

HEBREWS – LEVITICUS
“King of Righteousness and Peace”
Hebrews 7:1-10
July 2, 2023

Hebrews 7:1-10

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, **king of righteousness**, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, **king of peace**. ³ He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

⁴ See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! ⁵ And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. ⁶ But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ **It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.** ⁸ In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. ⁹ One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. ¹

“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”

Back in 1976, while the Cold War was in full swing, the gas crisis had taken over the news, and hopelessness and the term “malaise” became descriptive of the culture, Palestinian terrorists highjacked an Air France airliner and diverted it with all 90+ passengers to what they believed would be a safe haven in Uganda. Yet, while there, the nation of Israel

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Heb 7:1–10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

was preparing for a specialized commando unit to go in and rescue the hostages. The rescue took place and 110 of 113 were rescued. It was declared an amazing victory and became a story told over and over in Israel to this day.²

Stories like this become legend. Yet, when they're true, they create historic heroes that are told of generation to generation. The writer of this letter references a heroic moment in the history of God's people that goes back to Genesis 14.

One of the most renowned heroes of the faith, Abraham (then known as Abram,) has just led an incredible rescue operation against a conglomerate of city-states, their kings and respective armies, to rescue his nephew Lot and Lot's family who had been living in the city of Sodom. It is not good that Lot was in Sodom and surely Abram was not please with what he had heard of the goings on in Sodom, but kidnapping his nephew was more than he could stand. So, as the story is told...

Genesis 14:14-16

¹⁴ When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵ And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶ Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people. ³

Abram was a leader. He became a legend. He was God's man and was awaiting the fulfillment of God's promise. At this point, his flesh and blood, his family was in trouble and everything stopped to do what must be done. He led his servants and those in his household in pursuit.

² Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 185.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ge 14:14–16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Suddenly Abram became a military general and fought his way into enemy territory to rescue the prisoners.

What an incredible story.

While that story was known, told over and over again among the Jewish people, it is the next portion of Genesis 14 that the writer speaks of to the New Testament Hebrew believers.

It is important to know this backstory of rescue, however. In this story Abram is larger than life. He is a warrior, a valiant fighter, a leader of men, but also a family man...a devoted uncle. And it is love that motivates him to action.

All this puts Abram...Abraham on the top of the heap. He's on the mountaintop. Historically and religiously.

And the persecuted, questioning, frustrated, fearful Christians with Jewish heritage are called to remember him well at this point. Then, they once more have their historic heritage and lifelong heroic legends and tales (true tales nonetheless) connected to the present and eternal reality of the person of Jesus Christ.

And this is where we get the discussion on Melchizedek once more and in more detail.

It seems the author continues to reference this guy and thus, we will reference him for a few weeks, too. But...we must caution ourselves from seeing this as irrelevant to us. For us Gentiles believers, a priesthood such as is referenced here is either confusing and thus, ignored, or misunderstood and a stereotype.

We've looked at the biblical model of priesthood often in this series and once more we seek to strip away any preconceived ideas of who a priest is and should be, and must jump over a misconstrued ideology of

priesthood that has sadly overtaken much of historic Christendom to the point where either black suits and white collars come to mind or a watered down explanation that elevates everyone as priests, even without fully getting what it means.

So we will look at two broad strokes related to this man Melchizedek in relation to this.

1. THE KING WHO IS PRIEST
2. THE PRIEST WHO IS KING

THE KING WHO IS PRIEST

Melchizedek was a king. He is hardly mentioned at all in the Bible. Yet, where he is mentioned it is clear that he is a king. Now, if you can erase your imagery of Disney royalty and history European castles, you may be more apt to imagine an ancient king of a city-state such as Melchizedek.

Following Abram's amazing rescue and military victory over the allied evil cities and their kings, we are introduced to this king.

Genesis 14:17-20

¹⁷ After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). ¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said,

**“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;**

**²⁰ and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”
And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.⁴**

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ge 14:17–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Melchizedek is the King of Salem. Words matter and so do biblical names. The name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness.” The city Salem means “city of peace.”⁵ It is where Shalom comes from and is believed to be the same location where the city of Jerusalem now stands. This character of the biblical narrative only shows up here. His name is mentioned by David in the psalms, but even that references this story.

This man was unique and his position, title, name, all point to someone who would come.

He is the king who is the priest and as you may know, throughout the reading of the Old Testament when you see Israelite priests, we know they come from a specific tribe (the tribe of Levi) and all that was declared and set in place one thousand years after this story. Throughout the Old Testament we see priests and kings, but priests cannot be kings under the law. Yet...here we have a king who is called a priest.

This king of Salem meets the conquering hero Abram and brings him bread and wine (hundreds of years prior to the Passover and thousands prior to the institution of the Lord’s Supper...yet here we are.)

This great king of the city of peace comes before God’s man and offers a gift of fellowship and of righteousness.

This is key.

For this king who is priest is the foreshadow of Christ. He is the king of peace and he gives a gift to the man. A gift that would one day represent the blood of the sacrifice and the body of the Savior.

Foreshadowing at its best.

⁵ Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 216.

The character of Christ and the person of Christ is foreshadowed by this man who was a king of peace. King of kings.

THE PRIEST WHO IS KING

But not only king, but priest. This is so significant, for this is no caricature of priesthood shown here. This is a declaration, once more to those whose personal and national history was cemented in the truth of the Old Testament and the law and the prophets.

Kings are not priests...and Jesus is called King.

Priests are not kings...and Jesus is called priest.

Yet, Jesus is king, but a kingdom not of this world. He is king of an eternal realm and when all that is here is turned to dust, He is because he is the great I AM. The king who reigns is king over all. He is sovereign and holy and just and right. He is the king of kings and lord of lords and when questions come to the validity of his crown, the writer points to the Old Testament foreshadower of Melchizedek to remind the readers that this is no story made up on the fly, but a great epic where every single piece fits together like a perfect puzzle...bringing glory to the creator of all.

So Jesus is a king in the order of Melchizedek, but he is also a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

You see, Jesus was not born of the priestly tribe, that of Levi. He was of the tribe of Judah and while we know the prophecies that declare this was to be, the first century Jews had to come to grips with this unorthodox (in their minds) priestly role.

Thus, the author goes back prior to the Levitical priesthood from Aaron's lineage being instituted and shows how Christ is a priest, an intercessor between the Father and his children, his people, and his nation, just as Melchizedek was.

This Old Testament character who is only present for a moment has no genealogy listed. This does not mean he was not human, but his ancestry was omitted intentionally by the Holy Spirit so that the people would not declare his priesthood based on his family bloodline.

No story of his death is given, though if human he certainly died. This is to give connection as the foreshadower he is of the eternal nature of Christ.

Melchizedek appears. He is the king who is also priest. He is the priest who is also king. He is the image of Christ to come and he came to bring righteousness and peace upon God's man Abram.

The Genesis account says that Abram offered tithes to Melchizedek. There is no temple. There is no tithe requirement as instituted in the Old Testament for the Old Covenant followers of God, yet there is a gift here – a tenth – a tithe to a man, a king, a priest.

Why? Here's the big point – and it is not a call to get you to tithe. Nope. We're in a new covenant era. This is a picture of superiority. You see, tithes and offerings like this are not given to those who are subservient, but to the superior. It is not charity. It is honor.

Abram, the great man of God, the receiver of the national promise, the victor of the battle, the hero gives to the superior one – the priest of the most, high God.

Thus we must conclude that Melchizedek's priesthood is superior in every way to the Levitical priesthood instituted through Aaron. And thus, only one priesthood is higher than even that, and that is why Christ is a priest in the order of Melchizedek.⁶

⁶ Hughes. *Genesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 219.

But...why do I care? Why should you care? What is the big deal? We're not Jewish...at least most of us have no Jewish heritage, though some of us do. We live in the age of technology, instant gratification, modernity, and evolved thinking, not to mention factory-like religion in the shadow of the church-growth movement that sells doctrine in bite-size pieces designed to help us have four steps to a better marriage, better kids, better finance, and more.

What is the big deal?

Perhaps that is the answer? In the age of McChristianity and easy discipleship, the hard questions of doctrine, theology, and deeper thinking provide more meat than milk. And when we pause to think about who we are...it's often about identity, right? And whose we are, the need for a priest – an intercessor, one who goes before us, speaks for us, pleads for us, and even dies for us so that we may be rescued is clear.

We have a priest who is really the ultimate priest. We have a priest who is king. We have a king who is priest. We have a God who does not belong to us, but whom we would bow before, offering gifts from our generous hearts and receiving gifts we do not deserve.

Bread and wine.

Body and blood.

From the one who is the priest, the king, the hero of the story who is the author of the story, that is the way, truth, and life.

Superior to all. The Hebrews in the first century needed reminding of who Jesus Christ is. So, too do we. He is king. He is priest. He is savior.