
Sermon Notes

April 23, 2017

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

Mel Who?
Hebrews 7:1-25

Melchizedek -- WHY?

- ❖ Hebrews 5:10 draws a comparison between Jesus and Melchizedek
 - at that point in his letter, the author recognizes that many in his audience are not yet ready to process this information
 - in setting us up to receive benefit from this teaching, the author addresses issues of Christian maturity
- ❖ As we come to chapter 7, our author is now ready to show us just why this lesson about the parallels that exist between Jesus and Melchizedek are important to us

Melchizedek -- WHO?

- ❖ Melchizedek makes his very brief (walk-on) appearance in Genesis 14:18-20
 - Abraham has just concluded a military campaign against 5 kings to rescue his nephew, Lot along with Lot's family and his possessions
 - as Abraham returns from this battle, he is met by Melchizedek

- ❖ King David makes a brief mention of Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4 telling us that, in some way, Messiah's priesthood will be like Melchizedek's
- ❖ The author of *Hebrews* tells us things about Melchizedek that neither Melchizedek nor his contemporary, Abraham could have been aware of
 - only God could write and draw together these three different texts about Melchizedek
 - the author of *Hebrews 7* is also the author of *Genesis 14* and *Psalms 110*
- ❖ What can we say for sure about Melchizedek?
 - he was the king of Salem (an ancient name for Jerusalem)
 - he was a priest of the Most High God (the One true God)
 - he blessed Abraham
 - his name = "king of righteousness"
 - his title = "king of peace"
- ❖ There were several important differences between the priesthood of Melchizedek and the priesthood of the OT Levitical priests
 - the OT priests minister to and for Israel on behalf of *Yahweh* (I AM), the covenant name of the God of Israel
 - as priest of the Most High God (a more universal name for God) Melchizedek ministers to Jew and Gentile alike on behalf of the God of heaven and earth
 - Melchizedek was both a priest and a king (Israel's priests were priests and ONLY priests!)

- as King of Salem (Jerusalem), Melchizedek ruled over God's special city centuries before Israel's priests ministered there or Israel's kings ruled there
- Melchizedek was king of righteousness AND peace (the sacrifices of Israel's priests were incapable of making people righteous or giving them peace)
- for those who served as Israel's priests, genealogy is everything whereas it is irrelevant for Melchizedek
- the priesthood in Israel was a temporary assignment that ended at age 50, there is no "sell by date" given for Melchizedek's priesthood
- Melchizedek's universal, royal, righteous, peaceful, personal and eternal priesthood is a more complete picture of Christ's priesthood than was the priesthood of Israel's priests

Abraham's Tithe

- ❖ Abraham recognizes Melchizedek as a deserving and faithful priest of God Most High and gives him 1/10th of the battle spoils
 - a completely voluntary act on Abraham's part that reveals his thankful heart to God
 - by doing this, Abraham indicates his understanding that Melchizedek is superior to him
- ❖ Through Abraham, the Levites symbolically paid a tithe to Melchizedek indicating the way his priesthood is superior to their own
- ❖ Abraham gives a tithe to Melchizedek, and Melchizedek blesses Abraham

So What?

- ❖ In the same way Melchizedek's priesthood is superior to Israel's priesthood, Jesus offers us a superior covenant to the one made with Abraham
 - a better hope for righteousness and peace with God than the Law conveyed
 - this better hope is the means through which we draw near to God
- ❖ Drawing near to God is the essence of Christianity (Ephesians 3:17-19)
 - Israel's priests could never bring a person fully into God's presence, there was always a barrier in between
 - only in the new covenant is complete entrance into God's presence made possible
- ❖ Jesus is *able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.* (7:25)

Personal Application

1. Drawing near to God is the essence of Christianity. In what ways do you draw near to God? Where is there still distance in your relationship with God? What can/should you do about this?
2. Are there any ways in which you are clinging to rituals or shadows about God rather than fully embracing all the security, peace and freedom we are offered in Jesus?