

Osaka International Church

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Series: Patriarchs

Title: Melchizedek

Scripture: Genesis 14-15

Key Verse: Hebrews 7:1

I. Introduction

Good morning! In today's Scripture, we are going to meet one of the most interesting and mysterious characters in the Old Testament. His name is Melchizedek. The 15th century painter, Dieric Bouts portrayed him like this. The real Melchizedek probably looked very different, but I think the painter did a good job of hinting at the mystery of Melchizedek. The Bible does not really tell us a lot about him, but I think that everyone will agree that what it does tell us is pretty amazing. In fact, Melchizedek can teach us a lot about Jesus, our Lord.



Let's begin by reviewing the context. Last week we talked about Lot and about how he was carried off into captivity when the King of Sodom got involved in a war. Genesis 14 describes the events and tells us that the war actually involved nine kings, five against four. King Bera of Sodom was one of five kings who ended up on the losing side, and as a result the people of Sodom, including Lot and his family, were taken captive. When Abram, that is Abraham, heard that Lot had been taken captive, he took 318 of his own trained men, plus other allies and went and rescued Lot and the other people of Sodom. By the way, the fact that Abraham had 318 trained men ready to go to battle tells us something about Abraham's wealth and it also reminds us that even people of faith should be wise and always prepare for whatever might happen. Let's read the rest of the story from Genesis 14:17-24.

II. Scripture: Genesis 14:17-24 (NIV)

[17] After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). [18] Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, [19] and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. [20] And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. [21] The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself." [22] But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath [23] that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.' [24] I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me--to Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them have their share."

III. Teaching

In this passage there is an interesting conversation between Abraham and the King of Sodom, which seems to take place in front of Melchizedek. This suggests that Melchizedek may be acting as a mediator. The King of Sodom proposes that Abraham keep the, "goods," that he has captured, but that the people be returned to him. But Abraham refuses to accept anything because he wants to make sure that God alone gets the glory. This is a good lesson for us, but perhaps the most important thing here is what happens between Melchizedek and Abraham.

Melchizedek brings out bread and wine. This seems to speak prophetically of communion, and medieval painters often painted the scene very much like communion in recognition of this. For example, this 1635 painting by Laurent de la Hyre shows Abraham bowing to Melchizedek with a table that looks like a

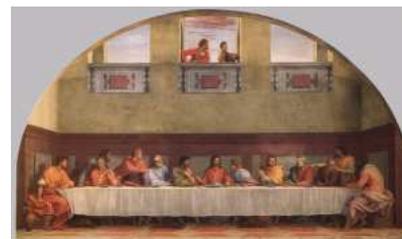


communion altar in between them. Notice what else is in **Genesis 14:18**, “**Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High.**” If you are fairly familiar with the Old Testament, this is a startling verse, because it tells us that Melchizedek is both priest and king. In Israel, the priests always came from the tribe of Levi and the kings from the tribe of Judah, so the same person could never be both priest and king. But the story of Melchizedek happens long before Israel is established, and it follows a more ancient standard than the law of Moses.



We won't go there now, but if you study Psalm 110 you can see that it is a Messianic prophecy which shows that the Messiah will be both king and priest. That requires a change of priesthood and a change of the law, thus teaching that when the Messiah comes the Law of Moses is to be set aside.

So, who besides Melchizedek is a mediator, both a king and a priest, and who brought out bread and wine? ... (Jesus)... That's right! Jesus, our Savior, is King of kings and He is also our Great High Priest, and He is the one Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5). And, at the Last Supper, He brought our bread and wine and established communion.



What we discover here is that Melchizedek is a prophetic model, or type, that teaches us about Jesus. God is the Author of history, so it is no problem for Melchizedek to be both a real, historical person and a prophetic model. And, Melchizedek is a type of Christ in many ways, both in what is said about him and in what is not said. For example, Scripture does not include any record of Melchizedek's birth, death, or genealogy; this silence of Scripture gives Melchizedek a sense of timelessness, a hint of eternity.

What did Melchizedek do after he brought out the bread and the wine? **Genesis 14:19-20**, “**and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.**” This is the first example in Scripture of the principle of giving one tenth as an offering to acknowledge that all things come from God's Hand. In blessing Abraham and in accepting the tithe, Melchizedek is acting as priest to Abraham. Here is a painting of the scene done by Maerten van Heemskerck. Take a look at the painting. Now, who do you think is the greater person in status, the man, or the priest who blesses the man? ... (the priest)... Right! This verse reveals to us that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham.



Psalm 110 is a prophetic Psalm about the Messiah to come, and in **Psalm 110:4** the Lord speaks to the Messiah to come and says, “**The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."**” When the Messiah comes, the priesthood of Israel which was of the order of Levi will be replaced. There will be a new priesthood and a new way of worshipping. Sometimes people read the Old Testament and they begin to wonder whether Christians should be keeping some or all of the Law of Moses. But the Old Testament itself taught that the Law of Moses would pass away with the coming of the Messiah. And that is exactly what happened, because not long after Jesus died and rose from the grave, the Jewish temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and the old sacrificial system stopped.



Some people may think that I am getting a lot of ideas out of just a few verses about Melchizedek, but I can assure you that I am on solid ground. You see, most of this comes from the most reliable commentary on the Old Testament ever written. I bet you have a copy of it. It is called the New Testament. The Old Testament is the background needed for understanding the New Testament. And the New Testament is the commentary that tells us what the Old Testament is really all about. If we want to have a good understanding, we need to read both. And actually, a large part of the book of Hebrews consists of a detailed explanation about the change of priesthood that I just mentioned. I especially want to encourage you to read Hebrews 7 some time this week when you have a few minutes, because that talks a lot about Melchizedek. Let's read a few verses together.

Hebrews 7:1-4 “This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, [2] and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." [3] Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever. [4] Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder!”

Hebrews goes on to tell how Melchizedek is great than Abraham and about the necessity of a change of priesthood, and why an end to the Law of Moses is necessary. But let's stop to consider what we just read. The name Melchizedek means, “king of righteousness,” and he is the king of Salem, which when translated means, “peace.” By the way, Salem is the same city as Jerusalem. So Melchizedek, a type of Christ, is ruling from Jerusalem, and he is both the king of righteousness and the king of peace. And, since his birth and death are not recorded anywhere, Melchizedek as a symbol is timeless and unchanging. Jesus is our eternal Savior, both High Priest and King of kings, and He purchased righteousness and peace with God for us through His death on the cross. And when He comes again He will establish perfect righteousness and peace everywhere. Melchizedek is a prophetic model of all of these things. Let's skip ahead in Hebrews 7 and read a little more.

Hebrews 7:23-26 “Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; [24] but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. [25] Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. [26] Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.”

Jesus is both King and High Priest forever, and He is able to save completely all who come to God through Him. We need more than a one-time forgiveness because we continue to sin again and again. But Jesus meets our need, because He is alive forever and always ready to intercede for us and to give us grace and mercy. We receive this through simple faith in Him and in His finished work on the cross. Trust in Jesus, and He will meet your need.

We could talk a lot more about Melchizedek, but I think we should explore a few other things also. A few minutes ago we talked about what happened before Melchizedek appeared, but I also want to mention what happens afterwards. Right after the story of Melchizedek, the Lord appeared to Abraham in a vision and renewed and expanded the promises that He had given Abraham earlier. The Lord promised Abraham many children, a vast number of descendants. **Genesis 15: 5-6, “He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”** The Lord promised, and Abraham believed. And the Lord declared Abraham righteous. This is salvation by faith.

Also in Genesis 15, the Lord promises to give the land to Abraham's descendants, and the Lord confirms the promise in a dramatic vision with an ancient ritual used for establishing an unchanging covenant. And today, we see the descendants of Abraham living in the land. God has His own schedule, but God always keeps His promises. Trust it. Believe it. Rely on it. God always keeps His promises.

IV. Conclusion

Melchizedek was both priest and king. And Jesus is King of kings and our Great High Priest. But can you think of anyone else is both royalty and a priest? Any ideas? .. (we are)... Yes, we are both royalty and priests. God is King and we are His adopted children. That makes us princes and princesses of His Kingdom. Now, in a kingdom ruled by a wise king, princes and princesses have a share in the wealth of the kingdom, but they also have responsibilities. Only a foolish king would leave his sons and daughters with wealth and no responsibilities.

And God is the wisest King of all. So, just as He has given us all the riches of the Gospel, He has also assigned us responsibilities. Take a look at this verse. **1 Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who**

called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” Think about that, **“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood....”** “Royal” speaks of believers as princes and princesses, royalty of the Kingdom of God. And if we are a, “royal priesthood,” then we are priests, royal priests serving before God.

And He has given us the task of declaring the praises of Christ Jesus, because Jesus has called us out of darkness and into His wonderful light. Who shall we declare His praises to? To everyone! The role of a priest is to intercede in order to bring salvation to others. We do this by declaring the praises of Jesus, testifying and witnessing to others that the Lord is God and Savior. And, we do this by interceding for others, in prayer and in action, always giving the glory to God and preaching the Good News of His love and of salvation through faith in Jesus. And we also bring out the bread and the wine, sharing communion as a testimony to God’s goodness and love, demonstrated forever at the cross of Jesus Christ. We often think of communion as a ceremony, but it is much more than that, it is the fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ. Take a look at this painting, it is called the *Communion of the Apostles*. But what are they doing? They are going to each person and showing love for them and blessing them. That is fellowship and communion. Let’s pray.

V. Closing Prayer

