

JESUS ABOVE RELIGION

CMBC May 29, 2016

Hebrews 7:1 – 28 (Read 11 – 18)

- There are several references in the Bible to a person called Melchizedek.
- It is a bit confusing why, but it turns out he has an important message for us
- We will try to uncover some of that this morning.
- Here is what to look for.
 - Hebrews is about presenting the case for who Jesus is.
 - Presenting to the Jews, the Hebrews.
 - Why the Old Covenant has changed.
 - So Hebrews has lots of Old Testament references.
- The Old Covenant and laws were important, since they pointed to God's rescue of mankind, the salvation of you and me.

ILL. Government making a deal with another nations sends a delegation to work out the details before the heads of state, the presidents come to sign the final deal. Now it is complete.

1. THE MYSTERIOUS KING MELCHIZEDECK

- a. References to him in Scripture
 - i. Melchizedek first shows up in a Genesis story with Abraham
 - ii. A reference in the Psalms about the Messiah
 - iii. **Psalm 110:4** The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."
 - iv. Several references to him in a couple of Hebrew passages 5, 6, 7
 - v. It is here in Hebrews 7 that the explanation of Melchizedek is made
- b. Honoured by Abraham – Here is the story
 - i. Abraham and Lot have just gone separate ways. Lot to Sodom.
 - ii. Sodom has been under the rule of a northern nation for 12 years.
 - iii. After 12 years they have had enough and rebel
 - iv. The northern kingdoms join forces and Sodom and the kings with them have lost the battle.
 - v. The kings of the north take all the spoils, plus families: men, women and children, including Lot.
 - vi. Abraham gathers his men and they defeat the northern kings and free the people and take back the spoils.
 - vii. Then Melchizedek comes to bless Abraham.
 - viii. Genesis 14:18 **And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. [19] And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: [20] And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.**

2. REMARKABLE SIMILARITIES TO JESUS

- Some believe that this was Jesus, but there is no evidence of that
- He is a king and a priest of the Most High God, believing in the same God as did Abraham.
- So how does he get into the discussion about Jesus in Hebrews?
- God planned ahead to have a historical illustration and evidence of what it means to be a true follower of God, to be in a close relationship with God beyond the trappings of religion.
- Jesus is above the law and all of the religious instructions of the Old Covenant
- We struggle with bringing together being obedient while being told that salvation does not come from our works – from keeping all the laws.
- Here is how God uses Melchizedek to teach us that.

First, look at the similarities to Jesus

- a. King of Righteousness and King of Peace
 - i. His name means King of Righteousness
 - ii. He is the king of Salem, Shalom, peace. Salem is Jerusalem
 - iii. He was the priest of the most high God – the one God.
- b. The bread and wine
 - i. Not the same as communion
 - ii. To refresh the soldiers
 - iii. We are captured by the similarities.
- c. Unique genealogy
 - i. No indication of his lineage
 - ii. Jesus too was a man in the flesh because of his virgin birth from Mary but his father was God.
 - iii. He was the Son of Man and the Son of God
- d. Paying of the tithe claiming ownership
 - i. Then Abraham gives a tithe
 - ii. This is key to why the Jews respected Melchizedek and why his example would be accepted by the Jews reading Hebrews.
 - iii. The tithe always meant ownership of God to everything I have
 - iv. The Jews paid their tithes to their owner God through giving it to the priests
 - v. When Abraham did this, it was seen that Melchizedek was above Abraham, and therefore above Arron the first priest of Israel.
 - vi. It was seen that the Levitical priest had paid tithes through Abraham to Melchizedek.
 - vii. Yet all of their sacrifices for their sins, their connection to God was through the laws of the Levitical system.
 - viii. But Melchizedek didn't fit that model and nor did Jesus.

What did all this say?

3. GOD'S PURPOSE IN INTRODUCING MELCHIZEDECK

- a. The purpose but deficiency of the Levitical priesthood
 - i. There was an important role for the priest and all of the laws of worship
 - ii. All these instructions were there to know God, understand him and respond to him
 - iii. That is the important role of religion
 - iv. But the writer to the Hebrews points out it has deficiency
 - v. Priests also were sinners
 - vi. They died and you depended on the next generation to bring your sacrifices for sin to God
 - vii. They made sacrifices but you had to do it again.
 - viii. You became a priest because you were a descendent of Levi. Only Jesus becomes our high priest because of an oath by God.

- b. The supremacy of Jesus
 - i. Jesus came from God
 - 1. Made a final sacrifice for our sins
 - 2. He alone as the final judge can forgive sins
 - 3. Rose from the dead to bring eternal life which he alone could give
 - ii. That changes all of the rules for coming to God
 - 1. No it completes what all of the laws for coming to God pointed to
 - 2. Melchizedek's example tells us that it isn't about the Levitical system and all of the laws of the Old Covenant
 - 3. Abraham's honour of Melchizedek was long before the laws of the Old Covenant were set up

- c. Embracing the appropriate role of religion
 - i. Religion, the activities of coming to God, are important and necessary.
 - ii. However, it is not about the activities, the laws
 - iii. When religion becomes our focal point, we lose our way to a relationship with God
 - iv. Samaritan women at the well
 - 1. She asked, (John 4:20) **Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.**
[21] Jesus answered, **"A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. [23] The time has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Those are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. [24] God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."**
 - 2. The previous worship was about keeping rules, good ones, but that was often outside of a close relationship with God.
 - a. In fact, that seemed impossible.
 - b. Living like that was very discouraging and confusing.

3. But God makes it possible for us to connect with Him in a personal relationship.
 - a. Spirit with spirit.
 - b. Child with father

- v. Hebrews is about the Jewish religion and laws
 1. The Holy Spirit included it in our Bible because we fall to our own rules.
 2. Buildings, governance structure, worship style, music, symbols, standing kneeling or sitting, written prayers or extemporaneous prayers, programs
 3. All those things are intended to lead us to a relationship with God
 4. But it is not about those things
 5. It is about a personal relationship with God that drives my worship of God, and shapes my worship, my willingness to obey God.

Four things happen when are focus on religion gets the priority:

- We become legalistic
 - Then we are easily identified as hypocrites
- We shape our laws our religion to suit us
 - I can obey what I want
- We rebel against God
 - I can't live up to this
- I am critical of how others worship God
 - I become proud