

# **BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #132:**

## **THE MYSTERIOUS MELCHIZEDEK**

**By John Temples**

One of the enduring mysteries of the Bible is the identity of a man named Melchizedek. He suddenly appears in the record of Abraham's victory over some pagan kings who had kidnapped his nephew Lot, then disappears. In all the Old Testament, there are only four verses that mention him--three verses in Genesis and one in Psalms. Yet, strangely, the writer of Hebrews, in discussing the priesthood of Christ, puts Melchizedek center stage in Hebrews 6 and 7. This mysterious, obscure figure is mentioned by name nine times in Hebrews--three times as often as he is referred to in the Old Testament.

So who was Melchizedek? And why does he figure so prominently in a discussion of the priesthood of Jesus? For reference, here are the main Scripture passages which mention Melchizedek:

“Now when Abram heard that his brother [Lot, actually his nephew] was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And he [Abraham] gave him [Melchizedek] a tithe of all.” (Genesis 14:14-20)

“The Lord has sworn and will ‘not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” (Psalms 110:4)

“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed

him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated 'king of righteousness,' and then also king of Salem, meaning 'king of peace,' without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" (Hebrews 7:1-18)

Here is what we learn about Melchizedek from Genesis 14:

- He was king of Salem (Jerusalem).
- He was also a priest of God.
- He pronounced a blessing upon Abraham.

Did Abraham know Melchizedek before this meeting? Probably; it was a small world. Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and also blessed God for giving Abraham the victory. Abraham then gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the spoils of battle. The significance of this is that *Abraham acknowledged that Melchizedek was his superior*. Hebrews 7:9 & 10 are very significant: "Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father

when Melchizedek met him.” (Remember, all the Israelite priests were from the tribe of Levi.)

NOW HERE’S WHERE IT GETS REALLY MYSTERIOUS--MELCHIZEDEK IS DESCRIBED AS BEING:

- Without father or mother.
- Without a genealogy (record of ancestry).
- Without beginning of days or end of life.
- Like the Son of God.

So Melchizedek was a priest of God before Aaron was a priest of God. (That’s important.) And the Hebrew writer makes the point that the priesthood of Christ is patterned after that of Melchizedek, not after that of Aaron. So Melchizedek was a type of Christ.

So who was Melchizedek? Here are some of the main guesses of scholars:

- An extraterrestrial.
- An angel.
- Shem, the son of Noah.
- Jesus in a pre-incarnate appearance (a theophany).
- An ordinary human being whom God blessed and used in a special way.

Let’s think about each of these possible identities.

WAS MELCHIZEDEK AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL?

I put this one first because, yes, you can find some fascinating Internet sites that promote this idea. Just for fun, here is what one website said: “The Melchizedeks are the genetic hosting race of the earth’s ascension cycle for the last 35,000 years. They were to help the earth heal and evolve out from the lower dimensions of the Phantom Matrix. Because we are coming to the close of a Root Race end cycle, their tour of duty with earth in this capacity, is also ending or coming to completion. This allows a time of review and pause for genetic rehabilitation and integrative healing for the 12 Tribes. This is the promise that the Melchizedek’s would not be forgotten, even if they were ‘fallen’ and forgot who they really are. This is made possible with the alignment to the Mother’s heart quintessence, to be rebirthed into the Creatrix field. This is the Mother Arc and her rehabilitation of the Blue Ray and the Sophianic Body....” End of discussion on that possibility.

WAS MELCHIZEDEK AN ANGEL?

This is hardly likely. He is specifically called a “man” in the texts we have read. (This is not conclusive, however, because angels were sometimes called “men” due to their appearance--Genesis 18 is an example.) But it would be totally out of character for an angel to receive tithes, take up residence on earth and rule over a city! And remember also that Heb 5:1 says “every high priest is taken from among men.” Priesthood is a human function, not an angelic one.

## WAS MELCHIZEDEK SHEM, THE SON OF NOAH?

Chronologically, this is possible. Shem lived to be 600 years old (Genesis 11:10,11). Shem was still alive when Abraham lived; in fact, their lives probably overlapped by a hundred years or so. However, there is one major problem with identifying Shem as Melchizedek. According to Hebrews 7:3, Melchizedek was “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.” Shem, though, had a genealogy, and we know who his father and mother were--Mr & Mrs Noah!

You might say, well, didn't Jesus have a genealogy also? Yes, His genealogy is very carefully documented in the gospels. The Messiah had to be a descendant of David, and that is the main purpose of the genealogies. *But the human genealogy of Jesus had nothing to do with His priesthood.* In fact, in Hebrews 7:14, the writer states that based on His human ancestry, Jesus could not be a priest. With regard to the Aaronic priesthood, genealogy was everything; with regard to Christ's priesthood (and Melchizedek's), genealogy was irrelevant.

## WAS MELCHIZEDEK JESUS CHRIST IN A PRE-INCARNATE APPEARANCE?

This view has many advocates, and several things are said about Melchizedek that seem to identify him with Christ:

- He is called “king of righteousness” and “king of peace.”
- He is said to be without father or mother.
- He accepted tithes from Abraham.
- He blessed Abraham.
- Hebrews 7:3 says he was “like the Son of God” and that his priesthood was perpetual.

It is true that Jesus did appear on earth on several occasions in the Old Testament. Most notably, He appeared to Abraham along with two angels shortly before the destruction of Sodom. However, the story of Melchizedek in Genesis 14

is very different from other theophanies or pre-incarnate appearances. In virtually all other theophanies, the person who is meeting with God has some awareness that they are in the presence of Deity. But in the story of Melchizedek, there is no indication that Abraham sensed that he was in the presence of God.

Furthermore, we have the same problem here that we had with Melchizedek being an angel: Angels did not come and take up residence on earth; they accomplished their missions and went back to heaven. When Christ appeared on earth in Old Testament times, He did the same--He briefly interacted with specific individuals and went back to heaven. He did not buy a house in Jerusalem and run for public office!

Another thing is that Christ and Melchizedek are always spoken of as two different persons. Hebrews 7:3 does not say he WAS the Son of God, but rather that he was LIKE the Son of God. Melchizedek was a type of Christ, and one of the fundamental rules of Biblical types is that the type and the antitype cannot be the same person. Hebrews 6:20 says Christ is a High Priest forever "according to the order of Melchizedek." "According to the order" means "resembling, corresponding to, like, having the same set of characteristics or qualifications." This is SIMILARITY, not IDENTITY.

WAS MELCHIZEDEK AN ORDINARY HUMAN BEING USED BY GOD IN A UNIQUE WAY?

This is the only logical choice left, and the one I believe to be correct. Melchizedek seems to have been a man raised up by God to typify Christ by virtue of His unique priesthood.

But how can it be said of him that he was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life"? It must mean there was no RECORD of parents or dates of birth and death. It is sometimes said of orphans that they "have no father or mother." This does not mean they literally have no parents; rather, it means we don't know who they were.

Remember, the whole point of this part of Hebrews is the contrast between the priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of Aaron. The Aaronic priesthood was based entirely on ancestry. Every Jewish high priest had to be a descendant of Aaron, and his genealogy was carefully checked to assure that fact. But Melchizedek's priesthood was not based on who his ancestors were; it was a direct appointment of God. It is in this respect that he became a type of Christ. So he had no father or mother *as far as the basis and eligibility for his priesthood were concerned*. Consider also that if the expression "without beginning or end of

life” is literal, then Melchizedek is ETERNAL, and is still alive! Not only that, but he would still be a High Priest! But that would mean that there are two High Priests, and there can be only one, Jesus Christ.

So these statements concerning Melchizedek’s ancestry refer not to his physical lineage, but to the source and nature of his priesthood. Wayne Jackson says, “It was not that Melchizedek was ‘without father or mother’ literally, or that he had no genealogical background. No, the truth being conveyed was this: whereas the Aaronic priesthood resulted from being a part of a family line (the descendants of Aaron, Moses’ brother), the priesthood of Melchizedek was bestowed directly by God. And it was precisely in this manner that the Lord Jesus was appointed as our High Priest; He did not inherit it by means of a physical lineage.... Melchizedek was not without physical parents; [but] he did not owe his position to them. The same was true in reference to Christ. It was not his Hebrew lineage that brought him to the priesthood; it was...a direct appointment of Jehovah.” (Christian Courier website)

## CONCLUSION

Melchizedek, therefore, was a normal, historical human being, a man who lived in an obscure period of history, who served a special function in God’s plan--namely, to foreshadow Christ in regard to his priesthood. He was both a king and a priest, as was Jesus. The book of Hebrews was written to discouraged Jewish Christians who were thinking of abandoning Christianity and going back to the law of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron. The message to the wavering Jewish Christian readers of Hebrews was, “Even your own Scriptures recognize a priesthood that is not only completely different from that of Aaron, but also that existed long before Aaron was even born.” THAT was a powerful argument.

The bottom line: Melchizedek was a human priest who received his priesthood not by *inheritance*, but by *divine appointment*. --John Temples