

MELCHIZEDEK

This character study doesn't even scratch the surface of the significance of Melchizedek. The hope is that it will pique your interest to do further study on your own.

Key Passages: Gen 14:18-20, Psa 110:4, Heb 5:6; 5:10; 6:20; 7:1-17;

There was a war of confederate nations, Lot was captured. Abraham went out to rescue Lot and returned victorious. He was first greeted by the king of Sodom.

Gen 14:18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.

Gen 14:19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

Gen 14:20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all.

It is interesting to note that Melchizedek brought out bread and wine. He was a Gentile. And that Abraham felt it appropriate to offer tithes to him.

Psa 110:4 The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

These are the only Old Testament references to Melchizedek. We don't know what significance his life had until it is explained in the New Testament. The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish converts to explain to them that the legalism of Judaism had come to an end with the sacrificial redemptive work of Jesus.

Heb 5:6 As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek";

That was a reference to Psalm 110.

Heb 5:10 called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"

Heb 6:20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

The "order of Melchizedek" is a type of priesthood with certain rituals and practices. We don't know of any one else who was a priest from this order.

Heb 7:1 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,

Heb 7:2 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,"

Here we are told the meaning of his name.

Heb 7:3 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.

This verse is often misinterpreted. We'll discuss that later on.

Heb 7:4 Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.

We're given a little bit to think about.

Heb 7:5 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;

Heb 7:6 but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.

We're reminded that it was the line of Levi who was called into the priesthood and instructed to receive tithes. It is pointed out that Melchizedek was NOT from that line and yet he received tithes.

Heb 7:7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.

Heb 7:8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

Heb 7:9 Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak,

Heb 7:10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

This is a "wait a minute" moment. If Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham, then logically speaking, he received them from Levi (who wasn't yet born).

Heb 7:11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

So... if the Levitical priesthood was perfect, why was another priest needed? And why did he come from the order of Melchizedek and not from Aaron's Levitical order? This must have gotten the Jewish converts' attention.

Heb 7:12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.

Heb 7:13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.

Heb 7:14 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.

The priesthood is being changed and with it, the law is changed as well. This priest is from another tribe, one that wasn't involved in the priesthood. Jesus is from the line of Judah. And THAT line wasn't involved in the priesthood.

Heb 7:15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest

Heb 7:16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

Heb 7:17 For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

These verses bring it all together. That another priest, one with an everlasting priesthood, has come... not to minister the law, but to minister grace. And that priest is Jesus.

It is important to note that the audience of this letter was Jewish converts. So the fact that there is no explanation of who Melchizedek was is an indication that they were familiar with whom he was.

Key Character Traits:

- **Faithful**
- **Righteous**

MEANING OF HIS NAME

Hitchcock's Bible Names states that his name means, "King of Justice". C.I. Scofield states that his name means "my king is righteousness". The Bible itself states that his name is "King of righteousness" and "King of peace"

EXPERIENCE

- **Melchizedek was the King of Salem**
(which would later be called Jerusalem). Salem is translated, "peace", so he is sometimes referred to as the "king of peace".
- **He was the Priest of the Most High God**
Nothing is recorded about his ancestry. He is only one of two people who are mentioned as being of this particular order of priesthood.
- **He met Abraham upon his return from rescuing Lot**
His celebration included bread and wine. He blessed Abraham and accepted his tithes.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

- **Faithful** – He blessed God and he blessed Abraham.

- **Righteous** – God placed great importance on Melchizedek’s priesthood. (Psa 110:4)

SHORTCOMINGS

No weaknesses or shortcomings were documented.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Although his encounter with the returning Abraham is the only instance of his life recorded in the Bible, it is clear that his impact was felt for thousands of years. 100’s of years after his meeting with Abraham, David was inspired to recall Melchizedek in his psalms.

There are some people who believe that Melchizedek was a Christophany... a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. They claim that Melchizedek was actually Jesus. They look to Hebrews 7:2, “king of peace” in particular, and Isaiah 9:6, “prince of peace”, as evidence that supports this claim. Hebrews 7:3 “*without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life*” is used as proof that Melchizedek is eternal and not a created being, and therefore Jesus.

There are a few problems with this view (Melchizedek as a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus)

- **King vs Prince**

Jesus is the “Prince of Peace” and Melchizedek is the “King of Peace”. If they are indeed one and the same, they would have the same title. As it is written, Melchizedek, as “King” would be GREATER in prominence than Jesus (the Prince). The notion that Jesus is somehow lesser in stature than Melchizedek contradicts the entire Bible.

- **Eternal / not-created**

Although the English translation implies this concept, the original Greek for Hebrews 7:3 simply says that nothing is recorded about Melchizedek’s ancestry, or his descendants.... Not that he doesn’t have any... just that it isn’t recorded.

The Greek word for "without mother" is "am-ay'-tore" and means "of unknown maternity". The Greek word for "without father" is "ap-at'-ore" and means "of unknown paternity". The Greek word for "without genealogy" is "ag-en-eh-al-og'-ay-tos" and means "unregistered as to birth". Just another perfect example of why it is sometimes important to refer back to the original language.

- **Like vs. Is**

Hebrews 7:1 says, "*but made like the Son of God*". If Melchizedek was Jesus, then Hebrews 7:1 would have been written "but the Son of God". Melchizedek was "made", a created being, obviously Jesus is not.

There are some groups, including many Jews, who believe that Melchizedek was actually Noah's son Shem. But as we have seen, Melchizedek's ancestry was not known/recorded... but we DO know Shem's ancestry. That inconsistency alone disqualifies this idea.

G LORY TO GOD

Melchizedek proclaimed God to be "*El Elyon*", "The Most High God: possessor of Heaven and Earth". Acknowledging God's sovereignty and "ownership" over His creation.

E SSENTIAL TRUTH

Through Melchizedek's priesthood, God provided humanity with a foreshadowing of the coming of Jesus. It provides evidence that God has had a divine plan from the very beginning. It shows us that He doesn't just "surprise" us when he fulfills His promises but that He reveals the relevant parts of His plan over time to those who seek Him.

Importance of studying scripture. The ancient Jews were aware of Melchizedek but did not seem to reconcile the differences between his priesthood and

the Levitical priesthood outlined hundreds of years later. "Scripture interprets Scripture". The mystery of the significance of Melchizedek is revealed in the book of Hebrews.

Oftentimes, verses that we have difficulty understanding can be explained by other verses. A concordance is a very helpful tool in locating these clarifying verses.

Yielding to God's Holy Spirit. The Jews of Jesus' times expected a warrior king. They focused on THEIR vision rather than on God's plan. The result, they as a nation missed the arrival of the long awaited Messiah. The clues, signs, and prophecies were written in the Bible by inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, but only a yielded heart can receive them.

Importance of a solid Christian walk. Just as Melchizedek's priesthood was a foreshadowing of Jesus' arrival, a good Christian life is a sign that the Lord is alive and working in believers' lives today.

LIFE APPLICATION

From these essential truths, we can apply them to our daily life.

We should read God's Word. Every day. We should pray for God's Holy Spirit to minister to us through His word. So that His will is revealed...and not what we think it should be. As Christians, we bear the name of Jesus Christ. Our lives should reflect that name that is above all names. Our words and actions should demonstrate the joy in our hearts that Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

This is the second time that I've studied Melchizedek. The first was for a research paper for my Old Testament Survey class 5 months ago. In preparing for this study, I started from scratch. I didn't use any of my previous paper. God's word ministered to me in a different way than before. I come away from this study wanting to just spend more time worshipping God for who He is. Not for what He has done... but for simply being "El Elyon" the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and Earth. Now I take a morning here, or a morning there during prayers, where I don't ask for anything ... I simply worship and love the Lord for who He is.

Here are some questions for prayerful consideration.

LEADING LESSON - *What do you think is the leading lesson of this man's life?*

IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE - *How does the leading lesson impact your life? What specific changes do you need to make to become a person of like character?*

FUTURE PLANS - *What specific action do you plan to take to grow in this character trait?*

EXPRESS OBEDIENCE - *Pray to God your desire to be obedient in this area of your life*