

Melchizedek: King and Priest of Salem

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Background

1. A mysterious name: Melchizedek, or Malki Tzedeq (Hebrew: מֶלְכִּי-צֶדֶק)
 - a. King of righteousness; king of Salem
 - b. Priest of El Elyon (God Most High)
 - c. Name is two words: malki meaning king, and tzedeq meaning righteousness
 - d. His name is similar to Adoni-tzedeq אֲדֹנִי-צֶדֶק, in Joshua 10:1-3 meaning "Lord of Righteousness"
 - e. Psalm 110:4 refers to Melchizedek as a prototype of the Messiah.
 - f. The Qumran Scrolls use it as a name of the archangel Michael, in contrast with Belial, who is given the name of Melchi-resha "king of wickedness"
2. A mysterious man - Although he is important, powerful, and of great Biblical significance, very little is revealed about him - Gen. 14:18-20; Psalms 110:4; Heb. 5:5-6, 10; 6:20; 7:1-10, 11, 14-17
 - a. And in spite of these texts, we understand so little about him and his role in God's plans

B. Speculations of men

1. An angel (Origen, Didymus)
2. Enoch (Husius, Calmet)
3. Shem (Jerome, Luther)
4. Or a "theophany" - a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ

C. We will be content with what God has revealed about him in His word

I. THE PERSON OF MELCHIZEDEK

- A. His life is revealed in only three verses out of 31,102 verses of the Bible
 1. The battle of the kings - Gen. 14:1-11
 2. Lot is captured and then rescued by Abraham - Gen. 14:12-17
 3. Upon his return, Abraham is met by Melchizedek - Gen. 14:18
 4. Melchizedek blessed Abraham - Gen. 14:19
 5. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek - Gen. 14:20
- B. The Hebrew writer used Melchizedek to illustrate the priesthood of Christ
 1. He explained the meaning of his name and title - Heb. 7:1-2
 2. He made some intriguing statements about his person
 - a. "without father, without mother, without genealogy"
 - b. "having neither beginning of days nor end of life"
 - c. "made like the Son of God"
 - d. "remains a priest continually"

II. THE PLACE OF MELCHIZEDEK

- A. Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham - Heb. 7:4-6
 - 1. Abraham paid a tenth to Melchizedek, just as the nation of Israel would later pay a tenth to the sons of Levi. Thus Abraham, great as he was, showed deference to Melchizedek
- B. Melchizedek blessed Abraham - Heb. 7:6-8
 - 1. Melchizedek blessed him "who had the promises." How great was Melchizedek that Abraham, who received the promise of a descendent who would bless the world, acknowledged him as the greater
 - 2. There is no dispute that the lesser is blessed by the greater, therefore Melchizedek is clearly greater than Abraham
- C. Melchizedek's service was not affected by death - Heb. 7:8
 - 1. In the priesthood under the Jewish system or Aaronic priesthood, tithes were received by mortal men whose service ended at death
 - 2. But it has been witnessed that Melchizedek lives or remains a priest continually - Heb. 7:3.
 - 3. How he lives and remains a priest continually, the Bible does not say. But in this way, Melchizedek is greater than the Levitical priests because there is no record or command regarding the end of his priesthood
- D. Even Levi, representative of the entire priesthood under the Law of Moses, paid tithes to Melchizedek - Heb. 7:9-10
 - 1. Levi was in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met Abraham
 - 2. Thus Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes to another through Abraham
- E. The entire point of the matter is that the priesthood of Jesus Christ is the greatest of all priesthoods in all dispensations - Heb. 7:11, 23-28

Conclusion:

- A. There is a much more we wish we knew about Melchizedek. But, these are principles from which we can profit:
 - 1. First lesson we can take from this is that there were greater men in the early, young days of the Patriarchal world than we will ever see in our own time. Perhaps it is because men like Noah, Enoch, and Melchizedek would be viewed as gods in our world.
 - 2. Second lesson is that these greatest of righteous men were not of the line of Eber, or Abraham, or Jews, or Christians. They did not have the written word, or the fully revealed will of God, or the promise of salvation through the seed of Abraham. And yet they managed to serve the Lord with a standard of righteousness unparalleled in our own time.
 - 3. Third take away is that the dimly revealed, obscure matters in scripture will be revealed in all of the glory and wisdom of God in heaven. This should drive us to even greater diligence to go there.
- B. What can we know for certain is that Jesus' eternal priesthood is illuminated by the priesthood of the great Melchizedek - Psalm 110:4; Zech. 6:12-13