

Part II, Week Four: Mysterious Melchizedek

Digging Deeper

Read Hebrews 7:1-10

What kind of priest is Jesus? The Jews knew about their Levitical priests, who performed all the functions of the temple service. They knew of the high priest, who alone could enter into the Most Holy place and make atonement for God's people.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is a different kind of priest. Jesus is like Melchizedek. First, the name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness" and his title, "king of Salem," means "king of peace." Surely these two descriptions fit our Lord.

Second, Melchizedek has no genealogy and no birth or death, "like the Son of God." The writer did not say "like the son of David" or "like the son of Mary." Jesus had a genealogy that traced back to David, Abraham, and even Adam. That, however, was his human genealogy as the son of David. Jesus also had a divine genealogy that traced directly to God. He was the Son of God. Christ's divinity is seen in the comparison with Melchizedek, not in the sense that Melchizedek was divine, but that Melchizedek was different than other biblical figures in that he had no record of his birth or death and no genealogy.

Finally, Jesus is like Melchizedek in that Jesus stands outside of the people of God. Jesus as the son of David stood squarely within the people of God, but Jesus as the son of God was entering from outside. He is not one of us. So Jesus differs from the Levitical priests since they were all members of Abraham's children. The service they rendered was in part for their own benefit. Jesus comes to us from outside, however, and the service he renders is solely for our aid. He is not the beneficiary of his own sacrifice the way the Levites were.

We need such a priest as that—like Melchizedek and like Jesus—who stands apart from us and who stands above us to act as our true intercessor and who can make us right with God.

Bible Study Questions

Read Genesis 14:17-20, Read Hebrews 7:1-10. The author explains Melchizedek in five ways:

- 1. Melchizedek was a priest and so is Jesus.** Read Romans 8:34 and 1 John 2:1-2. How is Jesus our priest?
- 2. Melchizedek was a king and so is Jesus.** Read John 18:37 and Revelation 19:16
- 3. Melchizedek's name.** Read 1 Corinthians 1:30 and Ephesians 2:14. Melchizedek means king of righteousness and where he ruled Salem (Jerusalem) means peace therefore he is king of peace as well.
- 4. Melchizedek was unique.** We are given no priestly ancestral details in Genesis regarding Melchizedek. In other words, he does not, and cannot (since they had not yet been born) trace his genealogy through Levi or Aaron. In this way, he differs from the O.T. priesthood.
- 5. Melchizedek is superior to the Levitical priesthood.** Why did Abraham pay a tithe to this man? Was it not because he recognized him as being superior? But did not the Levites also collect tithes? Yes, but that was brought about by a provision of the Law and not a recognition of superiority! Also, the Jews believed an ancestor contained all his descendants within himself. Therefore, the writer of Hebrews argues that the Levitical priesthood paid tithes to Melchizedek in advance. Verse 7 states that the lesser (Abraham!) was blessed by the greater (Melchizedek!). The author is now going to show that Jesus is in the order of the superior ministry of Melchizedek and therefore superior to the Levitical order.

Group Application Questions

1. How do the titles “king of righteousness” and “king of peace” help you to understand the character of Jesus?
2. Why is it important for Jesus, our high priest, to be the son of God and not just the son of David?
3. Since we are being formed each day into the likeness of Jesus, what do you see in Jesus' character from the passage that you need to emulate?

Prayer

Ps. 143:1 “Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.”

Take time to share prayer requests and pray for one another.

*Overview was adapted from Richland Hills Community Church

*Questions were adapted from “Hebrews, An Anchor for the Soul” by Kent Hughes and “The NIV Application Commentary” by George H Guthrie.