

## Hebrews 7:1-10

“The Ministry Of Melchizedek”

If we were to take a poll of the congregation and I were to ask each of you to write down a small handful of men whom you considered to be the greatest men in all of the OT we could probably expect to find *some* men commonly placed on everybody’s list. Perhaps Moses would be on everyone’s list, maybe Abraham, or David, we’d probably get a few Elijah’s and/or various prophets, maybe Samuel or even Joseph who was instrumental in saving Israel alive during the days of famine when God used him so powerfully in Egypt.

But I would venture to say that one who probably wouldn’t make it on the list, that we might be shocked or surprised to find out he *should* be on our list above all those previously mentioned. That prior to one’s study of the book of Hebrews they may not even be too familiar with and that’s this mystery man by the name of Melchizedek that flashes onto the pages of scripture back in Gen 14 and just as quickly seems to disappear into oblivion to mentioned only 1 other time in OT history 1,000 yrs later when out of the blue David (inspired by the Holy Spirit) writing what would become the 110<sup>th</sup> Ps proclaims, “*The Lord has sworn And will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.’*” Ps 110:4 and Once again this Melchizedek character slips into the proverbial shadows never to be mentioned again until 1,000 yrs later when he’s brought up here in the book of Heb. He’s a man who seems to be so allusive, so mysterious, such a small snippet in the pages of history, that is in his appearance on the pages of scripture specifically. Yet the Holy Spirit lifts him up out of the pages of scripture to reveal to us the fact that the role that he plays and the picture that he portrays is one that is absolutely critical to you and me.

Ch 7 of the book of Hebrews now brings us face to face with this mysterious man by the name of Melchizedek whom we’ve been being peppered with and given the teaser trailers about for quite some time now, the premiere is finally here. and It’s not that the writer has been seeking to hold out on us, he’s wanted to share with us the reality of the High Priesthood of Christ according to the order of Melchizedek for quite sometime now. But the readers weren’t ready for it, they wouldn’t be able to receive it, understand it or grow by it. and So he took the time to re-establish a few things for these folks 1<sup>st</sup>. These discouraged, in danger of drifting or worse still yet *departing* believers. He challenged them to get out of the grey areas that were common to any “religious” person and stand firm in those areas that committed them distinctly to Christ. “Let’s keep going, let’s keep growing *in Christ*, don’t be discouraged God hasn’t forgotten about you, He sees the work you do and your reward is sure. Don’t be discouraged God’s Word is true, and to underscore His already unbreakable word to you He backs it by an oath. So that by 2 immutable things (His word and His oath) you and I, we might have strong consolation who’ve fled *to Christ* in order to lay hold of the hope we have *in Christ*.”

So, “God hasn’t forgotten you He sees the work that you do, His word to you is true, and (3<sup>rdly</sup>) Jesus has gone before you as a forerunner and He’s going to lead you to glory. He serves as a sure and steadfast, safe and secure anchor to your soul; you are anchored to heaven in Christ. It’s not the Levitical system that will get you there, it’s not through rituals and legal rites, it’s not by Judaism or any other religious system, we’re accepted *in* the Beloved, that is in Christ (the Beloved of God) who’s become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Now, if Christ has become High Priest forever according to the *order of Melchizedek*, don’t you think we’d do well to find out about this Melchizedek fella?

I mean, if the ministry of Christ is intimately connected to, exemplified and personified in the ministry of Melchizedek, we do well to find out as much about this Melchizedek guy as we can. Because as we’ve mentioned before as the reader of the book of Hebrews is following along hearing all about the High *Priesthood* of Christ there would be one major objection, one major glitch, one major problem with the writers point. You see God had appointed that the priesthood was to be maintained by the tribe of *Levi*, and that more specifically the High Priest was to be of the lineage and offspring of *Aaron*. Well, we have a problem then, because not only is Jesus not of the lineage and offspring of Aaron, He’s not even a Levite. Remember He’s of the tribe of Judah (from which the kings were to come) of the lineage and offspring of... David. So we seem to have a problem here, because if Jesus is to serve as the High Priest and Overseer of our soul, He’s going to need some biblical backing for that, He *can’t* serve as our High Priest according to the order of Aaron, so then how does He qualify? Listen, according to the *order not* of Aaron who served as high priest in a “weak and unprofitable” system (according to the author here), but rather according to *the order* of Melchizedek. What? Who was that? Let’s begin.

### Vs1-3

Now I would venture to say that the average Christian upon reading those 1<sup>st</sup> 3 Vs would initially respond in a manner not too unlike this, “What in the *world* is he talking about?” But there are a few things that the writer is taking for granted that the reader is already aware of as he’s writing this, not the least of which is who exactly Abraham was. You remember Abraham; he’s the one that God called out of Ur of the Chaldeans. We read in Gen Ch 12, “*Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’*” Gen 12:1-3

There’s a little sub point I’d like to make regarding Ab’s calling. You have to realize that prior to this point Ab didn’t *know* the Lord, he wasn’t in anyway *serving* the Lord, he was a pagan in a pagan culture like the rest of the Chaldeans. Why then did God call him, was there something special about him? No, there’s something special about the Lord, the reasons He calls us aren’t based in us; they’re based in Him.

God just out of His grace and mercy called out to Him, made Himself real to him and blessed him beyond measure. How is it that you stepped out of darkness and into the light of Christ? Believe me when I tell you that it wasn't for any reason in you, you and I were *dead* in sin and in trespasses, but God who is rich in mercy simply out of His *grace* and mercy called out to you, called out to me, made Himself real to us and blessed us in Christ beyond measure.

But we talked about this last week, remember? God made a promise to Ab, that in Him all the families of the earth would be blessed (referencing the fact that through him the Messiah would ultimately come). But at the time Ab didn't have any children, and it would be 25 yrs of patiently enduring (Ab being 100 yrs old) before his son Isaac (through whom the promise would come) would be born. Now Isaac had Esau and Jacob, and Jacob would have a radical encounter with God whereby God would change his name to what? To "Israel" and Jacob would have 12 sons who would be recognized in the scripture as the 12 tribes of Israel; Rueben, Simeon, *Levi*, *Judah*, Dan, Naphtali, Asher, so and so forth. The writer here is assuming we're already familiar with all of this stuff because it's all paramount to his point; the entire nation of Israel (including Levi through whom the priesthood would come) was the offspring of Ab.

Now, Ab had a nephew by the name of Lot. and Perhaps you recall that at one time they were living together but Ab had so much and Lot had so much and together it was too much to try and handle so Ab said, "Listen, we need to part ways. Pick whatever direction you'd like to go, if you go left I'll go right, if you go right I'll go left." and We read, "*And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.*" Gen 13:10-11 Or to understand that another way he was lured by the lust of his eyes, and drawn toward the direction that would feed his flesh. He pitched his tent toward Sodom, and as you know the next time we find Lot he's literally living *in* Sodom, and he knows he shouldn't be there but he just can't seem to find the strength to get out because deep down there's something in him that likes it there (and of course that's the nature of the flesh).

But while he was there a war broke out and a confederation of 5 kings was warring against a confederation of 4 kings. (2 of the 5 kings were the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah). Long story short the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah fled, their cities were taken and with that Lot, his family and all that they owned were taken captive. Well, one of the men escaped and fled to Ab to tell him what had happened and the bible tells us that Ab took 318 of his servants who'd been born to him in his house who were trained for war (which tells us that Ab more than likely had well over 1,000 servants in his house to give you an indication of the wealth that God had blessed him with) and he divided his forces against these kings by night and attacked them and defeated them and gained back all of the spoil, and everything that had been lost as well as the women and the people.

Now with all of *that* as the back story to *this* lets turn to **Genesis 14** Vs 16-23 and see what happened, what was the fall out of that event.

## Vs16-20

Now I hope you paid attention to those last 3 Vs because as far as scripture is concerned that's all you're ever going to get regarding Melchizedek. He flashes upon the pages of scripture like a falling star across the midnight sky who's there but for a moment and then gone forever never to be seen or heard from again.

## Vs21-23

Interesting isn't it? Here Ab's returning with all this bounty, the spoils of war and just as the king of Sodom is about to reach him, this mysterious man by the name of Melchizedek flashes on to the scene and intercepts him. and He strengthens him, and refreshes with bread and wine, blesses him, Ab tithes to him and then he's gone. But now Ab (as the result of having spent time with Melchizedek being refreshed and strengthened by him) is ready to resist and refuse the temptation that is offered to him by the king of Sodom. Melchizedek came in at just the right time, gave him the physical and spiritual resources he needed that he might not be lured in by the things of this world, and unlike his nephew Lot not only did he resist he utterly refused that his flesh be catered to by the king of Sodom.

It's like, "Who was that masked man?" Well, the author of Heb is seeking to explain all that to us, the role that he played, the picture that he portrayed and how critical it is to you and me. and By the way, did you note the elements he shared with Ab? "Bread, and wine." Bread and wine...where else have I seen that? What do those things point *to* and speak *of* in scripture? The Lord's supper, they speak of *His* broken body, *His* shed blood, these are the things through which Ab was strengthened, somehow, and in some way (don't ask me to explain it) but Melchizedek and Ab shared together in the Lord's supper 2,000 yrs prior to the actual event.

We partake looking back 2,000 yrs, they were partaking looking *forward* 2,000 yrs. It baffles my mind yet it's beautiful to see how the Lord was giving mankind a picture of His plan even then. So that's the story, now let's consider who he was exactly, look back at Heb Ch 7 Vs 1 (read).

So right here in Vs 1 we learn 3 things about this Melchizedek guy, we learn that he was the king of Salem. and 90+% of commentators and bible scholars believe that Salem is the ancient name for Jeru-salem (which is interesting considering the fact that when Christ returns He'll rule and reign on the earth from what city? Jerusalem). and We also learn that he was the priest of the Most High God, which is a way of saying the true and living God, he wasn't a pagan priest. So already we know that his priesthood was of a different order than that which would be established in the law because the law was very clear God did not want the nation of Israel having men that officiated in the office of both a king and a priest. You could be a prophet and a priest, or a prophet and a king, but you could not be a king and a priest, God didn't want preaching and politics to be mingled together.

It's like you could be a preacher, or you could be a politician but you couldn't be both. and We've pointed out in the past that of the few times scripture records men trying to mingle

the 2, the results were always disastrous. and God further divided it by calling kings from the tribe of Judah and the priesthood from the tribe of Levi. But here Melchizedek was a rare exception in that the order in which he served, he served as both a king *and* a priest. The 3<sup>rd</sup> thing the writer points out to us here in Vs 1 is that Melchizedek *blessed* Ab.

Now there is a sense in which anyone can bless another person isn't there? I mean we often say, "God bless you," "Hey, may the Lord bless you today," or whatever. and It's a simple wish of good fortune upon others. But then there is another sense in which not just anyone can bless another person, there is a sense in which a blessing carries with it a Divine authority and weight whereby the touch of God visits a persons life in a unique and special, personal and profound way. and *That's* the type of blessing that *this* is speaking of here. That Melchizedek *blessed* Ab in a way that carried Divine authority, Melchizedek blessed him in the context of he was qualified or authorized by God to declare God's intent to bestow good things upon him. Now that's important, and we'll see very clearly why that is when we get to Vs 7. But look at Vs 2

Vs2

Here we learn 3 more things about Melchizedek and this whole encounter. #1 We learn that Melchizedek received a tithe from Ab, that Ab gave a tenth of all to Melchizedek. Now some versions say, "A tenth of the spoils" and that may be but I'm not convinced the context doesn't support the fact that Ab gave a 10<sup>th</sup> of *all* of his assets to Melchizedek. and I don't want to spend a lot of time on the subject of the tithe (you can all breathe easy) but suffice it to say that those who have a hang up on tithing because it's apart of the law and we're not under the law really don't have an accurate picture of the word of God. Oh, it's true if you can't give from the heart don't give at all, but don't be deceived with holding God's portion is just that, it's robbing from God, that's what the bible teaches. and Ab preceded the law by over 400 yrs and yet he recognized the tithe as a valid aspect of his worship of God, one way in which he gave of himself to God. That this was one way in which he demonstrated that his life *belonged* to God. Jesus commended the tithe in Luke Ch 11, oh He condemned the self righteous legalism of the Pharisees and the scribes but said that the tithe was right nonetheless. So pre-law, in the law, post law, it's there, it's not a law thing, it's just a God thing. and The person who has a hang up because they say, "It's a law thing." Doesn't really have a hang up with the law, there's a hang up in their heart but that's where deflect the attention to. So Ab recognized that the tithe was right and gave it to Melchizedek.

2 More things here in Vs 2. We learn his name means, "King of Righteousness" and being the king of Salem (Salem meaning peace) making him the "King of peace." and You don't have to be a bible scholar to see how clearly these things point *to* and speak *of* Jesus

Christ The righteous One, the Prince of peace. and It's important that these things be found in this order, righteousness and peace are found together in the bible in multiple places and in that order because we can't have true peace apart from righteousness. Peace isn't made upon the premise of compromise or sinful situations, peace comes through righteousness. Isa 32:17 *"The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."* Ps 85:10 *"Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed."* Of course we have James 3:17-18 *"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure (or righteous), then peaceable.... Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."* Heb 12:11 speaks of the peaceable fruit righteousness that yields from the life that's been trained through God's discipline upon their lives. It's only through righteousness that we can have peace with God. Rom 5:1 *"Therefore, having been justified (or declared righteous) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* It's only through the work of the cross of Jesus Christ that righteousness and peace could have "kissed each other." We have peace with God through the righteousness of Christ being accredited to us by faith.

Vs3

3 more things in Vs 3, it's amazing how much the author here was able to deduct from 3 Vs isn't it? and This is where he really starts hitting the nail on the head regarding how it is that Christ falls into this order. He begins to speak of the eternal nature of the order of the Melchizedekian ministry. He says, "with out father or mother, with out genealogy." The Levitical priesthood was based heavily upon genealogy. You had to be able to prove you were of the tribe of Levi and of the house of Aaron regarding the High Priest. The order of Melchizedek isn't one based upon genealogy, so Christ doesn't have to qualify under that premise.

But this is where the debate begins to rage, "Was Melchizedek actually an OT appearance of Christ?" Because we well know that Jesus didn't begin His days in a small town called Bethlehem 2,000 yrs ago. That may be when He stepped on to the scene with regard to His incarnation, but Christ is the eternal 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Godhead having always existed, with out human mother or father, with out genealogy, He's simply always been. and Of course one day when Jesus was confronted by the scribes and Pharisees they were boasting of Ab being their father and Jesus told them that if Ab was their father they'd love Him. Because Ab rejoiced to see His day and he saw it. and Of course they got all hostile toward Him and was all, "You're not even 50 yrs old how can you say Ab saw Your day." and Jesus said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."* John 8:58 Well, when did Ab see His day? Some would say right here when He appeared to him as Melchizedek High Priest of the Most High God.

Others say, "No Melchizedek wasn't Christ, he was a man like any other. But because the bible doesn't record his lineage, and doesn't mention anything about how he became who he was, or what happened to him after this event he simply serves as an illustration, a "type" of Christ showing how for all intents and purposes time isn't a factor in his ministry it just goes on

and on according to the record we have. We don't have a record of his birth or death so it makes for an eternal "type." Whichever way you want to see it is fine with me, the bottom line here is that the author is demonstrating how that Christ qualifies to be our eternal high priest according to the Word of God. So, #1 No genealogy (like Jesus in His deity), no beginning or end (like Jesus) and he ministers eternally (be it literally if it's Christ, or in type if it's a man either way the point remains the same). and Notice he was made like the Son of God, Jesus wasn't made like him (in type) but he was made like Christ. God was giving us a preview of the High Priesthood of Jesus in the picture of Melchizedek.

Vs4

He says, "Think about this for a minute. Ab was the be all end all of Israel, yet he consented to the fact that Melchizedek was greater than him by submitting to him a 10<sup>th</sup> of all that he had." Now Ab tithed to Melchizedek, but he was giving of himself to the Lord. When you tithe you may write your check to Calvary Chapel, or some other ministry, but make no mistake in your heart you're giving of yourself *to the Lord*.

Vs5-6.

As we mentioned earlier the tithe was apart of the law, and the children of Israel were commanded to tithe to Levi. The ministry was to be supported through the tithe of the people. But Ab (who is the great Patriarch of Israel) willingly apart from any law tithed to one who wasn't even of the lineage of Israel, and he (that is Melchizedek) took it one step farther by *blessing* (with Divine authority) Ab who had the very promise of God upon his life.

Vs7

Which is to say that by Melchizedek initiating the blessing and Ab *receiving* the blessing their mutual consent going on that said quite clearly (though unspoken) that Melchizedek was greater than Ab. Now think about it, in Ab *all the earth* was to be blessed, yet Melchizedek *blessed him!* Melchizedek was above the one to whom the promise came that the savior of the world would come through him.

Vs8

When Ab tithed to Melchizedek it was going to one who pictured not *mortality* but who for all intents and purposes pictured *eternity*, an everlasting priesthood.

Vs9-10

When Ab tithed to Melchizedek it affirmed the greatness of this "King-Priest" Melchizedek. Now, Levi received tithes as well, but here's the deal Ab was the father of Levi (through Isaac and Jacob), so in a round about way when Ab tithed to Melchizedek, Levi was

paying homage to tithing to him simultaneously because Levi was still in the loins of Ab when he submitted his tithe. and So the author here is making an airtight case of the order of Melchizedek (after whose order the Lord's High Priesthood is taken) over that of the order of Aaron's high priesthood, because Aaron came from Levi, but Levi (and you may as well say Aaron as well) paid his tithe to Melchizedek through Ab.

So we're beginning to see the magnitude of the Melchizedekian High Priesthood and how powerfully it overshadows that of the Aaronic High Priesthood. It's superior in *prominence*, he was both king *and* priest, superior in *permanence* eternal in it's nature (which we'll explore more next time), and it's superior in *preeminence* in that those who were commanded to receive the tithes by the law *paid* tithes to Melchizedek (so to speak) through Ab.

What a powerful picture of the ministry of Christ in our lives. Prominent, permanent, and preeminent. It's no wonder the scriptures continually encourage us to *come* to Christ, to *trust* in Christ, to *abide* in Christ. To trust in His supremacy, and His sufficiency to meet our every need. "*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*" Heb 4:16 Whatever your need may be today, come to Christ, you'll discover His grace is sufficient for you.

Perhaps your need is to simply come to Christ period, you've never given your heart to Christ. His grace is sufficient for you, Jesus bore the penalty of death that you might receive the reward of everlasting life. Forgiveness of sin is waiting for you, call *upon* the Lord, give your heart *to* the Lord and He'll make you brand new. Righteousness and peace are but a prayer away.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for the overwhelming encouragement that You provide us with in Your Word. As we consider the greatness of Melchizedek we can only be all the more confident regarding the greatness of Your Son. His Supremacy, His sufficiency, and we thank You that Your righteousness has been accredited to us, and Your peace is available to us in Christ. May Your peace rest upon us, and Your righteousness flow through us.