

Who Is Melchizedek?

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There are a number of different teachings about Melchizedek. One teaching postulates that Melchizedek could have been Shem who lived after the Flood. If the Bible chronology is taken literally, Abraham would have been about three years old when Shem died. Therefore, Abraham could not have offered a tithe of the spoils of war to Shem (Gen. 14:19-20).

Some Bible commentaries show Noah's Flood having taken place around 5000 B.C., and the birth of Abraham about 2161 B.C. If this were correct, Shem would have been over 2,839 years old when Abraham brought a tithe; which is highly unlikely given the fact that life spans prior to the Flood did not exceed 1,000 years and after the Flood they were shortened considerably.

So who is Melchizedek? The following study, although it is very brief, offers a different perspective to the Shem theory.

"Melchizedek" means "King of Righteousness" and he had authority over "Salem" which means "peace" or "peaceful." This location, called Salem in Genesis 14:18, later became known as **Jerusalem**, which means "city of peace." It is interesting to note that one of Christ's titles is Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

Prophecy shows that Christ will rule from Zion (Ps. 110:2), which is sometimes used in the Bible to describe Jerusalem.

In Psalms 110:4, Christ is shown to be more than just a "king." Here he is mentioned as a "priest." Therefore, Christ is both a king and a priest (cf. Zech. 6:13) and Genesis 14:18 can be viewed as prophetic, showing that Christ will be both King and High Priest.

The book of Hebrews speaks at length about Melchizedek.

In Hebrews 5:4 we see that, "no man takes this honor (of being High Priest, comments in parenthesis added) to himself", but it is from God (the Father). In Hebrews 5:5, "so also Christ did not exalt himself to be made High Priest." Therefore, God the Father exalted the one who became Jesus Christ to the order of Melchizedek which is stated in Hebrews 5:6, just as He says also in another *passage*, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK."

In Hebrews 5:7, "who in the days of his flesh (in contrast to the body he had prior to becoming flesh and blood) offered up prayers to Him (God the Father) who was able to save him (Christ) from death." With this interpretation, the Melchizedek of Genesis 14:18 was a being not of a flesh and blood composition.

When he later became flesh and blood, he was “perfected” as it says in Hebrews 5:9 and “became the author of eternal salvation.”

It is important in this context to recall that Christ appeared as a man to Abraham along with two other angels. These three beings ate a meal that Sarah prepared for them (Gen. 18). Had these three beings actually been composed of flesh and blood, they would all have died at some point (Heb. 9:27; 1Cor. 15:50).

Paul infers that the correct understanding of Melchizedek can be regarded as “solid food” in Hebrews 5:12, and is included as being one of the “elementary principles” of Christ in Hebrews 6:1. Christ gave up his position as a priest and king in the heavenly realm to become a man and die. Having accomplished what he was sent to do, he was appointed by God the Father as High Priest forever (Heb. 6:20).

In Hebrews 7:3 it states, “Without father, without mother, without genealogy...” Therefore, if Shem was in fact Melchizedek he would have known that his father was Noah and there would have been no doubt about his genealogy.

Hebrews 7:8, “here (in this human realm) mortal men receive tithes, but there (in the spirit realm) he (Melchizedek/Christ) receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he (Christ who was sacrificed) lives (because he was resurrected)”.

Christ/Melchizedek was made a priest “by an oath” from God the Father (Heb. 7:20-21). This oath was an assurance of Christ’s resurrection because God the Father gave His promise that the priesthood of Melchizedek would continue forever.

Now that Christ has been resurrected he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever (Heb. 7:24).

Consequently, the priesthood of Melchizedek was only temporarily interrupted for 3 days and 3 nights while Christ was in the grave. Also, this confirms that Christ did not receive the promise of everlasting life until after his death and resurrection (Heb. 4:15; 5:7-9).

It is no coincidence that Melchizedek brought “bread and wine” to Abraham following Abraham’s victory against the confederation of kings who attacked Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 14:18). This action was both prophetic and symbolic as it pictured the future victory of God’s people over the Adversary that could only happen as a result of Christ’s future sacrifice. It is important to note that Christ blessed the bread and wine given to his disciples during his ministry in the flesh (Mt. 26:26; Lk. 22:19-20; 1Cor. 11:23-25). We see no other example of a representative of the only true God performing such an act in the Old Testament until Christ did it again during his physical ministry (Mt. 26:26-28; Mk. 14:22-25).

This bread and wine pictured the body and blood of Christ being shed for the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29).

Melchizedek represents an everlasting priesthood, while the Levitical line represents a temporary priesthood (Heb. 7:11-16). As a result of Christ's work, there could be no individual taking the position of Melchizedek other than Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). Therefore, he always was Melchizedek and always will be. It is important to note that Christ is known by many names and titles (Ex. 23:21 cf. Isa. 9:6; Jn. 5:43). Thus, Melchizedek is another name applied to Jesus Christ and as we saw earlier it is a descriptive title that depicts the result of his sacrifice; a sacrifice which provides the means of peace and reconciliation between the only true God and His created family,

Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ He made him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2Cor. 5:18-21).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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