



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 27th January 2019

by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Hebrews 7:1-10

Subject: Part 18, After the Order of Melchizedek (7:1-10).

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,” ³ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. ⁴ Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. ⁵ And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; ⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. ⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. ⁹ Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. (7:1-10)

The Book of Hebrews is the only New Testament Book which refers to Melchizedek. Jesus Christ is identified as a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek in Chapter 5 and 6 as well as 7. The centrality of the whole book, is establishing Christ as superior in every way, even a superior High-Priest to the order of Aaron. So why was Melchizedek used in this way? Because Melchizedek, foreshadowed, the type of Priesthood Christ would have more than any other, as well as the type of priesthood we, who are believers, would also belong to.

There are many speculations of who Melchizedek was for there was no record of his birth or death. Some say that Melchizedek was Shem, because Shem would have still been alive at that point but it could not be, because we know Shem's genealogy and here in verse 3 it says that he was without father or mother, without genealogy. There is also speculation that Melchizedek was a celestial being, an angel but this couldn't be either because in verse 4 it says - *Now consider how great this man was*. Therefore we know he was just a man, also the priesthood was never, and will never be an angelic function. One of the biggest speculations is that Melchizedek was a theophany, which means that it was Christ appearing in the Old Testament. However this could not be, because in Hebrews 5 as here in chapter 7, it is very specific saying that His, as in Jesus' Priesthood was 'after the order of' in the similitude of, Melchizedek, which obviously means that it could not be Christ Himself. Also Melchizedek is described as made like the Son of God (7:3), not as being the Son of God.

So what exactly do we know about Melchizedek? Other than Psalm 110, he mysteriously shows up and he mysteriously disappears from the Abraham story in Genesis 14 in just 3 verses, 18 to 20 – Lets just quickly turn there –

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him ^{as a} tithe of all.

We know from Hebrews chapter 7 verse 2, that the name Melchizedek when translated means the King of Righteousness or the King of Peace. Melchizedek, may have been a title like Pharaoh or Caesar, rather than his actual name. Four times in chapter 7 verse 1 and 2, he is referred to as a king. He was King of Salem, which was the ancient name for Jerusalem. We are not told when God first considered Jerusalem to be His holy city, but He had a faithful king who was a faithful priest there even in the time of Abraham, many centuries before Israel's priests ministered there or Israel's kings ruled there.

We also know that Melchizedek was a Gentile King, for the Jewish nation had not been born, yet in Genesis 14 he deals with the Father of the Jewish Nation, as well as the Father of their Faith.

In Genesis 14, we see not only was Melchizedek a King, but he was also a Priest. This is highly unusual, in fact not only is it unusual, but under Levitical law, it was a big no-no. It was strictly forbidden. The Levitical Priesthood came from the tribe of Levi. The entire tribe of Levi was dedicated by God for religious service. Although all priests were Levites, not all Levites were priests. All priests, in fact, not only had to be descended from Levi but the High-Priest in particular, had to be from Aaron, Moses' brother. Their service was established when the tabernacle was set up by God's appointment through Moses. The Priesthood was strictly for the Levites, and strictly for the Jewish nation. They were a people who were set aside for the purposes of solely ministering before God and to his people. The non-priestly Levites were only allowed to serve as helpers to the priests. The Levitical priesthood was hereditary. A man who served as a priest did so because he was born into the right family, not because he lived a right life. They were not allowed to be involved in politics or governing the people. They were in no way a ruling class. A Levite, in fact, could not be king. Levites were subject to the King just as much as the other tribes, yet their priestly functions were not under the control of the king.

Just as much, a King was forbidden to do any priestly functions. In fact there is an example of this in 1 Samuel 13, when Saul who was Israel's first official King, would not wait for the prophet Samuel to arrive, and under the pressure from the people, he disobeyed God and done the sacrifice himself. This resulted in his crown and kingdom being detached from him and his family.

There are only three people in the bible, who are considered both King and Priest – Can anyone tell me who they are? Melchizedek, Jesus, and the Believer, that's you and I who are in Christ!

In Genesis 14, we see Melchizedek's priestly function when he blessed Abraham. He describes God, as El Elyon which is Hebrew for God Most High. The Jews used the name of Jehovah, or Yahweh to described God and no Jew would utter this name of God. It was too Holy to pronounce. Ancient Hebrew had no vowels, even the oldest of manuscripts do not help us to know exactly how the name would have been pronounced (although probably it was Yahweh, rather than Jehovah). When the Scriptures were read aloud, the title Lord (Hebrew, 'Adonay) was substituted for this name of God. In most English translations of the Bible, the name is given as LORD (capital and small capitals), and occasionally as Jehovah. This

name was uniquely related to God's covenant with Israel. It was His covenant name. Yet Melchizedek, calls him El Elyron, which if we turn to Deuteronomy 32 verse 8 we see, that this is the name used when God divided the nations –

When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, When He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples. According to the number of the children of Israel.

I think given this verse, it makes sense why Melchizedek continued to describe God as the Possessor of heaven and earth. It's also interesting to note, that when Daniel was writing his book, in the Aramaic section, this is the same name El Elyron, to describe God and it is how Nebuchadnezzar also described God. So what does this information tell us, What's the significance in this? Melchizedek's Priesthood is universal and not national unlike the Levitical Priesthood who could minister only to Israel. Since Jesus is our High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, this means that Jesus is not just the Messiah of Israel, but of the world. His priesthood is universal, just as Melchizedek's. This was an extremely important truth for Jews who had come to Christ, as well as those who were considering putting their trust in Christ. To them, there was no other priesthood established by the true God but the Levitical, which was restricted to Israel. This priest served the one true God, but he lived hundreds of years before the Levitical priesthood came into existence. It is significant that, immediately after his encounter with Melchizedek, Abraham spoke to the king of Sodom about "the LORD God Most High" (Genesis 14:22), a combination of the covenant and universal names.

Melchizedek's universal priesthood and his royal office beautifully typify Jesus' saviourhood and Lordship, as perfect Priest and perfect King. Though never known in Israel, the dual role of priest-king was predicted by her prophets. Speaking of the Messiah, Zechariah writes,

"Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honour and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices" (Zechariah 6:13).

In his psalm that mentions Melchizedek, David also looks forward to the Messiah who will be both Priest and King (110:1, 4). Because Salem was an ancient name for Jerusalem, Melchizedek ruled over God's special city, His holy city that was always close to His heart.

"For the LORD has chosen Zion [Jerusalem]; He has desired it for His habitation. This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it" (Ps. 132:13-14).

In Hebrews 7 verse 3, it tells us

"having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually."

This verse is not inferring that Melchizedek is an eternal being or the Son of God. It is pointing out that we don't know anything about his beginning or his end, there is no genealogy and we have no record of him. Remember, the Levitical priesthood was entirely hereditary, through Aaron. Melchizedek's was personal. From the beginning of the Aaronic priesthood, genealogy determined everything, not personal qualification. If you descended from Aaron, you could serve; if you did not, you could not. Consequently, the priests often were more concerned about their pedigrees than their holiness. The fact Melchizedek is said to have been without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life does not mean that he came from nowhere. It simply means that in the Old Testament record nothing is said of his parents or origin. It is interesting that the single Greek word (agenealogetos) translated without genealogy is found nowhere else in Scripture—in fact nowhere else in Greek literature. The reason, no doubt, is that it would have had no use because it would have made no sense. Everyone has a genealogy, whether he can trace it or not. The point in Hebrews is that Melchizedek's parentage and origin are irrelevant to his Kingship and priesthood. Whereas to the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood genealogy was everything, to the Melchizedek priesthood it was nothing. In this, Melchizedek was a type of Christ, not because Jesus had no genealogy but because Jesus's genealogy was not significant in regard to His priesthood. To be sure, Jesus' royal genealogy is important. It is given in some detail by both Matthew (1:1-17) and Luke (3:23-38). Matthew's gospel, in fact, begins as "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ" (1:1) but His lineage is not traced to Aaron or Levi, but to Judah. Jesus Christ, though God's own Son, was not qualified for the Levitical priesthood. Like Melchizedek, as far as his priesthood was concerned, Jesus Christ was chosen as a priest because of His personal worth, His quality. He was chosen because of who He was, not because of where He came from genealogically.

Jesus ***"has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life"*** (Hebrews 7:16).

Like Melchizedek's, Jesus' qualifications were personal, not hereditary.

Also, If Melchizedek had lived forever, he would not be a type but a part of the reality. The picture of a landscape is not the landscape, but only a suggestion, a representation, of it. The fact that we have no biblical or other record of the beginning or end of Melchizedek's personal priesthood simply symbolizes the eternality of his priestly order. Also, it is showing the comparison with the Levitical priesthood which finished at a particular age. No priest, no matter how faithful, could serve more than 25 years. Collectively, the priesthood was also temporary. It began in the wilderness, when the covenant with Moses was made and the law was given. It ended when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. The Levitical priesthood was for the Old Covenant and only for the Old Covenant, the covenant of law. Christ's Priesthood is likened to Melchizedek, for Jesus' Priestly duties has no such time or dispensational bounds. He abides a priest perpetually. Jesus is a priest like Melchizedek. His priesthood is universal, royal, righteous and peaceful, personal, and eternal.

⁴ Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. ⁵ And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; ⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. ⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. ⁹ Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Here the Hebrews are reminded that their father Abraham, the Jewish patriarch, offered tithes to another type of priest. Abraham's giving of that tithe was not compelled by some legal requirement as was later introduced by Law. In Genesis, it does not specify the amount, but in Hebrews 7 verse 4, it tells us that it was one tenth. Verse 5 is referring back to Numbers 18 in particular verse 24-28. The tithe and the prescribed amount was commanded by God. The Lord instructed the people of Israel to give to the priesthood to support them as they had no inheritance allotted to them and to maintain the tabernacle or temple. When people are commanded by law to do something, they don't always do it willingly. I wonder how willing and faithful we are in tithing. Do we see it as giving God everything, or giving back to God what he has already given so that he can bless his people, including yourself?

Here in these verses of Hebrews, we see that Abraham's tithe giving to Melchizedek symbolised Levi paying the tithe through Abraham, because the lesser was being blessed by the superior or as Hebrews, puts it, the better. Due to the fact that the Melchizedek Priesthood was superior, was the reason that he could bless Abraham who had the promises.

No truth of Scripture is more definite than the fact that God chose the Jews as His special people, His very unique and cherished people. But Scripture is equally clear that Israel continually misunderstood and presumed upon her unique relation to God. They, for example, recognized Him as absolute Creator of heaven and earth and as sovereign over His world. But they had a very difficult time understanding Him as Redeemer of the world. As Creator and Sustainer, He was the world's; but as Saviour and Lord, He was theirs alone. They could hardly conceive of another divine covenant and another divine priesthood, especially one that was royal and superior to their own. Yet they are told that the covenant in Christ, though called new, not only had superseded theirs but, in type, actually preceded theirs.

There was no permanent righteousness or peace related to Aaron's or to the Levitical priesthood. Although we have no historical record of his monarchy, we are told that he ruled righteously and peacefully. Melchizedek, though king of righteousness and of peace, could not make men righteous or give them peace. His priesthood was a better type than was the Levitical, but it was still a type. Only the Divine Priest could give righteousness and peace.

"Therefore, having been justified [counted righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

That is the necessary order: righteousness and then peace. Christ gives us peace by giving us righteousness.

"The work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever" (Isaiah 32:17).

The two things that men have longed for are a sense of righteousness before God and of being at peace with Him. These blessings have "kissed" each other and become a reality in the Messiah. Christ came to give us His righteousness that we might be at peace with God. Melchizedek pictured that. We are privileged before God, like Abraham, to know the blessings of God, the Most High, Possessor of Heaven and Earth, knowing personally our Great High Priest, who will one day receive us and we will reign with him forever. **Amen.**