

***HEBREWS 7 – “A Better Covenant”***

**Hebrews 6:19-20 “***We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”*

This **Hope** is the *"confident expectation”* that can only be found in Jesus, (our High Priest forever.) It holds us firm and secure regardless of the wind, waves, storms, and adversity we face in this world. Jesus does not only give us Hope, He **is** our hope. He is Christ in us the Hope of Glory!

In **Hebrews 7** we meet one of the most mysterious figures in the entire Bible. It’s the High Priest Melchizedek that the Author of Hebrews has been writing about in these past three chapters. He lived during the time of Abraham, and had a very interesting encounter with him after Abraham had just rescued his nephew Lot from an attack by four enemy kings.

**Hebrews 7:1-3 “**This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, **2**and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” **3**Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.”

Then author of Hebrews describes him in these very unusual terms. Let’s look at what the scripture says about his encounter with Abraham in Genesis 14.

**Genesis 14:11-20** “The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. **12**They also carried off Abram’s nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.

**13**A man who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshkol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram. **14**When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. **15**During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. **16**He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

**17**After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley).

***18****Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High,****19****and he blessed Abram, saying,*

*“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
    Creator of heaven and earth.****20****And praise be to God Most High,
    who delivered your enemies into your hand.”*

*Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”*

Abraham Lived around 2000 BC. He had come to live in the land of Canaan, that God had promised him and his descendants. He was called “Blessed by God Most High”.

Melchizedek was a Priest of “God Most High”, but not a Levitical Priest. Levi, Abraham’s Great grandson was born over 200 years after this encounter, and he himself was not a priest. His descendants who traveled from Egypt with Moses about 1500BC would become priests, and every priest thereafter would come from his tribe.

Abraham, who was still called “Abram” had come up from Egypt and was living in Mamre at that time, which is near Hebron, just south of Bethlehem, and south of what would *become* Jerusalem. At that time Jerusalem was just called ‘Salem’, and the Kidron Valley next to it was called the ‘Valley of Shaveh’ (or the King’s Valley). There was not a united Kingdom in Israel in those days, there were Kings of villages and of regions who would often align with one another and fight against their common enemies.

After Abraham had rescued Lot and all his people with only 318 trained soldiers from his own household, he received the famous visit from Melchizedek.

Melchizedek who was identified as a *priest of God Most High*, presented Abraham with bread and wine, and blessed him. Abraham responded by giving Melchizedek a tithe (tenth) of all the plunder they had taken in their victory.

There was no mention of any conversation between the two, or any prior history or later encounters in the Bible. This leaves us with a lot of questions about who Melchizedek was and is, and why the Author of Hebrews speaks about him so highly and so frequently.

Rather than try to go through the texts bit by bit and look for clues, why don’t we just interview Melchizedek himself and ask him our questions!

**INTERVIEW WITH MELCHIZEDEK**

Me: Welcome to our church, how are you doing today?

**Melchizedek: Thank you, I am doing well, It’s great to be here.**

Me: I have to ask you, do people call you Mel?, Chizzy?, or Melky (like Melky Cabrera from the Yankees, remember him? *: )*

**Melchizedek: No I don’t remember him, but people call me either; Melchizedek, king of righteousness”; OR “king of Salem” which means “king of peace”.**

Me: How did you get all those names and titles?

**Melchizedek: My name is made up of the Hebrew words “Melech” which means King, and “Zedek” with means** **"justice" or "righteousness". And since I come from Salem where I live as King and Priest, and Salem means “Shalom” (peace), they call me King of Peace as well.**

Me: That’s very impressive. I have to ask you, “Is there a MRS. CHIZEDEK”? *: )*

**Melchizedek: No, It’s just me.**

Me: If you are a King, how could you also be a Priest? And how could you be a priest if you have no temple to work from, and you are not even from the tribe of Levi?

**Melchizedek: I am not a Levitical priest like all the priests in the Bible and the Hebrew faith, I am a Priest of the most High God, I represent Him and intercede for His people.**

Me: Is this why Abraham presented his tithe unto you?

**Melchizedek: He presented it unto God, and I represented God at that moment as a Priest of the Most High God.**

Me: Did you know Abraham before this encounter?

**Melchizedek: Everyone knew him as Abram back then, which means “Exalted Father”, The Lord changed his name to Abraham in later years, which means “Father of Multitudes” because from his descendants came a great nation of people, “Israel”.**

Me: Why did you bring him Bread and Wine, was if communion Sunday?

**Melchizedek: No, communion wasn’t a thing yet. This was the common “food and & drink” of the day that you brought to someone whom you wanted to “break bread” with.**

**However, many years later Moses was given instruction to use these for Passover, and this is what Jesus used when he celebrated Passover at the Last Supper, which is where communion came from.**

Me: Why do you suppose he tithed to you? Abraham was very wealthy; It must have been “a LOT”.

**Melchizedek: Well his nephew Lot was not part of the tithe, But Abram tithed as unto the Lord, not unto me.**

Me: Here’s a tougher question; what does it mean when the Author of Hebrews says that you are*“Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever”?*

**Melchizedek: Unlike other kings and priests, my position(s) did not come from lineage or family-line. I am a Priest of the most High God and I suppose will remain that forever.**

Me: One last question. “Are you a Christophany”?

**Melchizedek: You mean, am I related to Kris Kristophany the actor? : )**

Me: No, a Christophany is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus. Is that you???

**Melchizedek: Some scholars say I am, others say I am not. That’s part of my mystery. All I can reveal to you is what is written;**

***“I am Melchizedek meaning “king of righteousness”; tand also, “king of Salem” meaning “king of peace.” 3Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, I remain a priest forever.”***

Me: That’s it? That’s all you can tell us? We’ve been waiting all this time to find out the real answer from you yourself.

**Melchizedek: That is all. I must go now. I still have time to get in on the Senior Citizen’s breakfast special at Perkins. : )**

< END OF INTERVIEW>

The author of Hebrews was very impressed with Melchizedek and wrote about him more than any other Bible writer. In fact he is the only one to ever mention Melchizedek after Genesis 14, besides David who mentions him briefly in Psalms and coins the phrase *“priest forever in the order of Melchizedek*.”

**Psalm 110:4** “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

The Author of Hebrews explains the greatness of Melchizedek’s priesthood as compared to the Levites.

**Hebrews 7:4“**Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! **5**Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, from their fellow Israelites—even though they also are descended from Abraham. **6**This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. **7**And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater. **8**In the one case, the tenth is collected by people who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. **9**One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, **10**because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.”

“The lesser is blessed by the greater”. Melchizedek “blessed” Abraham, showing that he was greater than Abraham. Since the entire line of the priesthood came through Abraham’s lineage, including Levi, Aaron and all their descendants, Melchizedek’s order of Priesthood is greater than the entire Levitical priesthood that was to come.

**Hebrews 7:11-14 “**If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? **12**For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. **13**He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. **14**For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.”

This is all to say that perfection was not able to be attained by the Levitical priesthood of Aaron. Only those who come from the tribe of Levi could be priests, Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, the tribe that the Messiah would come from.

**Hebrews 7:15-25“**And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, **16**one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. **17**For it is declared:

 “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”[Ps. 110:4]

**18**The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless **19**(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

**20**And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, **21**but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him:

“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind:

‘You are a priest forever.’”[Ps. 110:4]

**22**Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.

**23**Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; **24**but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. **25**Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

He makes the point that the law, as it was, complete with the sacrifices of the Levitical priests, was “*weak and useless”,* and ineffective, (making nothing perfect) in drawing us near to God.

This is why Jesus came, to fulfill the law (not abolish it), as a ‘perfect priest’ who lives forever. He not only offered the perfect and complete sacrifice for us on the cross, but He also continues to live and intercede for us.

**Hebrews 7:26-28“**Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. **27**Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. *He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.* **28**For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.” <>

Jesus blood on the cross, was the perfect atonement (Kippur), which paid the cost and fulfilled the “righteous requirement of the law” for the sins of mankind. Up until that time the priests would serve, offering sacrifices for the sins of the people, but this service was insufficient in reconciling people to God. In fact even the insufficient sacrifices at the temple stopped not long after Jesus died, because the temple was destroyed by the Romans and never rebuilt again. This is why he offers us a New Covenant, which is describes as a “better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.” In verse 18, and a “better covenant” in verse 22.

Jesus’ death on the cross was the once and for all atonement for all sins so that we can be forgiven of our sins, and God can dwell freely with us not in a temple, or in a tabernacle, but in our hearts.

**Hebrews 9:12** “He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place *once for all* by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.”

This is why Jesus’, during his last supper on his final Passover spoke these words;

**Matthew 26:26-28“**While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

**27**Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. **28**This is my blood of the *new covenant*, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

When we take the bread and cup of communion, we do not do it simply as a *solemn ritual*, we do it in honor and remembrance of the *blood of the new covenant* which fulfills the former covenant, and offers forgiveness of sins, and salvation for all those who fully believe in Jesus as their Lord, Savior, King, and Priest forever.

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