

A Man of Mystery  
Hebrews 7:1-10

1st Peter 1:3-13  
Colossians 1:19-23  
Responsive Psalm 113

So this week as we start into chapter 7 we will start to learn more about the mysterious Malchizedek that the Author here has mentioned him in relation to Christ as the great high priest. So he is obviously an important figure, for the author said that he has much to talk about him but is unable at this time for they are too dull of hearing, or rather because they have fallen back so far in their understanding that they need to once again be taught the basic things of the faith.

So let us start this morning, by going back to chapter 5, and read this section starting in verse 1, and reading to verse 12. So, there are 2 main questions I am hoping to answer today, Who is this Malchizedek? And what is his significance as to why he would be mentioned here. So a good place to start would probably be the earliest mention of Malchizedek, which is in Genesis 14, so let's go there and read from verse 14, to the end of the chapter. Abraham is going to war, or rather he went and rescued his brother and all of his possessions and the king of Sodom went out against them and this mysterious King of Salem shows up, being a priest of God blesses Abraham, and then Abraham pays a tithe to him. These are rather significant things that we will look at more closely this morning.

It also should be mentioned that Malchizedek is also mentioned in Psalm 110, which is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> time mentioned in the old testament, and the last time. Psalm 110 says "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool, The Lord shall send the rod of your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of your enemies. Your people shall be volunteers in the days of your power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning you have the dew of your youth. The Lord has sworn and will not relent, you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." So here is this Priest, who is also a King mind you that is so significant in the time of Abraham that Abraham who is the patriarch, the father of Israel pays a tithe to, and is so significant that David makes a reference to him centuries later, in which his name is associated with an eternal everlasting priesthood.

What makes such a thing difficult is that there is this person who is so significant, yet there is very little information about him other than what we find here in the book of Hebrews. The author is the only one of the new testament authors to spend any time on Malchizedek, but that does not lessen his importance, We need to remember the context of to whom the author is writing, and in this case it is a group of Hebrews, who would likely be familiar with Malchizedek at least on one level and so he becomes a very important example in this Author's teaching. We also can get an idea as to why the Author may want to speak upon Malchizedek because of the issue that he is addressing with the Hebrews and their angel worship. There were thoughts at the time, by both the Jews and some of the early Christians that Malchizedek was to be some sort of Messiah, or deliverer. This is apparent in some of the early writings, others as is seen in the Dead sea scrolls liken him to the arch angel Michael which if that is the case it is not out of the realm of possibility that this could have been an influence upon their straying away into angel worship.

So as we are starting to get a picture as to the importance of the Author's mention of Malchizedek here, let us go read chapter 7 in Hebrews, verses 1-10. So as we see the Author here uses the same description of Malchizedek as is used in Genesis, he is the King of Salem, and the Priest of the Most High God. It is important to note that this priest of the most high God is not some pagan king who was merely claiming priesthood but is one who worshiped the same God as Abraham. This is apparently in the genesis passage when he blesses Abraham, saying "Blessed be Abraham of God most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God most High who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He is not some priest of some pagan deity, nor is he a priest of the highest of multiple deities, but he is a priest of the one true God who is sovereign of all.

Continuing on here in verse 1 says that Malchizedek met Abraham after the slaughter of the kings. It would appear that he came to meet Abraham unannounced and offered his blessing. The reference to the slaughter of the kings is in fact is a battle that happened between 9 different kings, 4 of whom were led by Chedorlaomer of Elam who had defeated 5 kings who were led by the king of Sodom. In this defeat, Lot, Abraham's brother was taken prisoner by Chedorlaomer. Abraham when he had heard this news gathered his servants and armed them and set off in pursuit to rescue his brother. He attacked at night, defeating the 4 armies rescuing Lot and the others who had been taken captive. It was upon his return from this when Malchizedek arrived bringing with him bread and wine for Abraham and announced his blessing upon him, and Abraham in turn gave tithes of all the spoils that he had gained from this to Malchizedek.

From all evidences provided in these passages here in Hebrews it is apparent that Malchizedek is Abraham's superior, someone of authority, being a king, and priest, that Abraham recognized deserved a tithe offering of the spoils of his excursion. In light of what we know from the previous chapters of Hebrews here we can start to piece together one of the significance of the mentioning of Malchizedek here. Being that the Author is writing to Hebrews Christians, they would be all to familiar with the importance of Abraham in the Jewish Faith, being the father of the nation of Israel, and one who is held higher than Jesus himself since the Jews deny Jesus as the Messiah. And here the author is showing, that even Abraham, the patriarch of the Jews, the one in whom God made such a promise and oath as we saw last week, is in fact subject to another, there is even at that time, one greater than Abraham. This becomes apparent as well in the Author's introduction to Malchizedek, that we see in verse 2. whose name is translated the "king of righteousness" and also the king of Salem, being the "king of peace."

It is not too difficult for us to look at this and see the direct correlation here with Jesus himself. So we can see this Malchizedek as a shadow, or a type who is foretelling of the coming messiah. Much like we can see that Israel itself is a type, a foretelling of the Israel of God taught by the apostles in the new testament. That those who are of the Faith of Abraham, not those who are of physical descendants are the ones who are the heirs of the promises, the true Israel. Malchizedek is classified here in the uses of the names King of righteousness, and king of peace as the type of the coming messianic priest-king which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, whose kingdom is marked by righteousness and peace. In Christ we also see the appearance of the everlasting king who was promised under king David's lineage which Psalms says, is the Prince of Peace whose increase of government and peace there shall be no end.

Now we come to some verse that creates much of the mystery around Melchizedek and which has sparked many an odd belief about him as well, for it says that he is without father or mother or genealogy, and neither has a beginning of days nor and end of life, and I think the translation here in the NKJV would be better understood as resembling the Son of God, instead of saying made like the Son of God.

For that can have connotation into the support of the idea that Melchizedek was somehow miraculously formed without a father and mother and is a messiah like character, furthering the misunderstanding like the Hebrews that he was the messiah, or at the very least some undying heavenly creature such as an angel. But the reality is if we look at this in the context of what is being taught, and what is being said, you can't take what has been shown as an example, or to be understood typologically and then turn and apply some literal physical understanding. But rather the whole thing should be understood as a typo-logical example. It is not as though he did not have parents, or that he lived forever, rather the significance here is that fact that in Genesis there is no mention of his lineage which is something that we know is largely important to the Hebrews and even more so when it comes to the role of priest. Melchizedek is the only worshiper of God mentioned in the old testament who does not have his ancestry or descendants listed, As Philip Hughes states “ The description of being without father or mother, or genealogy, accordingly, should not be taken literally to mean that Melchizedek had no parents or family, nor does the statement that he had neither beginning of days nor end of life intend us to understand him as an eternally existent being who experienced neither birth nor death. The point here is that these assertions apply to Christ, not to Melchizedek. The significance of the biblical silence on these things is what marks Melchizedek out as a type won in these respects resembles the Son of God, who alone exists everlasting, from eternity to eternity. Melchizedek is the figure, Christ is the reality. And this also extends in the same way to the everlasting priesthood, Melchizedek is the figure, and Christ is the reality.

Moving on to verse 4, we see this distinction of Abraham, the patriarch of Israel paying homage, or tithes to Melchizedek. As this Author writes, “consider how great this man was to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of his spoils.” The great pride of of the Jews was that they could trace their lineage down to Abraham, and this is what they held onto, for it was as they believed their birthright to receive the blessings and promises that were given to Abraham. But here is someone, who is even mentioned in the Torah who is superior to Abraham, and as we see there needs to be no proof given as to the legitimacy of Melchizedek being superior to Abraham for Abraham gave him tithes of his spoils, and he being the greater of the two blessed Abraham as verse 7 says, the lesser is blessed by the greater. So if Melchizedek who is a type, a shadow of Christ, is superior over Abraham and all of the levitical priests, how much more so is Christ himself superior! If the type of Christ is superior to the one given the promises, how much more so is Christ himself.

The last few verses we are looking at today were kind of difficult to work through, in trying to determine their meaning and purpose in the context of the argument being put forth here by the author. There are some interesting assertions being made, such as Levi paying tithes to Melchizedek because he was yet in the loins of his ancestor Abraham. While we know this can not have been physically true for Levi is a few generations from Abraham, so it must point to a yet further spiritual meaning or truth. The commentaries I read talking about these verses did not really add a lot of clarity here either, but went into the whole practice of tithe giving which was instituted in the law that tithes should be paid to the priestly office, the descendants of Levi. But that does not really help in understanding Abraham paying a tithe to Melchizedek for he was not a Levite, and this also took place before the mosaic covenant and the nation and houses of Israel was established.

But a few little things I think can be pointed out here in these verses, the first being that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek proves that he was a living, mortal person as it says in verse 8. "Here Mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. So I think that this stands as an argument that Melchizedek was not some angelic heavenly being as some would argue from the reference that he has no lineage, no beginning or end.

As I had mentioned earlier, it is not as though he did not have a father or mother, it is not that he did not die, it is just that it is not recorded in the lineage that we see in the old testament. And again, this makes him a type, or shadow of Christ, a priesthood, and king who has no ending. As Aquinas said, "it testifies, in scripture, that he lives, that is, there is no mention of his death, not because he did not die, but because he symbolizes a priesthood that abides eternally. Just as Psalm 110 says, that he who is a priest after the order of Melchizedek is a priest for ever.

Another significance that we can attribute or tie to this passage here is the mentioning of Levi giving tithes, through his ancestor Abraham. It is much the same way of Paul's argument when he teaches in Romans on the basis that mankind's fallen nature is tied back to Adam, through the fall Adam all of man is under a curse, separate from God, lost in sin, so that when Adam sinned, all have sinned and also that through Adam's sin brought death to all. So in the same sense as Levi having paid tithes to Melchizedek, through Abraham, it can be said just as when Adam sinned all those who were in his loins sinned, all those whose ancestry stems back to Adam, which is everyone. So in the same significance of Abraham who is the patriarch of Israel paid tithes to one greater, so to did Levi the head of the priesthood pay tithes signifying again this type of Christ, this priest king's superiority which is shown here, but fulfilled completely in Christ himself. But this brings with it a very interesting ramification, for if we carry out his paying tithes through lineage, through ancestry that would imply that Christ who is from the line of Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek as well.

But, we must understand this in its proper context, first off this parallel only relates to Christ as the son of Man, not as the Son of God. For as the incarnate Son of Man he identified himself with mankind and with mankind's need for the institution of that high-priestly office to make intercession between God and man that Melchizedek was a figure. As the incarnate Son, Christ performs the priestly act of offering up himself as a sacrifice on behalf of fallen humanity, fulfilling that promise that through Abraham all nations shall be blessed, Through Abraham's seed, comes the Messiah who offered himself as a sacrifice so that all of those who are of the faith of Abraham may be heirs to those promises. But there is the element of Christ as the Son of God, in which he continues as a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. And even the Levitical priesthood itself, was just a shadow of the fulfillment of Christ's eternal priesthood. So Christ, as the Son of Man, and the Son of God bridges the gap which separates man from his guilt on the one side, and God and his righteousness on the other by his atoning priestly sacrifice of himself on the cross, he fulfilled the requirements for a reconciliation that is complete and everlasting, and in his glory the Son of God becomes also the glory of the Son of Man and all of those sons of men who through faith are forever made one with him.