**Bethel Christian Fellowship**

**Fair Lawn, NJ**

**Hebrews (19): The Book Of Better Things**

**“Mysterious Melchizedek”**

**Hebrews 7:1-10**

**May 12, 2024**

No matter where we may be on our journey, all of us are in need. All of us have stress and some degree of trauma. All of us face obstacles, and setbacks, and financial hardships, and emotional heartaches. All of us have physical pain, and some live with crippling fear and anxiety. Many of us find ourselves in relationships that are harmful and abusive; and we all suffer loss, some more painful than others.

But it really doesn’t matter what our problem may be. What matters is that we know we have a great need, and that we can turn to the only Person in whom we can find genuine help. That Person, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ, and no one knew that more than the author of the letter to the Hebrews.

His overarching theme is that Jesus is better than everything that has preceded Him in the Old Testament. The reason that’s important to know is so that we will be encouraged to look to Him, and to draw near to Him, and to find that He is able and willing to do for us what no one else could or can do. This is especially true when it comes to His role as our merciful and faithful High Priest.

Jesus has offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, thereby saving us from the wrath and judgment of God (Heb. 2:17-18). But then He passed through the heavens (Heb. 4:14), where He now lives to make constant intercession for you and me (Heb. 7:25). He is always ready to help us when we are burdened, and to encourage us when we are faced with disappointment, and to strengthen us in times of weakness and frailty, and to give us the wisdom we need to make sense of life when it seems so senseless.How, then, should we respond? The answer to that question is found in Hebrews 4:16: “*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need*.”

Following that exhortation, our author launches into his exposition of Jesus, the great High Priest (5:1-7:28). His purpose is to demonstrate that Jesus is better than Aaron, the high priest under the Old Covenant. But he knows the question that his readers will raise. According to the law of Moses, to be a priest in Israel you had to be a member of the tribe of Levi; and to be a *high* priest you had to be a member of the family of Aaron. Jesus was neither. So, how can He be a priest, much less a “better” one than those who have gone before Him?

Our author responds by telling us that God has established another priesthood that is entirely unrelated to the Old Testament priests. They belonged to the order of Aaron; but Jesus belongs to the order of Melchizedek, and He has been ordained to this priesthood forever. For in Psalm 110:4, the LORD (Yahweh) says to David’s Lord (the Messiah): “*You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek*” (Heb. 5:6; Cf. 5:10; 6:20).

So, *who* in the world is Melchizedek, and *why* is he given such “top billing,” and what difference does it make to you and me? Those are the questions we will want to answer as we turn to today’s text (Heb. 7:1-10). But the place to begin is Genesis 14, where we are first introduced to Melchizedek and the role that he played at an important time in Abraham’s life.

**A. Melchizedek and Abraham (Gen. 14:17-20):** “*After his* (Abraham’s) *return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him* (Abraham) *and said, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand*.”

Many would have us believe that Melchizedek was a manifestation of Christ before His incarnation (a “theophany”). But the author of Hebrews says that he “resembles” or is “like” the Son of God (7:3), not that he “is” the Son of God. That’s an important comparison which argues against such an interpretation. In fact, everything in this passage points to the idea that Melchizedek was a real, historical figure who was the king of a real, historical city called Salem.

But here’s what we need to know. Given the way Melchizedek is portrayed in Genesis, our author views him as a “type” of Christ. A “type” is an Old Testament person, place, or thing that prefigured or foreshadowed the coming of Christ. David, king of Israel, was a type of Christ; and Jonah and his experience in the belly of the fish was a type of Christ and His three days in the grave. The same will be true for Melchizedek.

**B. Melchizedek the Priest-King (Hebrews 7:1-3):** “*This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means ‘king of righteousness;’ then also ‘king of Salem’ means ‘king of peace.’ Without father or mother, without genealogy*, *without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever*.” It’s clear from these verses that our author is pointing to the important ways in which Melchizedek was a fitting type of Christ:

1. Melchizedek was both king and priest (v. 1). He is the only man in the Old Testament who held both offices. As the king of Salem (probably Jerusalem), he was also a priest of the one true God. He acknowledges “God Most High” as the Creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:17), and Abraham combines the name “*Yahweh*” (LORD) with “*El Elyon*” (God Most High) indicating that they are one and the same deity (“the LORD, God Most High,” v. 22).

2. Melchizedek’s name means “king of righteousness,” and “Salem” means “peace” (from the Hebrew word *Shalom*), so that Melchizedek is both “king of peace” and “king of righteousness” (v. 2b). How fitting for our author to tie those two names together, since the “King of Righteousness” and the “Prince of Peace” are both messianic titles (Jer. 23:5-6; Isa. 9:6).

3. Melchizedek’s family history is unique (v. 3). Melchizedek was a real man, a real king, and a real priest in a real city. But as far as the *Old Testament record* is concerned, there is nothing listed about his father or mother or his genealogy, or when he was born (“without beginning of days”) or when he died (“or end of life”). The Scriptures *intentionally* omit *any* reference to his genealogy, which is significant given the fact that genealogies are so prominent throughout the book of Genesis (and all through the Old Testament). Hence, our author uses the silence of Scripture to portray Melchizedek as a “type” of the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**C. The Greatness of Melchizedek (7:4-10).** Our author now demonstrates that Christ is superior to Aaron because Melchizedek is superior to Abraham.

1. Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, since the one who receives a tithe is greater than the one who pays it (vv. 4-5): “*Just think how great he was: even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the Law requires the descendants of Levi to collect a tenth from the people – that is, their brothers – even though their brothers are descended from Abraham*.”

2. Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, since the lesser person is blessed by the greater (vv. 6-7): “*This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi; yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater*.”

3. Since Christ is “in the line” of Melchizedek, and Aaron and all the Levitical priests are “in the loins” of Abraham, then Christ is greater than Aaron (vv. 8-10): “*In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die* (the Levitical priests were mortal men)*; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living* (nowhere is it said that Melchizedek lost his priestly office by dying)*. One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body* (literally, “in the loins”) *of his ancestor*.” (Abraham – Isaac – Jacob – Levi – Aaron)

But having said all that, what difference does this make to you and me? It makes all the difference in the world! It’s precisely because of the greater and better priesthood of Christ that we can be confident that “*He is able to save to the uttermost* (at all times) *those who draw near to God through him . . .*” (Heb. 7:25a). Unlike all the other Old Testament priests, Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 2:17-18), then rose again and passed through the heavens (Heb. 4:14) and is now seated at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3), where he “*always lives to make intercession*” for us (Heb. 7:25b). If all of this is true, then we can find in Him all of the spiritual resources we will ever need, no matter what the pain or problem may be.

* If you have been deeply wounded or abused – draw near to God through Jesus Christ so that He can heal those wounds and reaffirm His undying love for you.
* If you are filled with anxiety and worry about things you can’t control – draw near to God through Jesus Christ, so that He may give you His peace, which surpasses all understanding.
* If you have lost hope that things will never change – draw near to God through Jesus Christ so that He may give you hope in His promises and His purposes for your life.
* If you are broken-hearted – draw near to God through Jesus Christ so that He may bring healing and wholeness from within.
* If you are weary and worn out – draw near to God through Jesus Christ so that He may give you strength for today, and bright hope for tomorrow.
* If you have any other problem or pressing need – draw near to God through Jesus Christ and believe that He understands the problem and is ready and able to help.