

“Melchizedek”
Hebrews 7:1-3
(Preached at Trinity, April 28, 2024)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citation will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. This afternoon we're going to focus on the mysterious character we know by the name of Melchizedek. His name is spoken of in 10 verses of the Bible. Of those ten times, eight are in Chapters 5-7 of the Book of Hebrews. The other two are in Genesis and Psalms.
 - In Genesis 14 Abraham met him after going to war to deliver his nephew, Lot. Abraham paid tithes to him. That was 2000 B.C. That brief exchange between Abraham and Melchizedek is all we know of this mysterious figure until we read of him again 1000 years later when King David references him in Psalm 110.
 - Psalm 110 records the verses quoted in **Hebrews 5**:
Psalm 110:4 NAU - "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."
Hebrews 5:10 NAU - "being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek."
 - It is also quoted at the end of **Chapter 6**
Hebrews 6:20 NAU - "Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."
2. In **Chapter 5:11** the author wrote: "Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.*"
There is much to say about this mysterious individual. This afternoon I want to give a brief overview of Melchizedek. Most important, I'm going to set before you the rich comparison between Melchizedek and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Melchizedek is one of the greatest types of Christ in the Bible.
Hebrews 7:3 NAU - "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually."
This doesn't mean that Melchizedek was not born or that he didn't have parents or that he did not die. It just points to the nature of his priesthood. He didn't inherit his priesthood from his father, nor were there successors to his priesthood. Melchizedek was a priest by the divine ordination of God. It points to the perpetual nature of the priesthood of Christ. The priesthood of Christ was by Divine ordination – a perpetual priesthood.

3. Nothing is known of the background of Melchizedek and many questions are raised.
 - A. After the flood the world was in a rapid state of spiritual decline. There were few believers. There is not even a hint that anyone in Canaan besides Abraham was a worshipper of God. How did Melchizedek come to be in Canaan?
 His name means “*king of righteousness*” His life was upright and holy. John Calvin said of him: “Amid the corruptions of the world, he alone, in that land, was an upright and sincere cultivator and guardian of religion.”¹
 “Melchizedek reminds us that it is possible to follow and honor God in a godless world.”²
 How did this king from Salem learn of Jehovah God?
 - B. Melchizedek is declared to be both a king and a priest. The first time the word priest is found in the Bible is in reference to Melchizedek in Genesis 14. Who else recognized his priesthood? How did Abraham know that he was a priest?
 - C. There have been many conjectures as to the identity of Melchizedek –
 Although we know nothing of his identity, we surely know what he stood for.
4. This afternoon I want us to examine his priesthood.
 The early readers of this epistle were not able to comprehend this teaching.
 May God grant us ears to hear.
 - I. Melchizedek was a Priest
 - A. The priesthood is a major theme in the Book of Hebrews.
 1. When you do a search on the word “priest” or “priests” you’ll get 32 hits in the Book of Hebrews. “Priesthood” will give 3 more.
 2. We’ve looked much at the subject of Christ’s priesthood since **Chapter 2**. The author wants us to understand the unique and superior nature of the priesthood of our Lord.
 - B. To understand the nature of priesthood you have to understand the nature and need of mediation.
 1. Human beings are alienated from God because of sin.
 This can be clearly seen in Adam's expulsion from the garden. He was banned from reentering the Garden, symbolizing his alienation from God.
 2. There is a vast impassable gulf separating us from God. There is nothing we can do to close the gap.
 No religious deed. No resolution. No amount of prayer. NOTHING.
 3. God introduced the priesthood so that Israel would understand the distance between them and God and their need of a mediator – Someone to represent them to God.
 - C. The priesthood was demonstrated in the construction of the Jewish temple.
 1. Communion with God could only take place within the holy of holies. A thick veil separated this holy place from the rest of the temple.
 2. No one was able to enter the holy of holies except the high priest, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

¹ Richard D. Phillips, *Hebrews*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 223.

² *Ibid.*

3. Under the O.T. sacrificial system the priests of Israel were required to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people, but it was also mandatory that they also offer sacrifices for themselves since they too were sinners. The sacrifices associated with this priesthood were inadequate as **Hebrews 8-10** clearly shows.
 - a. The sacrificial system taught the way of forgiveness through the death of an innocent victim, but the death of a sacrificial animal could not permanently take away sins.
 - b. They had to be offered again and again.
 4. The Old Testament priesthood was also limited because it was associated with a particular nation.

Aaron's priestly ministry never transcended the borders of Israel. He was the priest of the God of Israel.
- D. Melchizedek appears as the first priest in Scripture. His priesthood was superior to the Levitical priesthood.
1. This can be seen in the fact that Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek. Although Abraham was the conqueror, he gave homage to Melchizedek, not visa versa. Melchizedek received the tithe from Abraham.
 2. Also, when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek the tribe of Levi had not yet come into being. **Verse 10** tells us that Levi was still in the loins of Abraham. This means that with Abraham as Covenant head, Levi also gave tithes to Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:9-10 NAU - "And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him."

 - a. Remember, the tribe of Levi was the priestly tribe. They were responsible for receiving the tithes. They were responsible for offering up the sacrifices.
 - b. Since Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek this demonstrates that Levi was inferior to Melchizedek.

II. Jesus is after the order of Melchizedek

Hebrews 5:10 – "Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec."

- A. Melchizedek's priesthood transcended national boundaries.
1. The Levitical priests represented Israel, a particular nation. Often the O.T. records Jehovah to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We can see this when Elijah stood before the priests of Baal.

1 Kings 18:36 NAU - "At the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word."
 2. Melchizedek's priesthood was of a universal nature. This was demonstrated when Abraham stood before him.

Genesis 14:18-19 NAU - "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth."

- a. The priesthood of Melchizedek knew no national boundaries.
 - b. He was the king of Salem yet came to Abraham in the role of priest. He was the priest of Salem, but Abraham submitted to his priesthood.
3. The priesthood of Jesus is also a universal priesthood
Revelation 5:9 NAU - "And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."
- B. Like Melchizedek, Jesus is superior to the Levitical priests.
1. Melchizedek predated the Levites.
Hebrews 7:3 NAU - "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually."
 2. The Levitical priests could only offer sacrifices of a temporary nature.
 - a. Jesus offered a sacrifice of eternal value.
Hebrews 7:23-24 NAU - "The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, ²⁴ but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently."
 - b. If the priesthood of Jesus were ever revoked it would be the end of all hope for those for whom He died. But this shall never be. Jesus is the Rock, the Corner Stone. His priesthood shall never end.
- C. Melchizedek was both priest and king.
1. None of the Hebrew kings could claim this dual office.
 2. Melchizedek's name means "*King of Righteousness*"
 Melchizedek was the king of Salem - Salem means "*Peace*"
 3. In **Isaiah 9:6** Jesus is called the "Prince of Peace"
 שָׂר-שָׁלוֹם - (sar shalom) – Prince of Peace
 - a. שָׂר sar – means prince, ruler, leader, chief, governor – points to His dominion - It points again to His Kingly office
 - b. שָׁלוֹם points to the nature of His Kingdom – it is a kingdom of peace
 3. The citizens of our Lord's Kingdom have been brought to peace with Him. We have been reconciled with the Father.
- C. Jesus is the King of Righteousness *and* the King of Peace – in that order
1. Peace cannot come apart from righteousness
 - a. Our greatest peace is in reconciliation with God. It is an inner peace. It is a confidence in Christ and contentment in life.
 - b. This world will also never know peace without the righteousness of Christ.

2. The problem with people today is that they want peace without righteousness.
 - a. The great chant of the 1960's was "peace"
 - They wore the symbol of peace and changed the V for victory sign to a peace sign.
 - They chanted, "give peace a chance."
 - Yet it was a godless decade of fornication and drugs. They wanted peace without righteousness.
 - b. Now, again we want peace.
 - We want an end to terrorism. We want to live in the absence of danger and fear – we want peace.
 - Yet, again, we want peace without God's demand of righteousness.
 - We want to live our own way and do our own thing without consequences. We shall not know peace until God becomes the center of our lives.
Romans 3:17-18 - "And the path of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."
3. Sin must be dealt with before peace will come
 - a. Peace will not come through the U.N.
Peace will not come through military campaigns.
 - b. Peace will only come through the Prince of Peace. And it must be the ultimate peace of reconciliation with our Creator.
Romans 5:1 NAU - "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"

III. Implications for us

- A. Jesus Christ is the only way of entering into the presence of God
John 14:6 NAU - "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
 1. No man can serve as our mediator.
Jesus is our only great High Priest
 2. Jesus must be the focus of our life, the hope of our eternity
Hebrews 10:21-23 NAU - "and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;"
 3. We must not place our confidence in any other.
- B. Jesus must be the focus of all Christian ministry today.
1 Corinthians 2:2 NAU - "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

1. True preaching must always be Christ centered.
Matthew Henry: "Christ, in his person and offices, is the sum and substance of the gospel, and ought to be the great subject of a gospel minister's preaching."³
2. It is Jesus alone who kept the Law of God perfectly qualifying Himself as the spotless Lamb of God.
3. It is Jesus alone whose sacrifice upon the cross nullified the damning effect of sin.
4. It is Jesus alone who sits upon the throne as our Mediator.
5. The reason we preach the whole counsel of the Word of God is because Christ is found on every page

Conclusion:

1. Have you trusted in this great Priest/King? Are you resting in Him. If not make this your greatest priority.
2. It is only through the priesthood of Christ that lost, distressed sinners find peace for their souls. If He does not take away your sins they shall not be removed.
He has offered up the perfect sacrifice – His own flesh and blood.
3. He now serves as our Mediator. There is only one Mediator between God and men.
1 Timothy 2:5-6 NAU - "For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time."
4. He serves as our Advocate, one who pleads one's cause before a judge.
1 John 2:1-2 NAU - "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world."
Hebrews 9:24 NAU - "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;"
5. Since Jesus is serving in heaven as your great High Priest, may it encourage you to press on in obedience and service.
Hebrews 4:14 NAU - "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2246–2250.