

## **Greater Than: Melchizedek**

**Genesis 1:26, 14:17-20; Psalms 110:4; Hebrews 7 & 8**

Jesus is the fulfillment of every role we need. From Adam to David, God revealed His plan through people who pointed forward to someone greater. In Jesus, it all comes together. He is the true Man, the eternal Priest, the final Prophet, and the forever King. This series invites us to see how every promise finds its completion in Him.

### **Melchizedek:**

Today we are going to be looking at Jesus as the eternal Priest. We will begin by looking back to the story of an interesting figure - Melchizedek. Not much is known about him, but he is a very important figure in scripture and Hebrew tradition.

Melchizedek's story is found in Genesis 14:17-20. This is not a lot of information about Melchizedek but there are a few things we can determine.

Melchizedek reflected the original design of humanity. Read Genesis 1:26. He was both a king (ruler) and priest (mediator between God and creation).

He was a priest before the priests were established through the Levites in the time of Moses, but was not tied to an ethnicity or tribe. We don't know the particulars of his ceremonies or traditions. It is almost like the motions are not paramount.

Melchizedek was superior to the Levitical Line. The priesthood of Aaron was a 'divine concession' born out of Moses' resistance to God. The Levitical priesthood was often marked by corruption and compromise.

He was a Canaanite before they were bad guys. This shows God can use and be reconciled to anyone.

Abraham treated him as a priest. His name means "King of righteousness". He ruled Salem (meaning "peace") which later became Jerusalem.

Melchizedek was contrasted against the King of Sodom (who asked for stuff). Sodom came to take while Salem came to give. He offered food & drink to Abraham after a battle. (This was a type of communion where you sit down and are with family.)

Melchizedek represents an ideal leader who blesses God and people.

### **What is a Priest?:**

Throughout the Old Testament God communicated to the people through mediators, prophets, and priests. This was necessary because of the broken relationship that was caused by Adam & Eve disobeying by eating from the DIY Tree (Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil).

The Levitical Priesthood were the ones who were to meet God in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle (later the Temple) to intercede for God's people. They would also bring messages back to the people from God.

In the Bible, Priest means an intercessor and an advocate between people and God. Basically, a defense attorney before God. The prosecutor is 'Satan' (which means 'the accuser' and is a title, not a name).

It is a humbled station before God. The priests do not negotiate with God; they appeal. They are yielded to God's will. They guide people on how to lay down their will to grow closer to the One they serve.

### **Eternal Priest:**

Melchizedek is considered an *eternal* priest. What does that mean? Because there is no birth or death record, his order of priesthood is without beginning or end. Abram honors his position by giving Melchizedek a tenth of everything

Read Psalms 110. David is speaking of someone else who receives the covenant oath of God. David calls that one 'Lord', which is a common term for addressing a king. He is speaking of his future seed who will be the Messiah. This poem portrays a human as an image of God who shares in God's rule; an eternal king/priest who ushers in the new creation. It is a Messianic prophecy that Jesus fulfilled.

### **Hebrews 7 & 8:**

Read Hebrews 7 & 8. Let's see how it answers the question, "Why is Jesus enough?"

The people hearing this letter were used to lots of priests (Levitical order) offering sacrifices over and over for themselves and others. That was the system God established through Moses. However, it was incomplete and could never fully finish the job. Every priest eventually died and every sacrifice had to be repeated.

Hebrews brings up an unexpected person from the Old Testament...Melchizedek. He shows up out of nowhere in Abraham's story. He is both a king and a priest. He then disappears. There is no birth story or death story. The writers of Hebrews say that was intentional because he was pointing ahead to something better.

Jesus was that 'something better'. He is a priest, although not from the usual line (tribe of Levi) but the tribe of Judah. He doesn't age out, retire, or die. Jesus lives forever and never stops representing us before God (mediating). Forgiveness is complete when we go to God through Him.

Here is why this matters. Jesus isn't working out of an earthly building; He is at the right hand of God. His role is not to be stuck in an endless cycle of offering sacrifices. HE was the sacrificial lamb and was the final sacrifice needed.

Then the author reminds us of a promise God made in Jeremiah. A new covenant would come: not written on stone tablets, but written on hearts. It wouldn't be a system that constantly reminds you of your failure, but one where sins are forgiven once and for all. Hebrews says that the new covenant is here: established and mediated by Jesus. And because of Him, we don't just follow rules. We live in a restored relationship with God.

Hebrews recognizes that:

- the priesthood of Levi and the Law of Leviticus failed to make anything perfect.
- Levite priests needed an intercessor themselves.
- Jesus is of the tribe of Judah (not Levi) and is immortal, therefore He is not subject to Levitical rules.
- neither Melchizedek nor Jesus would be subject to the now obsoleted Levitical law (focused on changing behavior rather than changing hearts).

### **How This All Comes to Jesus:**

Jesus is a single figure to be the following:

- A sacrifice that pays the consequences of sin. (Priests Ceremony)
- Be the intercessor between God and people (Priests Task)
- Act as a central point to move toward when people wish to be reconciled to God. (Priests Station)

**In short:**

- The old system (Levitical) wasn't wrong; it was incomplete.
- Melchizedek was a shadow; Jesus is the substance.
- Because Jesus is our High Priest, we can have a relationship with God.

**Reflection Questions:**

- What stands out to you about Melchizedek? Why does the author of Hebrews emphasize his uniqueness?
- How is the Levitical system incomplete? How does Jesus fulfill the Old Covenant and create a New Covenant?
- What does it mean that God's law is written on hearts rather than tablets?
- How does living under a covenant of grace (having a changed heart & laying down of your will)—not obligation (behavior modification)—change how you obey God?