without father** [*apatōr*: “fatherless”; from *a* [*alpha*] as a negative, with *patēr* (“father”). The only occurrence in all of the New Testament];
- **without mother** [*amētōr* “motherless”; from *a* [*alpha*] as a negative, with *mētēr* (“mother”). The only occurrence in all of the New Testament];
- **without genealogy** [*agenealogētos*: from *a* [*alpha*] as a negative, with *genealogēō* “to reckon or trace a genealogy” (as set out previously). The only occurrence in all of the New Testament];

HAVING [*echō*] **neither** [*mēte*] **beginning of days**
nor [*mēte*] **end** [*telos*] **of life** [*zōē*: “life”, from *zaō*: “to live”]

[*mēte...mēte*: “(*mē* with the enclitic *te*); a copulative conjunction of negation “neither...nor”; it differs from *mēde* (*mē* with *de*) in that *mēde* separates different things, but *mēte* those which are of the same kind or which are parts of one whole” – *Thayer*].

BUT [*de*] **having been likened off from** [*aphomoioō*] **the Son of the God** [*tō Huiō tou Theou*]

- **abides** [*menō*] **priest in** [*eis*] **the perpetuity** [*to diēnekēs*]” (Hebrews 7:3, our translation).

[Noting some of the other Greek words:

“HAVING”: *echō*: “1) to have, i.e. to hold; 2) to have i.e. own, possess; 3)... to be in such or such a condition 4)... to lay hold of a thing, to adhere or cling to, or to be closely joined to a person or a thing” – *Strong/Thayer* (our edit and emphasis).

Here *echō* is in present active participle, the present tense denoting a simple statement of fact or reality viewed as occurring in actual time; the participle is similar to the English “-ing”].

“abides”: *menō* “to abide, remain” with reference to

- place: “to sojourn, tarry, not to depart, to continue to be present, to be held, kept, continually”;
- time: “to continue to be, not to perish, to last, endure”; of persons: “to survive, live”;
- state or condition: “to remain as one, not to become another or different”;

Also: “to wait for, await one” – *Strong/Thayer*.

The word *menō* occurs 120 times in the New Testament. It is used in the Gospels altogether 53 times, namely 3 (Matthew), 2 (Mark), 7 (Luke) and 41 times in John’s Gospel (which of course pre-eminently sets forth our Lord Jesus Christ as *the Son of GOD*).

Here in our text regarding Melchizedek *menō* is in present active indicative: simple statement of fact/reality viewed as occurring in actual time and indeed actually occurring.

NOTE also the following texts:

John 12:34: “We have heard out of the law that *Christ abideth* [*menō* in present active indicative] *for ever* [*eis tōn ainōa*: “to the age”];

John 14:10: “I speak not of Myself: but *the Father That dwelleth* [*menō* in present active participle] *in Me*, He doeth the works”.

John 14:16: “And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you *another Comforter*, that He may abide [*menō* in present active subjunctive] with you *for ever*” [*eis tōn aiōna*: “to the age”].

2 Corinthians 3:11: “For if that which is done away [i.e. “the ministration of condemnation”, i.e. the Law] was glorious, much more *that which remaineth* [*menō* in present active participle] is glorious” (“*that which*” being “the ministration of righteousness” (v.9), which is “the ministration of the spirit” (v.8), and “the Lord being that Spirit” (v. 17);

2 Timothy 2:13: “If we believe not, yet *HE* [*Christ Jesus* v.10] abideth [*menō* in present active indicative] faithful: He cannot deny Himself”.

1 Peter 1:23: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by *the word of God which liveth* [*zaō* in present active participle] and *abideth* [*menō* in present active participle] *for ever*” [*eis tōn aiōna*: “to the age”]

Peter 1:25: “But *the word of the Lord endureth* [*menō* in present active indicative] *for ever*” [*eis tōn aiōna*: “to the age”]

Hebrews 7:24: “But *THIS MAN* [Jesus, v.22] because [*dia*] He *continueth* [*menō* in present active infinitive] *ever* [*eis tōn aiōna*: “to the age”] hath [*echō*] an unchangeable [*aparabatos*] priesthood”.

[*aparabatos* from *a* [*alpha*] as a negative particle) and a derivative of *parabainō* (literally "to go aside" [*bainō*: “go” with *para*: “aside”], hence "to go beyond", chiefly used of "transgressing" or "to transgress, fall", i.e. “violate) – *Thayer*. Hence *aparabatos*: “unviolable, inviolable, unalterable, unchangeable”];
The only occurrence in all of the New Testament];

“**perpetuity**“: *diēnekēs*: literally "unto the carried-through" (*dia*: "through" with *enenka*: "to carry"), i.e., unto (the) unbroken "continuance"– *Vine (our edit and emphasis)*.

This word occurs only 4 times in the New Testament – and all are in Hebrews.
It is used of the "continual" offering of sacrifices under the Law in Hebrews 10:1
More importantly for our studies here, however, are the two remaining places in Hebrews (10:14, 16), where we have *diēnekēs* in context directly relevant to our topic:

“FOR [*gar*] the law, having **a shadow** of the destined good things, not the very image of the things, they can never, with the same sacrifices which year by year they offer evermore [*eis to diēnekēs*] make them who approach, perfect;

Else would they not, in that case, have ceased being offered, by reason of those rendering the divine service having no further conscience at all of sins, **being once for all purified?**
BUT [*alla*], in them, is a recalling to mind of sins, year by year, FOR [*gar*] it is impossible for blood of bulls and goats to be taking away sins.

WHEREFORE [*dia*], coming into the world [*kosmos*], He saith:

“Sacrifice and offering, Thou

willedst not, but, a body, hast Thou fitted for Me — In whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sins, Thou didst not delight”

Then, said I:

“Lo! I am come,—in the heading of the scroll, it is written concerning Me,—to do, O God, Thy will” [quoting Psalm 40: 6-8].

Higher up, saying [i.e. as said above] “**Sacrifices, and offerings, and whole-burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sins, Thou willedst not, neither delightedst in**”,—the which, according to the law, are offered,

“**THEN**” [*tote*] hath He said: “*Lo! I am come! to do, Thy will*”:—
He taketh away the first, that [*hina*: “in order that”] the second, He may **establish**:

BY [*en*] which will, we have been made holy, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, **once for all**.

And, every priest, indeed, standeth daily publicly ministering, and the same sacrifices oftentimes offering, the which never can clear away sins;

BUT [*de*] this priest, having offered one sacrifice for sins **EVERMORE** [*eis to diēnekes*], “**sat down on the right hand**” [quoting Psalm 110:1] of God:

As for the rest, waiting “**until His foes be made His footstool**” [quoting Psalm 110:1].

FOR [*gar*], by one offering, hath He perfected **for EVERMORE** [*eis to diēnekes*], them who are being made holy” (Hebrews 10:1-14, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

We can therefore now see the following:

Stated regarding the Father

- “**...the Father That dwelleth** [*menō* in present tense, active voice] **in Me**”.

Stated regarding the Holy Spirit

- “**...another Comforter, that He may abide** [*menō* in present tense, active voice] **with you for ever**” [*eis tōn aiōna*: “to the age”].

Stated regarding the Word of God

- “**...the word of God which liveth** [*zaō* in present tense, active voice] **and abideth** [*menō* in present tense, active voice] **for ever**” [*eis tōn aiōna*: “to the age”].
- “**...the word of the Lord endureth** [*menō* in present tense, active voice] **for ever**” [*eis tōn aiōna*: “to the age”].

Stated regarding the Lord Jesus Christ

- “**...Christ abideth** [*menō* in present tense, active voice] **for ever**” [*eis tōn aiōna*: “to the age”];
- “**...He abideth** [*menō* in present tense, active voice] **faithful**”.
- “**...THIS MAN because He continueth** [*menō* in present tense, active voice] **ever** [*eis tōn aiōna*: “to the age”] **hath** [*echō*] **an unchangeable priesthood**”.
- “**...this Priest, having offered one sacrifice for sins EVERMORE** [*eis to diēnekes*], “**sat down on the right hand**” [quoting Psalm 110:1] **of God**”.
- “**...by one offering, hath He perfected for EVERMORE** [*eis to diēnekes*], **them who are being made holy**”.

Consider now the language used by the Divine Author regarding MELCHIZEDEK:

- “**This Melchizedek...abides** [*menō* in present tense, active voice] **priest in the perpetuity**” [*eis to diēnekēs*].
- “... of Whom it is witnessed that **He liveth**” [*zaō* in present tense, active voice].
- “**that HE** [Melchizedek] **liveth**” is directly contrasted (also by heavy emphasis in the Greek) with “**dying MEN**” [*apothnēskontes anthrōpoi*].

[Thus e.g. ESV: “**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” (Hebrews 7:8)].

- “**HAVING** [*echō*] **neither** [*mēte*] **beginning of days**
nor [*mēte*] **end** [*telos*] **of life**” [*zōē*: “life”, from *zaō*: “to live”].

[Therefore and indisputably: Melchizedek is *not* a man – *adam*: an earth-born human being.

And since He possesses life without end, and has NO beginning of days, He is NOT a created being akin to the angels or all the other spiritual powers. Melchizedek is self-existing and eternal. He is Deity].

- “**without father, without mother, without genealogy**”.

[A *child* easily understands this plain language: it means that NOBODY ‘made’ Melchizedek. He has no origins, no beginning and no end. He is God – as our Lord Jesus Christ is God.

In fact and which should now be evident: Melchizedek is the Lord Jesus Christ *manifested* in the Person of Melchizedek – just as e.g. the several references to “The Angel of the Lord” is the Lord Jesus Christ Who manifested Himself in that particular angelic form on several occasions.

“*The Scriptures...they testify of ME*”

Note that we revert further on, to the meanings of the Name ‘Melchizedek’.

We are now in a position to examine (striving “to be *not* slothful”) the “numerous things” of *that* matter which is stated to be “difficult to describe” and “hard to explain”, namely the deep truths of our *Lord Jesus Christ being called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedec*:

A. The Holy Spirit’s exposition – through His servant Paul - on this matter commences with the tremendous and factual statement that:

“At the end of these days, He [GOD] hath spoken unto us IN SON” [*en Huiō*]
(Hebrews 1:2; *Rotherham emphasis*).

The SON – even the Lord Jesus Christ,
(through Whom God also made the ages
[*tous aiōnas*] and Who upholds ALL things [*ta panta*: the all things, i.e. all those things
referred to in context or understood])
- having achieved purification of sins,

“SAT DOWN on the right hand [quoting Psalm 110:1] of the Majesty in High Places” [*en hupsēlois*] (1:3).
[And thereby also “By so much becoming *superior* to the angels”]

Unto the SON (and in direct contrast to *the angels*) God said:

“*Thy throne, O God, is unto times age-abiding*” [“unto the age of the age”: *eis ton aiōna tou aiōnos* - quoting Psalm 45:6] (1:8).

God also said to the SON:

“**THOU**, by way of beginning, Lord, the earth didst found, and the works of Thy hands are the Heavens;
They shall perish, **BUT** [*de*] **THOU** abidest still *

* [*diamenō*]: “remain permanently, to continue throughout”: *dia* (“through”) with *menō*];

and **all**, as a mantle, shall be worn out, And, as if a robe, wilt Thou fold them up,—as a mantle, and they shall be changed;

BUT [*de*] **THOU** art the same, and Thy years shall not **fail**” [quoting Psalm 102:25 *et seq.*].

BUT [*de*] to which of the messengers [i.e. “angels”] hath He [God] said, at any time:

“Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool?”

[quoting Psalm 110:1; also quoted by our Lord in Matthew 22:44].
(Hebrews 1:10-14, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

B. The Holy Spirit then sets forth in Hebrews chapter 2 THAT:

“FOR THIS CAUSE it behoveth us, with unwonted firmness, to be holding fast unto the things that have been heard, lest, at any time, we drift away” (2:1);

[i.e. how shall we escape, if we neglect “so great a salvation” spoken through the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e. “*IN SON*”)

(and “God jointly witnessing also both with signs and wonders and manifold mighty works, and with distributions of Holy Spirit...” [“holy spirit”: *pneuma hagion*: “power from on HIGH”] – namely as happened through the whole period of Acts),

considering how transgression and disobedience was punished, regarding things (namely the Law) spoken in the past through angels].

“FOR [*gar*: particle of affirmation and conclusion denoting “truly therefore, verily as the case stands” – *Thayer*]

not unto messengers [i.e. “angels”] hath He [God] subjected the coming habitable earth [*oikoumenē*] of which we are speaking” (2:3-5).

[That coming *oikoumenē* has been subjected to our Lord Jesus Christ, wherefore we read in 2:7-8 (which quotes Psalm 8:4-8):

“*Thou hast made Him less - some little* [i.e. for a little while] - *than messengers* [i.e. “angels”] *With glory and honour* [*doxa kai timē*] *hast Thou crowned Him*”,

[This crowning with “*doxa kai timē*” took place at the Transfiguration:

“FOR [*gar*] we have not followed ***cunningly devised fables***, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, BUT [*alla*] were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

FOR [*gar*] He received from God the Father honour and glory [*timē kai doxa*], when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory [*doxa*]:

*“This is ***My beloved Son***, in Whom ***I*** am well pleased”.*

And this voice which came from Heaven ***we*** heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount” [namely at the Transfiguration];
(2 Peter 1:16-18, KJV, *Rotherham emphasis*).

Not only has the Lord been crowned; it is further stated:

“*And hast set Him over the works of Thy hands; All things* [*panta*: all whatsoever] *hast Thou subjected beneath His* [Christ’s] *feet*” [quoting Psalm 8:6-8].

FOR [*gar*] in subjecting to Him the all things, nothing left He [God] to Him unsubjected”.

BUT [*de*] now [*nun*: “at the present time; right now”], not yet, do we see, to Him, the all things subjected”.

(because: it is in the *oikomenē* to come, when our Lord returns in power and glory – His Second Coming – that all things are then *actually* subjected to Him).

[“BUT ***now, NOT YET***, do we see, to Him, the all things subjected”.

Almighty God calls the things, which He has purposed in His will, *as if* they are – though they are “*not yet*” – because they *will* come to pass, because God absolutely ensures this:

“I am watching to see that My Word is fulfilled.” (Jeremiah 1:12, NIV).

[“watching”; Hebrew *shaqad*: “watching over, to attend to” – *Strong/Gesenius*;
LXX translates with *egregora* : “to have been roused from sleep, to be awake ; then –
“to watch i.e. *give strict attention to*, be cautious, active” - *Thayer*]

This we also see in Romans 4 regarding His purpose in Abraham:

“**Because of this** it is of faith, that it may be according to grace, for the promise being sure to all the seed, not to that which is of the law only, but also to that which is of the faith of Abraham;

who is father of us all (according as it hath been written -- `A father of many nations I have set thee,) [Genesis 17:5] before Him Whom he did believe –

GOD, WHO is quickening the dead, **and is calling the things that be not, as being**”.
(Romans 4:16-17; Young’s Literal Translation; *emphasis Rotherham*).

(Rotherham translates: “And calleth the things that are not, as things that are”).

Our Lord Jesus Christ was – of necessity - made (for a little while) lower than angels, when incarnated in the flesh, because *only thereby* could He achieve the threefold PURPOSE (as set forth in Hebrews 2) of:

1. The necessary suffering of death on behalf of everyone:

“by reason of the suffering of death...to the end that, by favour of God, in behalf of every one He might taste of death” (2:9);
[i.e. as our “Kinsman-Redeemer”].

2. Destroying Satan as the one with the power of death, so as to deliver those subjected to bondage:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood [i.e. *human* beings—made of flesh and blood] **He also Himself** likewise took part of the same;

THAT [*hina*: “in order that”] through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject **to bondage**”.
(Hebrews 2:14-15, KJV; *Rotherham emphasis*).

3. Thereby bringing many sons to Glory:

“FOR [*gar*] it became Him, for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing **many sons** unto glory, to make the Captain **of their salvation** perfect through sufferings”.
(Hebrews 2:10, KJV; *Rotherham emphasis*).

It is truly important to note, that to bring about these purposes, our Lord Jesus Christ:

- laid aside His then Heavenly glory;
- divested Himself of His then spiritual form; and
- took “**a servant’s form** [*morphē*], coming to be **in men’s** [*anthrōpos*] **likeness** [*homoīōma*] and **in fashion** [*schēma*] being found **as a man** [*anthrōpos*]”. (Philippians 2: 7-8, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

NONE of this affected His Divine essence or character, but in terms of authority, power and standing *as viewed by* the massed ranks of angelic and spiritual powers inhabiting *kosmos*, our Lord absolutely humiliated Himself down to the level of *adam*, i.e. human-kind;

He became indeed “lower” [*elattoō*] than even angels: the lowest stratum of the heavenly powers.

[*elattoō*] occurs only 3 times in the New Testament: in the two references to Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2:7, 9, and in John 3:30 as used by John the Baptist:

”He must increase, but I must decrease”.

The word “signifies "to make less or inferior, in quality, position or dignity;" "madest ... lower" and "hast made ... lower," in Hebrews 2:7, 9.

In John 3:30, it is used in the Middle Voice, in John the Baptist's "I must decrease," indicating the special interest he had in his own "decrease," i.e., in authority and popularity” – *Vine*].

Our Lord’s “coming to be **in men’s** [*anthrōpos*] **likeness** [*homoīōma*]”, served a wide range of Almighty God’s deep and immense purposes, some of which were kept secret until gradually unveiled in the course of all the events recorded in the Gospels and Acts, and the completing of the Scriptures.

In Hebrews, one particular such purpose – till then a secret only vaguely hinted at a couple of times in *all* of the Old Testament - was revealed, which may be summarized thus:

- THAT the Lord Jesus Christ “was made (for a little while) lower than the angels”

(for the three-fold purpose referred to above:

- (1) the suffering of death in behalf of every one;
- (2) destroying Satan as the one with the power of death, to deliver those subjected to bondage;
- (3) bringing many sons to Glory);

- THAT, notwithstanding our Lord thus becoming *lower* than the angels:

(1) He was crowned with honour and glory;

(2) The coming habitable earth [*oikoumenē*] was subjected to HIM (*not* angels);

(3) He was – in God’s purpose (which is as certain when stated, as when actually coming about) * set over all things, which things already have – in God purpose - been subjected beneath feet of the Lord Jesus Christ”;

* [“GOD...callesth the things that are *not*, as things that are”; Romans 4:17].

- THAT the particular purpose of our Lord “coming to be ***in men’s*** [*anthrōpos*] ***likeness*** [*homoiōma*]” set forth *here* in Hebrews was:

“**FOR** [*gar*], not surely of messengers [i.e. “angels”] is He laying hold, **BUT** [*alla*] of Abraham’s seed He is laying hold [reference to Isaiah 41:8];

WHENCE [*hōthen*] * He was obliged, ***in every way***, unto the brethren [reference to Psalm 22:22] to be made like [*homoioō*];

THAT [*hina*: “in order that”] **He might become a merciful and faithful High-Priest, in the things pertaining unto God,—for the making of propitiation for the sins of the people**”.

FOR [*gar*] in that He, suffered when tested, He is able, unto them who are being tested, **to give succour**”.

(Hebrews 2:16-18, Rotherham *with emphasis*).

* [*hōthen*: adverb meaning “from which, whence” (indicating either place, source or cause); here – according to *Thayer*, citing this very text - used of “the cause from which, i.e. “for which reason, wherefore, on which account”].

[The meaning of the sentence “FOR not surely of angels is He laying hold, BUT of Abraham’s seed is He laying hold”, divides versions and dictionaries into two nearly equal camps, regarding what or in what sense the Lord is “laying hold on”?

The operative verb is *epilambanomai*: “to lay hold of, to take hold of” (*epi*, “upon,” *lambanō*, “to take”) – *Vine*. However, the Greek does not identify *what* is “taken”. This must be determined by context.

Hence e.g. KJV has:

“For verily He took not on [*Him the nature of*] angels; but He took on [*Him*] the seed of Abraham” (KJV supplying the sense in English by the words added in square brackets).

On the other hand, a fine version such as HNV has:

“For most assuredly, not [to] angels does He [*give help*], but He [*gives help*] to the seed of Avraham”.

(i.e. “took by hand” [to help], as indeed is the meaning in the first occurrence of *epilambanomai*: in Matthew 14:31, when Peter started to sink into the water:

“...and immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him [*epilambanomai*]”).

And this physical action of “taking” is the sense in which the word is mostly used in the New Testament.

Hence e.g. Darby translates: “For He does not indeed take hold of angels by the hand, but He takes hold of the seed of Abraham”.

However: *epilambanomai* is also used in the sense of taking on something through laying hold: “...*lay hold on eternal life*” (1Timothy 6:12); “...that they *may lay hold on eternal life*” (1 Timothy 5:19) - which passages *Bauer* cites to mean: “take hold of in order to make [it] one’s own”.

(However – and to the contrary - *Bauer* cites Hebrews 2:16 as meaning “being concerned with” with the sense of “help” also “being possible”).

In Luke 20:20, 26 *epilambanomai* is used regarding the chief priests and scribes sending spies, feigning as just men “that they *might take hold of* His words“ (to deliver the Lord up to the authorities - v. 20), but “they *could not take hold of* His words before the people” (v. 26).

In the sentence “FOR not surely of angels is He laying hold...” the words *not surely* translates the unique word *dēpou* (only occurrence in the NT), an indefinite enclitic particle consisting of *de*, with *pou* regarding which *Thayer*, interestingly, notes that “it is signifying “somewhere, somewhere about, nearly”; it has a limiting force and is used when something is affirmed in a slightly ironical manner, as if with an pretence of uncertainty”.

Hence the meaning may be expressed as: “you will surely allow that not of angels is He laying hold, BUT the seed of Abraham”.

The whole immediate context (from verse 9-18, *q.v.*) is about our Lord coming in likeness of men and made lower than angels.

It is about the Lord in His new essence as God manifest in flesh - and not in angelic form – and the purpose thereof.

Hence it is evident that the KJV is correct in supplying the sense:”*For verily He took NOT on Him the nature of angels; BUT He took on Him the seed of Abraham*”.

This can also be seen by the given reason immediately following:

“**WHENCE** [*hothen* – “for which REASON”] He was obliged, *in every way, unto the brethren* [reference to Psalm 22:22] TO BE MADE LIKE” [*homoioō*].

This understanding of Hebrews 2:16 also accords with e.g. Webster, Wesley, 21stKJV, GNV, RV, Phillips, A Conservative Version, Anderson, Webster’s KJV Revision,

Whiston, Complete Apostle's Bible, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Bishop's Bible and Geneva Bible,
Likewise Luther Bible (1545), and, of the literal translations: Godbey, Julia Smith, Green, exegeses Companion Bible and Emphatic Diaglott.

Interestingly, both Young's and the Concordant literal translations have: "for, doubtless, of messengers *IT* [namely "*fear of death*"] doth not lay hold, but of seed of Abraham *IT* layeth hold".

Finally: why here the reference to the "seed of *Abraham*" (in contrast to angels)? Because Paul is – in his letter to the Hebrews - writing to Hebrews].

The chain of arguments in Hebrews 2 leads up to *this* key statement:

"THAT [*hina*: "in order that"] He might become a merciful and faithful HIGH-PRIEST, *in the things pertaining unto God*, for the making of PROPRIATION FOR THE SINS of the people".

(Hebrews 2:17, Rotherham).

This is *the very first mention in the New Testament* of our Lord Jesus Christ as High-Priest.

It is also *the first and only time* that the word *hilaskomai*: "make propitiation for" is used about our Lord's High-Priestly sacrifice.

It is also here in Hebrews that Paul – referencing several Old Testament Scriptures – shows the wider and deeper understanding of the terms "*children*" or "*sons*", and "*brethren*" to include much more than the people of Israel.

And this he does on the basis of what our Lord had already said about who are "*His brethren*"

- **"For whosoever shall do the will of My Father Which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother".** (Matthew 12:50, KJV);
- **"For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother".** (Mark 3:35, KJV);
- **"And He answered and said unto them, "*My mother and My brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it*".**(Luke 8:21, KJV).

(Continued in our next)

