

AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEC

Hebrews 7:1–3 — *"For this Melchisedec, 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 by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."*

Here in the Bible we have the most information regarding this man Melchisedec, or Melchizedek. The spelling difference is because of differences in transliteration from Greek as opposed to transliteration from Hebrew.

The previous chapter ended with Jesus as the forerunner entering within the veil, and that He is a high priest forever "after the order of Melchisedec".

This has come up twice in the epistle up to this point. In 5:6, Paul is quoting Psalm 110:4, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec". In 5:10, he reasserts that Christ is "called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec", not quoting the Psalm as much as referencing what is said in it, and, more importantly, who it is that said it. Here is the whole Psalm:

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head.

As it has been noted by many, this is the most quoted and referenced passage of the Old Testament by the New. It should also be noted that it is verse 1 and verse 4 that are those that are quoted. The time element in verse 1 is very significant — "until".

Verses 2 and 3 are about how it will be when the enemies of the Son, who is Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed, JESUS, are made His footstool. Verse 5 through 7 speak of how He will do it. But verse 1 speaks of Christ *now*. Verse 4 speaks of Christ *forever*.

In Hebrews chapter seven, we get a review of who this Melchisedec is. This takes us back to Genesis chapter 14, the only place where this mysterious figure appears in the Old Testament, save Psalm 110 where Christ¹⁴ is a Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

In Genesis 14, we are early in the story of Abraham, or as he was still known at the time Abram. There were 4 kings that fought with 5 other kings. There were 4 from the east. Abraham was interestingly from the east, but living in the area of those in what could be referred to as Caanan. The 5 kings were from that Caanan area. Abram was not said to be allied with any of them, but his nephew Lot was living with his tent pitched toward Sodom. Lot got caught up in the fight and was captured by the kings from the east, and that is when Abram gets involved.

Abram was quite rich in this world's goods, as can be seen that he had his own private army. His 318 trained armed servants slaughtered the armies of the kings of the east, as it is called here in Hebrews 7, "the slaughter of the kings". Abram rescued Lot and it was a victory in favor of, interestingly enough, the king of Sodom and his allies.

At the same time, in comes Melchizedek, king of Salem. Melchizedek brought to Abram refreshments. It says that he brought forth bread and wine. Many have noticed the bread and wine as the same elements that we partake of at the Lord's Supper. This is interesting, but it is a stretch in my estimation to make too much of this.

What is important is what is said next of Melchizedek: "*he was the priest of the most high God*", Genesis 14:18. This indicates a knowledge of God among the peoples of Caanan during the time of Abraham and before as well. And we should expect this, seeing it was not a very long time since Noah and his family stepped off of the ark. It would have been in excess of 367 years¹⁵, using a good round number of less than 400 years since the ending of the flood. The tower of Babel incident would have happened, due to mankind's rebellion in desiring to build a tower to reach unto heaven. There was knowledge, but that knowledge would have been perverted.

We do see though that God had a representative among all of this, and here we meet that representative. It is this man Melchizedek, who is king of Salem. Many have suggested that "Salem" is a former name of Jerusalem. Whether this is the case or not, it is hard to tell. The scriptures speak of a former name of Jerusalem being "Jebus" (Judges 19:10, 1 Chronicles 11:4), and the former peoples of it being Jebusites. In Hebrews we have God's commentary on what King of Salem means. It is King of Peace. Melchizedek enters when the battle is over. Notice that we also have the note that the very name Melchizedek means King of Righteousness. Righteousness and peace go hand in hand with each other, and there can be no peace without righteousness. Peace and righteousness are the characteristics of the Kingdom of God under God's Christ who will rule and reign over it.

¹⁴ We know this certainly as JESUS CHRIST. From the Old Testament point of view, and even what the Jews at the time of Christ seemed to universally acknowledge, this Psalm was talking about the coming future Messiah, or Christ, who is the son of David that was promised from 2 Samuel forward. See Matthew 22:41-46.

¹⁵ In Genesis 11:10-30, in addition to 12:4 we can get to this number. I take the years to be years like we understand them. There is no reason to think of them any differently. The same is true for the years in Genesis 5. In Genesis 5, it is hard to believe because the years these men lived was so much longer than we do. The language is clear though. The one who believes the Bible can read this as "thus saith the Lord".

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”, Romans 14:17.

This can be realized even now while we are in the waiting “until His enemies are made His footstool”. It will be the characteristic of the whole earth when it is under the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Melchizedek was at that time the king of righteousness and the king of peace, and he was the priest of the most high God. We spoke last lesson how that the priesthood of Melchizedek as priest of the *most high God* had a universal scope, as Aaron’s priesthood and that of the Levitical priests had a scope for the people of Israel. It is noteworthy that it is here, in the epistle to the Hebrews, that this Priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchisedec is expounded.

The Most High God is “possessor of heaven and earth”, and it is the name by which Gentiles such as Nebuchadnezzar would come to know Him. While He was especially the “God of Israel” and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, known personally and intimately¹⁶ to the Israelites as JEHOVAH, or YAHWEH, He was never not the God of the rest of the earth¹⁷, although they refused knowledge of Him as we see witnessed in Romans chapter 1.

In Hebrews 7:3, we have this about Melchizedek: *“Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God;”*

There has been much debate about whether the Melchizedek of Genesis 14 was actually a pre-incarnate revelation of Jesus Christ. Fundamentally sound, Bible believing Christians have been on both sides of this argument, and we will not reach the answer to this conclusively here. It does say in verse 8 and “it is witnessed that he liveth”, being in the present tense. It is also true that nowhere does the scripture say that Melchizedek is Jesus, but that Jesus Christ is high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

What we do see is that this man Melchizedek was greater than Abraham, seen by the fact that Abraham paid him tithes (a tenth of the spoils). It is also seen that Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek indicating an order, the less is blessed by the greater. The message that the Hebrews, i.e., Jews, should get from this is that Jesus Christ (as a priest after the order of Melchizedek) is greater than Abraham. Even believing Jews needed to be reminded and established in this fact.

We will see later that this High Priest after the order of Melchisedec is greater by far than the Aaronic priests in many significant ways.

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession”, Hebrews 4:14

¹⁶ He was a God so nigh (Deuteronomy 4:7) to them, but their worship was still at a distance as could be seen from the veil and the priesthood and the law that kept the people separated until the great high priest after the order of Melchizedek entered within the veil.

¹⁷ Romans 3:29 — *“Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:”*