

## **Problems in the Book of Hebrews: Melchizedek**

### **Hebrews 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1,10,11,15,17,21**

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**Introduction:** Melchizedek is mentioned 11 times in the Bible, 9 of them in the book of Hebrews, (5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1,10,11,15,17,21) The writer of the book of Hebrews uses the other 2 references to Melchizedek from the Old Testament, (Gen. 14:8; Ps. 110:4).

#### **Who Was Melchizedek?**

- A. He was a “king,” (7:1)
- B. He was a “priest,” (7:1)
- C. He was in “Salem” (7:1)
- D. He was connected to the “Most High God,” (7:1)

#### **Why is Melchizedek so important?**

- A. Melchizedek’s name means “king of righteousness,” (7:2)  
“Melek” (Heb.) means “king” and “sedeq” (Heb.) means “righteousness.” (Guthrie, p. 253)
- B. Melchizedek was king over the “city of peace,” (7:2)  
“Salom” (Heb.) meaning “peace.” (Guthrie, p. 253)
- C. Melchizedek had no “listed” ancestry, birth or death (Gen. 14)(7:3)  
The absence of Melchizedek’s ancestry, birth and death in Genesis and now in Hebrews, is deliberate showing “his priesthood has neither the qualifications nor the parameters one finds concerning the Levitical priesthood in the Law of Moses. The Levities were priests by virtue of heritage and ceased from the office upon death. Scripture places no such limitations on Melchizedek’s priesthood.” (Guthrie, p. 254)
- D. Melchizedek was “made like the Son of God” (7:3)  
“Made like” (Gr. “aphomoiomenos” perfect passive participle) meaning “to produce a facsimile or copy.”  
“The likeness is in the picture drawn in Genesis, not in the man himself. Such artificial interpretation does not amount to proof, but only serves as a parallel or illustration.” (Robertson, p. 381)

#### **How important was Melchizedek? (7:4-10)**

There are three words calling us to the fact that Melchizedek is “great.”

- A. We are to “Consider” him, (7:4, Gr. “theoreite,” imperative of command, 7:4).
- B. We are to realize he is “great”(7:4, Gr. “pelikos”) is a word for “geometrical magnitude” rather than the word “great” (Gr. “posos”) meaning “arithmetical.” (Robertson, p. 381)
- C. We are to realize he is “better” (7:7, Gr. “kreittomos”) meaning “more profitable, superior, better, more excellent.”

#### **What did Melchizedek do to give him this position?**

- A. Melchizedek gave a blessing, (7:1)  
Levi and his priestly offspring were through Abraham, but Melchizedek blessed Abraham. (7:6-7)
- B. Melchizedek received tithes, (7:2)  
Abraham (Gen. 14:17-20) returned from battling the invasion of five kings from Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela. Abraham recovered the booty and returned home. He paid tithes to Melchizedek. Levi and his priestly offspring receive tithes as a command and part of the Law, (7:5,8-10)

#### **How was Melchizedek used in relationship to Christ? (7:14-28)**

Superiority of Christ under the Melchizedekian priesthood. (See my extra chart on the comparison of the Levitical priesthood to the Melchizedekian priesthood)

- A. Under Melchizedek, an unending priesthood; under Levi “death” ended the priesthood, (7:3,17).

- B. Under Melchizedek, a different tribe “Judah;” under Moses it was “Levi,” (7:14).
- C. Under Melchizedek, an endless life; under Levi priesthood ended at death, (7:16,21,24).
- D. Under Melchizedek, a better hope of drawing near to God; under Levi the Law was not perfect, (7:18-19).
- E. Under Melchizedek, made a priest with an oath; under Levi no oath (7:20-21).
- F. Under Melchizedek, a better covenant; under Levi old imperfect covenant and law, (7:22).
- G. Under Melchizedek, able to save to the uttermost; under Levi temporary sacrifice for sins, (7:25-27).
- H. Under Melchizedek, perfection; under Levi, imperfection, (7:11,28)

### **Conclusion:**

People get all hung up on Melchizedek’s ancestry and death that they miss the whole reason the writer is using him in the teaching material. Some have suggested Melchizedek was: (1.) a biological anomaly, (2.) a supernatural creation, (3.) an angel in human guise (Qumran community in their writings and commentaries), or (4.) an actual theophany of Christ. (English, p. 189)

There are several reasons why Melchizedek was not an anomaly, was not a supernatural creation, was not an angel, and was not a theophany of Christ.

#1. In the context the writer to the Hebrews uses exactly what the previous narratives have said (Gen. 14:8; Ps. 110:4) in order to create a stark contrast between Melchizedek’s priesthood and the Levitical priesthood. (Guthrie, p. 254)

#2. The absence of Melchizedek’s ancestry, birth and death in Genesis and now in Hebrews, is deliberate showing “his priesthood has neither the qualifications nor the parameters one finds concerning the Levitical priesthood in the Law of Moses. The Levities were priests by virtue of heritage and ceased from the office upon death. Scripture places no such limitations on Melchizedek’s priesthood.” (Guthrie, p. 254)

#3. To suggest that Melchizedek was actually Christ in pre-incarnate form would be both illogical and unnecessary. To suggest that Jesus lived on the earth as a priest in the form of Melchizedek would make the statement that “Jesus is a priest patterned after the priesthood of Jesus” which doesn’t make any biblical sense. Melchizedek’s priesthood was patterned after God’s directives for a priest, which had existed prior to the Levitical system in heaven.

#4. Melchizedek is a “type” not the actual reality, meaning Melchizedek lived a life like God wanted and not that he was God in the flesh. The author of Genesis 14:18-20, the first reference of Melchizedek, lists no ancestry, birth or death, but lists him as a living man. The writer of Hebrews capitalizes on this as a type. “It is not the type that determines the anti-type, but the antitype that determines the type; Jesus is not portrayed after the pattern of Melchizedek, but Melchizedek is ‘made like unto the Son of God.’” (Bruce, p. 138)

#5. Melchizedek was “made” which tells us that he was a “man.” The writer of Hebrews uses the words “made like” (Gr. “aphomoiomenos” perfect passive participle) meaning “to produce a facsimile or copy.” Melchizedek was not God in the flesh, but as a man was a living example of righteousness. “The likeness is in the picture drawn in Genesis, not in the man himself. Such artificial interpretation does not amount to proof [for Melchizedek being a theophany of Christ], but only serves as a parallel or illustration.” (Robertson, p. 381)

Melchizedek was an actual human king and priest that existed prior to the Levitical priesthood.

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