

MELCHISEDEC, KING OF SALEM

TEXT: HEBREWS 7:1-10

Introduction:

1. Melchisedec, King of Salem (7:1), is referred to nine times in the book of Hebrews, six times here in chapter 7 (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21).
2. We are first introduced to Melchisedec in Genesis 14:18. "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God."
3. Melchisedec is also referred to in Psalm 110:4. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (cf. Heb. 5:6).

I. MELCHISEDEC WAS A TYPE OF CHRIST

1. When we refer to a type, we mean "a person, thing, or event in the Old Testament, designed to represent or prefigure some person, thing, or event in the New Testament" (Fred Hartley Wight, *Devotional Studies of Old Testament Types*).
2. "Types are pictures, object lessons, by which God taught His people concerning His grace and saving power" (WG Moorehead, *The International Bible Encyclopedia*).
3. "The typology of the Old Testament is the very alphabet of the language in which the doctrine of the New Testament is written" (Sir Robert Anderson, *The Literal Interpretation of Scripture*).
4. "A type is an Old Testament institution, event, person, object, or ceremony which has reality and purpose in Biblical history, but which also by divine design foreshadows something yet to be revealed" (Donald K. Campbell, "The Interpretation of Types," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 112, No. 447).
5. Typical interpretation does not disregard the literal meaning of the Biblical text. Melchisedec was the literal king of Salem, and a literal priest of God.
6. Melchisedec's name means, "King of righteousness" (7:2).
7. "King of Salem" means, "King of peace" (7:2). Salem is Jerusalem.
8. Psalm 76:1, 2 says, "In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion."

9. "King of righteousness" and "King of peace" (Heb. 7:2).
10. The order is significant because righteousness must come before peace. Isaiah 32:17 says, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."
11. Some people teach that Melchisedec was the pre-incarnate Christ. This is not true. James Borland, in his book *Christ in the Old Testament*, wrote, "It would be highly unusual for God to have visited Abram while posing as the king of a Canaanite city. Besides, in none of the identifiable Christophanies was the one who appeared connected in any way with life on this earth."
12. Some mistakenly interpret Hebrews 7:3 to teach that Melchisedec was Christ or some supernatural being (like an angel). However, Hebrews 7:6 states that Melchisedec did have a genealogy -- he just was not in the line of Abraham (as Levi was).
13. If Christ and Melchisedec are one and the same, then the argument of Hebrews 7 (and the book of Hebrews in general), would be illogical because the point is that Christ is better than Melchisedec (cf. 7:22), just as He is better than the angels (1:4) and better than Moses (3:3).
14. Furthermore, how could Melchisedec be "made like unto the Son of God" (7:3) if he was the Son of God. This whole passage would not make sense if the two were one and the same.
15. It is stated several times in the Bible that Christ is a priest "after the order of Melchisedec" (Psalm 110:4; Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:11, 21). This differentiates Christ from Melchisedec. It does not make sense to say Christ is a priest after Himself.

II. ABRAHAM PAID TITHES TO MELCHISEDEC

1. Melchisedec was a godly Canaanite king who had retained the true knowledge of God from his ancestors going back to the days of the flood.
2. Job would be another example of a godly believer during this time period.
3. The Bible does not tell us about his birth, death, and genealogy because he is a type of Christ.

4. What makes the omission of his genealogy noteworthy is the fact that the book of Genesis is full of genealogies.
5. Referring to Genesis 14:18-24, H. A. Ironside said, "Strengthened by the bread and the wine administered by Salem's king-priest, Abraham was prepared to refuse the blandishments of the King of Sodom, representative of the world in all its impurity and debasement" (*Hebrews*).
6. Genesis 14:20 says, "And he gave him tithes of all" (cf. Heb. 7:2, 4, 6). Abraham was actually giving his tithe to the LORD.
7. Leviticus 27:30 says, "And all the tithe of the land...is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD."
8. Therefore, Abraham was actually giving his tithe to the LORD. He presented it to God through God's priestly representative, Melchisedec, the King of Salem (7:2, 4, 6).
9. Today the tithe is presented to God through the local church.
10. First Corinthians 16:2 says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."
11. There is always a big debate among certain Christians over the subject of tithing. Was it just for Israel or is it for believers today?
12. Here we are reminded that Abraham paid his tithe over 500 years before the Mosaic Law was established (cf. Gen. 28:22).
13. Numbers 18:21 says, "And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation."
14. This is the "commandment" referred to in Hebrews 7:5.
15. The apostle Paul referred to Numbers 18:21 in I Corinthians 9:9-14. Paul refers to these Scriptures to illustrate his point. His argument is that pastors should be supported financially by God's people (not by the government).
16. There is no New Testament law for Christians to tithe. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
17. Our Lord said in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."
18. The apostle Paul said, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (I Cor. 16:2).

19. These Scriptures (and there are many more) indicate that Christians should give more than ten percent.
20. Our Lord commended the poor widow women who gave her two mites saying, "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:43, 44).

III. MELCHISEDEC GREATER THAN ORDER OF AARON (7:4-10).

1. The "sons of Levi" (priests) came "out of the loins of Abraham" (7:5). Abraham was the father of Isaac, the grandfather of Jacob (Israel), and the great-grandfather of Levi.
2. Moses and his brother Aaron were from the tribe of Levi.
3. All Levites had to prove their descent from Levi (cf. Ezra 2:61-63; Neh. 7:63-65).
4. As important as it was to be a Levitical priest, Melchisedec was greater. Hebrews 7:6, 7 says, "But he (Melchisedec) whose descent is not counted from them (Levitical priests) received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less (Abraham) is blessed of the better (Melchisedec)."
5. The superiority is in position, not in person. There was no end to his priestly reign (7:8).
6. Hebrews 7:9, 10 teaches that since Levi was a descendant of Abraham he could be said to be "in the loins of" Abraham when Abraham paid his tithes to Melchisedec.
7. H. A. Ironside said, "The Levitical priesthood was represented in the patriarch Abraham when he acknowledged the superiority of Melchisedec by his attitude toward him" (*Hebrews*).

CONCLUSION:

1. The emphasis here in Hebrews 7 is not on the importance of tithing. It is on the superiority of the order of Melchisedec.
2. However, when we pray this evening let us pray that Christians would follow the good example of Abraham and understand the importance of tithing.