

Pictures of Christ: Melchizedek

Jesus Christ

By Tom Hill

Bible text: Genesis 14:17-20
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Master Ministries International, Inc.
3581 Knollview Ct SE, #305
Grand Rapids, MI 49546-5923

Website: www.masterministries.org/
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/masterministries

Take your Scripture passage that I have provided for you and we will read the first section from Genesis chapter 14 verses 17 to 20.

These studies on our gatherings together we concentrate on pictures in the Bible that give us a glimpse of Jesus. And we have started in the Old Testament and we are going to work our way through. I don't know how far along we will get through as the year progresses and holidays and so on, but each one stands alone, so it really doesn't matter. But here is another picture of Jesus that we see here and we will explain it in few moments, but follow as I read from Genesis chapter 14 verses 17 to 20.

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). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)

And he blessed him and said,

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”
And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.¹

Now to fully understand that section of Scripture we need a little bit of context, surrounding Scripture to help us understand what went on in these verses that they described.

If you back up to chapter 13 of Genesis and begin there, you read some background that helps us understand this passage. In chapter 13 we discover Abram and his nephew Lot both had become exceedingly wealthy with much gold and silver, flocks and herds, it says.

¹ Genesis 14:17-20.

Well, a dispute arose between the herdsmen of Abraham's flocks and the herdsmen of Lot's flocks. So rather than having contention between the families and the people Abram suggested to Lot that he move.

"You go to the right hand and I will go to the left. Or if you prefer going to the left, I will go to the right. But you make the first choice," a very kind and gracious offer on the part of his uncle. "You make the choice and whichever you choose, you go there and then I will go in another direction so that we don't have the disagreements between us."

And so Lot chose the lands surrounding the city of Sodom. The Bible describes it as well watered. That can be taken two different ways. It can mean there was lots of water there and was well watered, or it can mean that there were lots of wells there and they were well watered. We don't know. It doesn't really matter. It was a fertile place for crops and herds and animals. And so Lot moved there.

After he moved, God spoke to Abram. Now, you recall that previously we looked at God's calling Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and had spoken to him and made promises to him about a land and about offspring. And up to this point, Abram has got neither. He doesn't have offspring and he doesn't have land.

Well, after Lot separated, God spoke to him again and confirmed to him, "Abram, all that you see, look in ever direction as far as you can see with the eye that is yours. I am giving it to you and to your offspring. And your offspring will be like the sand on the seashore and the stars in the sky, abundant."

And it says that Abraham moved from where he had lived at the time of the separation between he and Lot and he went and sacrificed and that he moved back to Hebron in the southern part of Israel.

There were four kings to the east out of Iran, Iraq and Kuwait, our present countries. And these four kings decided to expand their territory. So they came west and they conquered the land, the kingdoms north of where Abraham lived and they took over the lands. And after they conquered those cities and those kingdoms they spied the land of Sodom where Lot lived. And so these four kings proceeded to go to battle with the kings around Sodom and the lands associated with Sodom and they defeated them. And as part of the defeat and the victory over them they took Lot as captive. And they took much plunder and goods from the people and they proceeded to head back home.

Someone came to Abram and said, "Abram, you will never know what happened. These kings from the east came down and came down from the north and they conquered Sodom and all the kings around there and they have taken your nephew hostage along with many goods."

Well, upon hearing that Abram gathered together his own army—that gives you a clue as to the size of his land and the size of the people that were part of his family—and he took them in pursuit of the kings and his nephew Lot. He soon overtook them and defeated

them all and recaptured his nephew Lot and all of the goods that those kings had taken away from Lot's friends and family in Sodom. And he began to return back to his land where he lived and Lot back to his city.

That is chapter 13 and the first part of chapter 14. And then we come to these verses, 17 to 20. As Abram and Lot and the armies returned back the King of Sodom and Melchizedek went up to meet them. And they had a celebration, a victory party. It says here that Melchizedek came out with bread and wine. That was a common expression that they used to describe a meal, coming out for a celebration. Let's party. That which was lost has been regained and our goods are back and let's have a party. Let's celebrate for Abram's victory over the enemy who had destroyed us.

And we see that as part of the victory celebration that there were two people who came. There was the King of Sodom who came and there was Melchizedek who came as part of this celebration. And, of course, Abram is part of the celebration as well as the other parties with him.

We get a glimpse here of Melchizedek and who he was. He only appears a couple of times in Scripture. He appears here, he appears in a psalm which we will look at in a few moments and he appears in the book of Hebrews. But Melchizedek the description here tells us that he was the King of Salem. Salem is another word for the city of Jerusalem, the city of peace. And this man Melchizedek governed that city as king, King of Salem. His name also means King of Righteousness, King of Peace. So that describes for us this man Melchizedek.

We also find that it describes him as a high priest. He not only governed and ruled as king, but he also served as high priest, high priest of God most high, it says.

So that is Melchizedek. He came out to celebrate with Abram. No doubt he knew of Abram. Abram was a mighty man in that land even though he didn't possess any of the land as his own living mostly as a nomad. They knew Abram. He was a great man. And he came out and gave respect to him and celebrated with him and gave him a blessing from God. It says Melchizedek blessed him and gave thanks and praise and honor to God most high for the victory that Abram secured over the enemy kings.

We also get a picture of Abraham. Abraham recognized something unique about Melchizedek. He wasn't just another run of the mill king, because if you read farther on in Genesis 14, which we didn't make part of the study this morning, you will read about this interaction with the King of Sodom, not very good. He had no respect at all for the King of Sodom. But he did for Melchizedek. He recognized something unique about him, something about the presence of God associated with Melchizedek. And Abraham recognized that and noticed that.

You say, "Well, how do you know that?"

Because he gave him a tithe. He gave him an offering. Now he wasn't offering it to him

as though he were a god, but he recognized him as a godly ruler, as a high priest and he gave to him an offering as though he were giving it unto God, a tenth of all that he had captured when he secured victory over the four kings.

We also get a glimpse of the character of God. We see here an unusual circumstance. You will remember a while back I mentioned how God called out Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and how that he had chosen Abraham and that through that family of his he would produce the seed that he had promised to Adam and Eve back in the Garden of Eden.

“It will come through you, Abraham, through your family. You are my chosen people.”

Melchizedek was not of the family of Abraham. Yet he knew God. And he worshipped God and he loved God. And that gives us a reminder of what God had promised to Abraham that he would bless all nations through him.

And we find here just a little glimpse of this truth that here God had blessed Abraham, his chosen one and he also had blessed Melchizedek, a Canaanite, a non ethnic member of Abraham’s family reminding us and showing to us that God would include all peoples, people from every nation, from every tongue and tribe, but through Abraham.

We also see God’s grace. God in his kindness enabled Abraham and his troops to overtake the enemy and to defeat them and to bring back safely Lot and others and the goods that the kings had stolen from them. God’s goodness, he didn’t have to do that, but he did. He protected them and enabled them to secure victory over the enemy.

We also see God revealed to us as an omnipresent God. Now that is crucial for us to understand in this era. Gods had control of geographical territories. People who lived in this city claimed this god that they worshipped. People in a neighboring city had another god that they worshipped. And, thus, throughout all the land with every different geographical location they worshipped a different god. Furthermore, they had gods of weather, gods of harvest, multitudes of gods that they worshipped.

We see here God, God most high revealing himself as the only God. There is no other God.

“I alone am God.”

And he proved it through Abraham and his granting to him victory over tribes from another land to the north of where he lived and bringing back family and goods. God is an ever present God. He isn’t restricted to one locality. He isn’t restricted to one season. He isn’t restricted to one harvest season or a crop. He is God almighty and that is how Melchizedek describes him. God most high, possessor of all things.

And so we get a glimpse of the three main characters, if you will, in this story: Melchizedek and we see Abraham and then we see God revealed to us.

Now why do you think God would move upon Moses to record this account? You will remember. I will remind you again of when Moses wrote these records. He wrote them during the 40 years that the children of Israel traveled from Egypt towards the Promised Land. And he recorded all of these events during that time period. So the children of Israel when they read this, they had not yet entered into the Promised Land. And God wanted them to know some things before they got into that land. He wanted them to know some things about himself, his character, his nature and that just as he gave aid and help to Abram, he would give aid and help to them when they came against their enemies. He wanted them to know he was an all powerful God that wouldn't depend on geography. He would be with them wherever they went and would enable them to secure victory throughout the whole Promised Land.

So he wanted them to know some things about himself. And so he moved Moses to record these events that would encourage them, that would instruct them and prepare them for their entrance into the Promised Land.

Now I mentioned at the beginning that this passage gave to us a picture of Jesus in the Old Testament. And I suppose that through many of your minds some questions went across of how in earth does this passage tell us anything about Jesus?

Well, let me take a few moments and explain how this passage reveals to us some vital truth about Jesus. And before I do that, I will take you back to the beginning.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”²

And how did he create them? Very good. He created Adam and Eve sinless, without sin. And he would manifest himself to them and he fellowshiped with them in the garden in Eden. But Adam and Eve sinned and they violated God's command. He had told them to take his presence throughout all the earth and then he also commanded them not to eat of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. And they disobeyed both of those. And sin invaded their lives and separated them from God so they no longer had communion with God, no longer had fellowship with God. And, in fact, the Scriptures describe for us that they hid from God. They didn't want to see him. They heard his voice. It sounded familiar. They knew that voice. But they hid. God pursued after them, found them and made a promise to them.

“I will send the seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent.”

The very first indication that God would make some kind of provision for the offspring of Adam and Eve who now plunged into sin.

But a brief very description didn't tell us too much. As time has passed, God has continued to reveal progressively his plan that the first stated to Adam and Eve. We saw it in the picture of the ark that Noah built, a picture of Jesus. And now we come to this ac-

² Genesis 1:1.

count and we see here a picture, a further revelation of Jesus that he is making through the writing of Moses to the children of Israel, providing this picture of Melchizedek, a unique man, a king and a priest of the most high God at the same time.

Abraham recognized his uniqueness.

When we come to Psalm 110, which I have provide for you, we will take a moment and read that, because that begins to explain a little further about how this pictures for us Jesus. Psalm 110 was written by David and it is a prophecy about Jesus. He calls him my Lord. And we read the following, Psalm 110 verses one to seven.

The LORD says to my Lord:
 “Sit at my right hand,
 until I make your enemies your footstool.”
The LORD sends forth from Zion
 your mighty scepter.
 Rule in the midst of your enemies!
Your people will offer themselves freely
 on the day of your power,
 in holy garments;
 from the womb of the morning,
 the dew of your youth will be yours.
The LORD has sworn
 and will not change his mind,
 “‘You are a priest forever
 after the order of Melchizedek.’”³

David is giving a prophecy about the Lord, the one who was to come, a Lord above him, a Lord whom he recognized as having rank and authority above him. For he says he sits on the right hand of God almighty. This Lord is described as one who would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

When we come to the book of Hebrews we find a more complete revelation of this connection between Melchizedek and Jesus. David prophesied about it. Now we read in Hebrews the explanation of how it comes together in the person of Jesus. Hebrews chapter five verses one through 10.

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.⁴

That is just a brief description of the role and responsibility of a high priest. That is what a high priest does. That is his function. That is his job. Notice that they are appointed. It is not someone who decides on a Monday morning, well, I am going

³ Psalm 110:1-4.

⁴ Hebrews 5:1-2.

to be a high priest and assumes that position and that responsibility. No, they are appointed. God appoints them. And we can go back into the Old Testament and see how God made provision to appoint the high priest for the children of Israel throughout their years prior to Jesus.

Ok, now starting in verse number three.

Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.⁵

Now comes the connection to Christ.

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;
as he says also in another place [which we read just a moment ago],
“You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.⁶

This passage identifies for us three high priests. One of them was Aaron. He was the high priest that God appointed in the Old Testament when he gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. And the family of Aaron became the priests of the temple and there was an order designed by God how to pick out the high priest out of those families.

Then we have another priest, another high priest, Melchizedek. We read a few moments ago about him. The high priest and the most high God, King of Salem. He was the first priest ever mentioned in Scripture. So he was the high priest even before Aaron was the high priest.

So now we have Jesus prophesied by David who would become a high priest forever, not a terminal high priest like Aaron who died and his children lived and died and they served and then they died. No. A high priest forever, not like Aaron, but like Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a king and a priest simultaneously. Jesus Christ became

⁵ Hebrews 5:3-4.

⁶ Hebrews 5:5-10.

a high priest after the order of Melchizedek and was also king, King of the Jews he is described as.

So Melchizedek way back, centuries before Christ came in the flesh we find a picture that gives us some glimpses of that one that God had promised to Adam and to Eve and to Abram who would come, who would be the Savior, the one who would make provision and overcome the evil one on behalf of men and women. And we find it fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And we find that the Scriptures record for us the ministry of the Lord Jesus, how he continues to serve as the high priest in heaven with the most high God on behalf of sinners, applying his sacrifice on the cross where he became the sacrifice that he as high priest offered unto God on behalf of sinners like you and me. And it will culminate on day in that king returning to earth, establishing his kingdom on earth. The Scriptures say a new heaven and a new earth. This earth will be dissolved. It is tainted. It is tainted with sin. Oh, it looks good to us, doesn't it? And we enjoy many things of it and it certainly has great beauty that we enjoy, but imagine it is tainted. It is not the perfect heaven and earth. That is yet to come and it will surpass and replace this earth. And he, the King, Jesus, will rule over that kingdom, that new heaven and new earth. And there will be those there as part of his kingdom who will reign with him.

And we read here the description of those who will join him there.

So how does all of this correlate to us in our day? Well, it helps us see God's progressive revelation that he promised and how he made provision for people along the way and he made provision of Melchizedek for Abraham and the provision of Abraham and his family, his offspring that ultimately would lead to Christ who came like Melchizedek, king and high priest of the most high God, who made sacrifices to the most high God on behalf of those who needed a sacrifice. And his sacrifice was himself, not an animal, himself that he offered as a sacrifice to most high God on behalf of people like you and me.

And this passage in Hebrews describes for us that a day will come when that king will come and that sacrifice that Christ made on behalf of people obtained eternal salvation for everybody? Oh, no. That is the danger, you see. Because it doesn't say that here. It doesn't say he obtained eternal salvation for everybody. It says he obtained eternal salvation for all who obey him. God hasn't changed from the beginning of creation. He still demands obedience merged with faith.

A well known martyr of a few years ago by the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer who became a martyr on the evil regime of Adolf Hitler in Germany he made a statement that fits here perfectly.

“He who believes obeys. He who obeys believes.”

You can't separate faith and obedience. You can't fully obey God unless you believe him. You can't fully believe God unless you obey him. And so who will obtain the eternal salvation and reign with the king eternal on the new heaven and new earth? Those who believe and obey.

This picture that we see described for us of Melchizedek in the Old Testament brings these truths into reality and to correlation to us, because we live in the era of the reign of the one who will be the priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, Jesus. He reigns in heaven presently, but he has his kingdom here on earth. And those who believe and obey have become part of that kingdom. It may not look like it right now, but a day will come when we will see that kingdom and we will join and become part of that kingdom.

All who believe and obey.

And so we live in that era of on the one hand finished, but not yet. Christ fulfilled it all, but it hasn't all yet come to culmination. One day it will all culminate together. And the Scriptures describe for us how that all transpire.

It correlates to us because of what we see pictured for us here in Melchizedek and fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. Therefore, we must trust God's provision that he has made for us, his Son Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, the one who now sits at the right hand of the Father as David prophesied he would, a priest after the order of Melchizedek, the Lord who was above him yet sitting at the right hand of God the Father, God most high. And we must yield to him. We must believe him, trust him, cast our eternal salvation upon him, because he obtained it on behalf of all of those who believe and obey.

So the logical question has to come then: Have you believed and obeyed? Do you believe and obey what the Scriptures describe for us about this king, priest, the fulfillment of Melchizedek, Jesus the Son of God, the Savior, the high priest who made sacrifice to the Father of himself in payment and on behalf of people like you and like me?

If you have and do trust and obey him, you found these truths encouraging, comforting, a reminder of the greatness of God and how he has made provision for you. If you have not yet fully trusted in Christ and obeyed him, the author of eternal salvation, I plead with you today to follow the urging and prompting of the Scriptures that say he obtained eternal salvation on behalf of all who obey him. And I pray that the Spirit of God will come to you today and open your eyes to see your need of Jesus, God's provision of Jesus on behalf of people just like you and that he will bring forth from you and in you faith to believe and trust Jesus, the Savior of sinners.

I pray that that will come to fruition in you lives today.

Let's close with prayer.