

Text: Genesis 14:18-20

Title: The Elusive Melchizedek

Truth: Priest Melchizedek worshipped God and foreshadows Christ.

Date/Location: Sunday November 20, 2022 at FBC

Text

¹⁸ 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 [Abram] gave him [Melchizedek] a tithe of all.*

*How do we now Abram was the one giving the tithe? Because he was the one who had collected the large amount of “spoils.” As we know, he did not treat them as plunder. He gave all of it away to others.

I. This Melchizedek

- A. He was a king—king of the city of Salem and, by his name, “king of righteousness.” It would be hard to imagine a more compelling pattern or type foreshadowing Jesus Christ.
- B. He brought out bread and wine. This sounds like communion! But it was not the Lord’s Table. It was a celebratory fellowship meal at the occasion of Abram’s victory over his enemies. It was held in honor of Abram, for sure, but also in fellowship with the Most High God, so it was not merely a “humanistic” celebration.
- C. Melchizedek was priest of “God Most High.” That is, he was priest of “El Elyon” referring to God who is *high* or *above* or *highest*. This name for God is used infrequently (Gen. 14:18, 19, 20, 22; Num. 24:16; Psalm 57:2, 107:11). We must remember: God is MOST HIGH over all the earth. He is the sovereign authority of all.

Though he did not do a sacrifice right on the spot in Gen. 14, the fact that he was a priest means that he did offer sacrifices to God and was an intermediary between other people and God. He was a man of God, of the one and only true God.

Somehow, God called this Melchizedek to be his priest in Salem (principle of Heb. 5:4) even before the Jewish nation was constituted. Because of lack of information, he is a bit mysterious.

- D. Melchizedek pronounced blessing on **Abram** (19a). How he said it was “blessed be Abram of God Most High.” Translated into plainer English, that would be something like a prayer wish: “*May Abram be blessed by the most high God*”; or like a statement: “*Abram has been blessed by the most high God.*” Neither of these two thoughts are false, but in the context, it seems that God has already blessed Abram by protecting him and making him victorious—so the “statement” version is better than the “wish” version.

Melchizedek recognized that this God was the One possesses heaven and earth. And why? He built them! He made them. He created everything. It belongs to Him. There are no other peers who vie for possession of those things. No one came before Him, no one is His boss, and no one will come after Him that has such an exalted role in the universe. There *are* others who want to be like God, but no one can be.

Psalms 24:1 The earth is the LORD’S, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.

1 Corinthians 10:26 "the earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness."

Job 41:11 Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him?
Everything under heaven is Mine.

Jonah’s 1:9 “I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

Psalms 50:12 “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness.

Psalms 89:11 The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all its fullness, You have founded them.

Ps 146:6 [The LORD God] Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever.

Dt 10:14 Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it.

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

I encourage you to meditate on these statements and make them part of your personally memorized “confession of faith” so that if someone asks you the rather obvious question, “Who is God?” that you can give them a reasonable answer.

E. In the reverse direction, so to speak, Melchizedek pronounced blessing on **God** who delivered the enemies of Abram into his hand. A blessing in the direction from God to man (the first statement) means that God favors and protects a person—or that He is asked to provide such favor and protection. A blessing in the direction from man to God (this statement) does not mean that the lesser favors or protects the better. Rather, it is a statement of thanksgiving, worship, credit, and honor toward God. He is worthy of this now because He delivered the enemies of Abram.

You do not have to be a Melchizedek-level priest to pronounce blessing on God. In fact, anyone can pronounce such a blessing, and particularly Christians can do so. In fact, all Christians *are* priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9)! We have the privilege to speak directly to God in Christ, and to speak on His behalf to others.

F. Melchizedek blessed Abram, saying that God had blessed Abram, and saying that God Himself was blessed.

II. The Tithe

A. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, et al., did not receive back 100% of what they had lost, but rather 90%. And yes, if you are keeping careful track of things, you know that they received a bit less than that because they covered the remuneration for Mamre,

Eschol, and Aner and some food for the young men who went out to the battle (14:24).

- B. This tithe served as the worship of thanksgiving to God because of what He had done for Abram. God kept the Abrahamic Covenant and protected Abram and his nephew and those who went to the battle with Abram. He returned the captives and the possessions. The enemies were conquered. God deserved the credit, not merely Abram or his 318 men. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were certainly not going to offer any real thanks to the true God because they did not worship Him. So, Abram did it for them out of their possessions which he recovered from the four-king confederation led by Chedorlaomer. It is interesting that even indirectly from *unbelievers* God received a tithe in recognition of His grace.
- C. If you are familiar with the law of Moses, you will note that Abram paid a tithe, and what's more, he paid it to a non-Jewish person! What is going on here? The Book of Hebrews explains it like this: usually Jewish people pay tithes *to* Levi, but here Levi in effect paid tithes through Abram *to* Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:4 calls us to "consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils." God had arranged something special here to indicate to the nation of Israel someone beyond them, someone higher than them, worthy of recognition and support. Paying a tithe to someone else indicates the greatness of that person and his role in God's plan. Another was destined to come on the scene who would be like this: sort of an "outsider" to whom the nation should pay homage.
- D. Should you tithe? I answer that question at length on our website.¹

III. Where Else is Melchizedek in the Bible?

There are two places in Scripture where we find this elusive character making an almost cameo-type of appearance. But his appearance, though brief, does not constitute an insignificant or minor part in the story of redemption. There is something about Jesus that

¹ <https://www.fbcaa.org/MattPostiffBlog/2017/07/Thoughts-on-Tithing>

makes Him like this Melchizedek, and that is significant for redemption.

- A. Psalm 110:4. God speaks to the Lord and tells him that He is a priest forever, but not in the order or line of Aaron. Rather, He is in the line or order of Melchizedek. The first half of the verse states that God has sworn, and to make it doubly sure, it says He will not relent. This declaration of the priesthood of the Messiah is irreversible and unbreakable, founded on the reliability of the divine promise and divine power. Messiah *is* a priest like Melchizedek, and He will be so forever.
- B. Hebrews 5-7 mentions Melchizedek in 9 verses. Seven of those verses contain partial quotations of the Psalm 110:4 passage, referring to the Anointed One (Messiah, Jesus) being a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. Jesus is called and appointed to that role. But the readers of Hebrews, like many of us, are dull of hearing and unable to process what his priesthood means.

The first 10 verses of chapter 7 speak of the Genesis 14 narrative and lays the groundwork for why Melchizedek is significant. The chapter goes on to explain that his is a different priesthood than the Levitical priesthood, and therefore of necessity the Jewish readers ought to be expecting a change in the Law to accommodate the future promised priest. A priest of the tribe of Judah was unheard of. They were the tribe of rulers, but not the tribe of intermediaries before God. But with Jesus, those two functions would coalesce into a single person.

Hebrews 5:1 and 8:3 talk about priests offering gifts and sacrifices for sins. These ideas of priests / sacrifices / sins go together throughout the Bible. Priests in the Old Testament were busy offering sacrifices of others (animals) for the sins of others (people). Our Lord was Himself a priest that offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of others. As a king-priest, he humbled himself to the level of his subjects, and then went even lower to take their place.

Conclusion

God introduces an important person in a very oblique way in the three verses of this Old Testament narrative. This person is a prototype of the Messiah. There is no record of his birth or death, so it is like his priesthood popped onto the scene and never really stopped. I believe he died, and that he was *not* a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus on earth. Then God promised to make another priest in this sparse line/order, and that priest is Jesus the Messiah. He Himself is blessed, and blesses God, and favors His people. He delivers us from sin. He is worthy of all the tithes and offerings that we could make.

MAP