

GENESIS 14:17-24 (MELCHIZEDEK - GREATER THAN LEVI)

Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of every biblical picture and figure which looks forward to the coming Messiah. All the way back to the time of Eusebius who lived during the second and third century, the three-fold office of Christ is noted – that of being the prophet, priest, and king.

And this concept is believed to have been built on even earlier Jewish sources. But in the end, it's the Bible that reveals this for those who study it and peer into the beautiful gemstones which look forward to this coming Messiah.

In Deuteronomy, the great Prophet is predicted who would come in the manner of Moses –

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’” 18:15, 16

In Jeremiah, a great King is anticipated who is God incarnate –

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord,
“That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;
A King shall reign and prosper,
And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.
6 In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell safely;
Now this is His name by which He will be called:
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS Jeremiah 23:5, 6

And also in Jeremiah is the anticipation of a new High Priest –

“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I

took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.
Jeremiah 31:31, 32

A New Covenant implies a change in priesthood. Many other times the uniting of the offices of prophet, priest, and king into one is alluded to in the Old Testament. Isaiah speaks of these three offices belonging to the LORD. Because they are fulfilled in Jesus, Isaiah's words are a veiled reference to the deity of Jesus Christ –

(For the LORD *is* our Judge,
The LORD *is* our Lawgiver,
The LORD *is* our King;
He will save us). Isaiah 33:22

Interestingly, this same concept of a judge, lawgiver, and king was used in the three-fold division of our own government. The king is replaced with a president because the true King of our nation is the Creator to whom our leaders were recognized as subordinate.

In the New Testament, we see the three-fold concept realized in the Person of Jesus. If we were to look for a first picture of this though, we don't need to even leave Genesis. Today we'll see a person show up in only three verses and yet these three verses are so important that the author of Hebrews will spend three entire chapters speaking about them.

Introduction: Our enigmatic figure is Melchizedek and he is mentioned 11 times in the Bible. All but two of these are in the book of Hebrews. The other two are once in Genesis and once by David in the psalms.

If you ever want to enter into the truly goofy, you can read all kinds of crazy stuff about Melchizedek, just like the crazy things people make up about the Nephilim in Genesis chapter 6.

But what we have recorded about Melchizedek is very clear and there's no need to make up a crazy theories when the Bible's purpose in introducing him is to simply prefigure our true Prophet, Priest, and King – Jesus.

Text Verse: “Behold, the Man whose name *is* the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the LORD; Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” Zechariah 6:12, 13

Yes, because of Jesus, there is peace between the offices of the King and the Priest. And also because of Jesus, we have the full revelation of God’s word as is prophetically breathed out by the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus fills these wonderful roles for us... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Introducing and Explaining Melchizedek

¹⁷ 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.

Our last sermon covered the battle which occurred between the four kings from the east and the five kings who lived in the area of Sodom. When the battle was over, Abram’s nephew Lot was captured and taken captive, but Abram marshaled together his troops, went off in pursuit of Lot and safely returned him with all the other captives, and their goods.

Now we see the victorious Abram being met by the king of Sodom in the Valley of Shaveh. This king is named Bera who was introduced in Genesis 14:2 and he’s the same king who fled from the battle in 14:10. But now he comes forward to meet Abram and receive from him what he had lost.

The valley of Shaveh is where they met, which is also called the King’s Valley. Shaveh means “level” and it’s possible that the idiom that we use today “Meet me on the level” comes from this very phrase.

As Abram was returning from the slaughter of Chedolaomer and the other three kings, he may have sent a messenger to Bera with a note, “meet me at Shaveh” or as we would translate “meet me on the level.” Anyway, this

same “King’s Valley is also the valley mentioned in 2 Samuel 18:18 and tells us the story of a sad figure in the Bible, Absalom the son of King David –

“Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which *is* in the King’s Valley. For he said, “I have no son to keep my name in remembrance.” He called the pillar after his own name. And to this day it is called Absalom’s Monument.”

If you go to Israel today, you can see a large monument called “Absalom’s Monument” off to the side of the Temple Mount. It’s definitely not the same monument mentioned in the Bible, but because it was given this name, its face is all marred up from people throwing rocks at it. If you know the story of Absalom, you’d understand why. He was the son who attempted to overthrow Israel’s great king – his own father David.

¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.

¹⁹ And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a tithe of all.

This is all that’s recorded about Melchizedek. So why is it that he is mentioned again by David in the psalms and is referred to for three chapters in Hebrews? There’s obviously a lot more in these three verses than may be apparent at first.

Because the entire point of these three verses is to introduce what is explained in Hebrews, I’m going to read you David’s comment about Melchizedek from the psalms and then read you Hebrews 5-7 and attempt to explain them as we go. This may take a while, but hopefully you’ll see why this account is mentioned.

Before we do though, I’ll tell you that even in antiquity this great priest of God brought out and gave a blessing over bread and wine. This is

something we do to this day and it prefigures the body and blood of the coming Messiah, Jesus.

Here is what David says about Melchizedek in Psalm 110 –

⁴The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
“You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”

This may not seem very instructive, but it’s based on the introduction to the psalm recorded in verse 1 –

¹The LORD said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”
²The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

Jesus used this very verse to explain something about the coming Messiah that the scribes of His day had missed –

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴²saying,
“What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”
They said to Him, “*The Son of David.*”

⁴³He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’
saying:

⁴⁴‘The LORD said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’?

⁴⁵If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” ⁴⁶And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore. Matthew 22:43-45

Well, now let’s read Hebrews 5-7 and discover why Melchizedek is mentioned in these three verses in Genesis, but before I do I’ll tell you that if you want to witness to a Jewish person from the New Testament, the two

best places to do it in my opinion are from the book of Matthew or the book of Hebrews –

(5) ¹ For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. ³ Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. ⁴ And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*.

⁵ So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him:

“You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.”

⁶ As *He* also says in another *place*:

“You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek”;

⁷ who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ¹⁰ called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” ¹¹ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

(6) ¹ Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits.

⁴ For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

⁷ For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; ⁸ but if it bears thorns and briers, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.

⁹ But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. ¹⁰ For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. ¹¹ And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” ¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. ¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.

¹⁹ This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, ²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

(7) ¹ 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, ² 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,” ³ 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.

⁴ Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. ⁵ 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; ⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. ⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. ⁹ Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

¹¹ 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? ¹² For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. ¹³ For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.

¹⁴ For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. ¹⁵ And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest ¹⁶ who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. ¹⁷ For He testifies:

“You *are* a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek.”

¹⁸ For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

²⁰ And inasmuch as *He was* not *made priest* without an oath ²¹ (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him:

“The LORD has sworn

And will not relent,

'You *are* a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek'"),

²² by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

²³ Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. ²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶ For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever.

II. Abram's Wisdom

Although we've covered a lot of ground, but there's a few more verses in Chapter 14 before we're finished. They demonstrate the wisdom displayed by Abram in dealing with the king of Sodom.

²¹ Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself."

The king of Sodom acknowledges Abram's right to all of the booty recovered in the war and only asks for his people back. This is an ancient tradition and is, until recently, the inviolable rule of war. Any land or possessions won in war become the property of the victors.

Occasionally but very infrequently, a nation will give up that right. America, for example has defeated enemies around the globe, but has graciously granted freedom to the vanquished. They have been allowed to retain their own societies, cultures, religions, monetary systems, languages, etc. This is the exception, not the rule.

There is one other exception to this rule which is being forced on the victors by the nations of the world – the Land of Israel. The Jewish people

defeated their enemies in war and gained right to Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, etc. In this case, and only in this case, are the nations of the world up in arms about the results of the battle.

What was rightfully won, is being slowly but surely stolen away from Israel and for this reason the nations will come under God's judgment. But that is for the future to handle. In Abram's time, the war booty was acknowledged as his.

**²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth,
²³ that I *will take* nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that *is* yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'—
²⁴ except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion."**

Instead of exercising his right to the spoils of war, Abram made a vow to "the Possessor of heaven and earth," meaning the One true Creator God, that he wouldn't accept anything personally from the king of Sodom.

By using the same term about God that Melchizedek used – the Possessor of heaven and earth – he was acknowledging in front of the king of Sodom that the same God whom Melchizedek was loyal to was the God that he also was loyal too.

In his vow – which he made by an uplifted hand – Abram said he wouldn't accept anything, from a thread to a sandal strap. The Hebrew word for thread – *khut* – was something women used to tie up their hair. A sandal strap was used by men to secure their sandals. He was saying he wouldn't take even the smallest thing that belonged to a man or woman, from their head to their feet.

The only thing that would he would accept is what his soldiers had eaten along the way to, during, and coming back from the battle. Along with that,

there were three Amorites who went with him to defeat the enemies and Abram allowed them to decide to take whatever they wanted.

There are probably three good reasons why he didn't accept anything for his efforts. First is that Sodom was notoriously wicked and he didn't want to have anything of theirs simply because of the principle of "guilt by association."

Secondly, he received his nephew back alive and he was surely grateful to God for that. And thirdly, he had received Melchizedek's blessing. This was something of far greater value than any earthly goods.

If you look at what Abram did here, it should be a life lesson to us all, especially Abram's – "guilt by association" and the perception others would draw from it.

If you're looking to get into a business deal or accept anything from someone else, it's always important to have the highest moral ethics, especially when you bear the name of Christ Jesus.

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6 – "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."

And when speaking to Titus about giving instructions to church members he said this, "Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded,⁷ in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorrupt-tibility,⁸ sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you."

Despite the way the media portrays Christians, throughout the Bible – Old Testament and New – we are shown that living lives of integrity and holiness are the hallmarks of being faithful and obedient children of God.

And that brings me to the point where I'd like to share with you the way of becoming a child of God. Let me take a couple minutes and explain to you why Jesus came and why it's important to you.

Abram's Meeting with Melchizedek

The king of Sodom went out to the valley of Shaveh
To meet Abram after his return from the defeat of the eastern kings
And there Melchizedek over bread and wine, a blessing he did say
In the name of God Most High he accomplished priestly things

And Melchizedek blessed Abram, and this he said
Blessed be Abram of God Most High
Possessor of heaven and earth, our heavenly Head
Yes, he is the Creator of the earth and sky

And blessed be God Most High too
Who has delivered your enemies into the hand of you

And Abram gave him a tithe of all the spoil
All gained in war through the battle's toil

Now the king of Sodom to Abram said
Just give me my people and all the spoil you shall keep
But Abram declined as he shook his head
He knew his integrity was worth more than goats and sheep

I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High
Yes my hand to the Possessor of heaven and earth
I will take nothing from you be it low or be it high
Nothing here to me contains that much worth

You will never be able to say to a friend or to your brother
I have made Abram rich, yes, it was me and not another

Just what the young men have eaten
And the portion of the men who were with me too

All my gain comes from God's blessing and not from a'cheatin'
But let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre have what they wish from you

Let us remember Abram's example and trust in God, not in man
For the many blessings we receive each and every day
Let us praise Him for these blessings as oft as we can
And from our mouths, let us continually say

"Great and awesome God
In Your light I will trod
Thank you for all good things
To You my heart forever sings"

Above all I thank You for my Lord Jesus
Whose precious life He gave for us

And so in His glorious name I say
All of my praises to You, each and every day

Hallelujah and Amen...