

Hebrews 7:1-3 "The Son Of God Remains A Priest Forever"

Last week we took a look at the practice of tithing. Since so much is mentioned here in our text about Abraham tithing I felt it needed some clarification. If you weren't here the tape is available. It may give you some new insights and clear up some questions you may have had on this issue as it related to the O.T. and for the church today.

But now we start with our text in chapter seven and we examine the intent of our writer, which, as I mentioned last week is not to instruct about tithing, but rather to show the superiority of the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 7:1-3 ^{NAU} For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation *of his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace. ³ Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

Here our writer re-introduces us to Melchizedek. We saw him in chapter five and now he's back. In fact this is where our writer was always intending to go before he stopped his teaching on the priesthood of Melchizedek and paused long enough to exhort his readers to not be sluggish as it relates to spiritual things.

By way of recap, Melchizedek is seen briefly in Gen.14 and is then mentioned again by the psalmist in Psa.110. Those are the only times in all of the O.T. he is mentioned. This is why there is so much mystery surrounding this man Melchizedek.

And it is this mystery to which our writer now goes to make the point of how Melchizedek is a type of Christ. And by type we mean he is a foreshadowing of the true Christ.

And so when we talk about Jesus Christ being a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek we must understand that the priesthood of Melchizedek is a type of the true priesthood of Christ and not the other way around.

It is Jesus who is being exalted in this letter to the Hebrews not Melchizedek. He is simply being used to show the excellency of Christ. One more thing about the priesthood of Melchizedek before we examine our text is that we must keep in mind that Jesus is not a High Priest *of* the order of Melchizedek, but rather *according* to the order of Melchizedek.

Arthur W. Pink in his commentary on Hebrews points out, "it is highly essential to observe that Christ is not there said to be High Priest of the order of Melchizedek, but after [or according to] etc. The difference between the two expressions is real and radical: "of" would have limited His priesthood to that particular order; "after" simply shows that there is a resemblance between them, as there also was between Aaron's and Christ's."

And so we must understand that our writer is not suggesting that an earthly priesthood of any order is definitive of the eternal Savior and High Priest of our faith. With that said we move to our text and draw from it the teaching which should encourage our hearts and spirits in Christ.

HEB 7:1-2 "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, 2 and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace."

This is a recap of what we find in Gen.14. But there are some interesting things which should not escape our notice. First, we see that Melchizedek was a king as well as a priest. In fact, this is a unique position for any of God's servants in the O.T. When Israel received her first King some 1,000 years after Abraham, we see that none of the Kings enjoyed this dual position.

Outside of Christ only Melchizedek can be called a King-Priest. And evidently Abraham was fully aware of Melchizedek's status before the Lord. This too is interesting because it would appear that Abraham, who came from a pagan family before being called out of Ur by God, was the only one on the face of the earth, together with those who followed him, who then trusted and followed God.

And yet, we see this is not the case. If Melchizedek is a King of Salem, and the High Priest of God Most High of that people, it necessarily follows that his people also knew of the one true God

and must have been a worshipping people since a High Priest is a Mediator between God and men.

Once again this shows us how God has always had a plan to have fellowship with His people. And for us to limit who those people would be or to suggest that only one particular group could be faithful to God is to fall into the Elijah syndrome, where Elijah cried out to God in despair thinking that only he was left in all of Israel to carry on the work of God.

God's response to Elijah was, "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel - all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him." [1KI 19:18]

God is always at work and we should never assume that only we are left to do the work, or that only we know what it is to be faithful and uncompromising to our Lord. Yes, there will be times when it seems only a few are standing for the truth, but God is faithful to Himself and us and will always have those who will carry on the work despite the opposition which is both outside and within the camp of Christ's church.

But, back to our text. Abraham has just defeated the kings who threatened the life of his nephew Lot. Melchizedek comes out to meet Abraham so that he might bless him. Abraham then receives the blessing by way of giving Melchizedek a tenth of all the spoils of the battle.

We saw last week that Abraham understood something of the will of God when it came to worshipping the Lord with his increase. Giving of his increase was a form of worship to God as it should be for us today.

Unfortunately, many people in the church today do not realize the great privilege of giving to God as a means of worship. Many equate giving to God as some sort of tax. 'If I go to church then it will cost me something. But I don't want to be out of sorts with God and so I'll write Him a check and I will have rendered unto God the things that are God's and I'll be okay for another week, until the tax-man, [the Pastor] expects me to give again.'

No, no! That's not giving unto the Lord and it's not giving cheerfully. To worship God with what He's given us is to understand that everything belongs to Him. Our appreciation of His eternal life, given to us in Christ, is to say to Him, thank you Lord. I worship you with what you've given me in this life

knowing that my true rewards will be in my heavenly home with you.

Two things were going on here with Abraham. First, Abraham recognized that God is to be worshipped, not only with his lips, but also with his life. And there is no more tangible way of expressing that than in the one thing which is so important to all of us; the means of carrying on our existence in being able to use such things as money or the increase of our labor.

God knows the importance of this. This is why He encourages us to work in this world to put food on the table, a roof over our heads, clothes on our backs. But in ordaining the means to provide for our needs He has also ordained this tangible stuff, we call money, to be used to show Him that "stuff" does not take priority over loving Him with all our hearts, souls and minds.

Abraham was worshipping God with stuff that God didn't need. But it shows a dependence on God who gives all good gifts and it shows that we're willing to trust that God can meet all of our needs over and above what we expect.

But there was a second thing that Abraham was doing. He was recognizing that Melchizedek was a special servant of the Most High God. It was not as though Abraham just decided to start giving away of tenth of the spoil to anyone who would come out to meet him in the desert.

No, Abraham knew that this man was not only a King, but also a Priest of God. Pink puts it this way: "Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham was the exercise of his priesthood; Abraham's paying him tithes was the recognition of it. Abraham had just obtained a most memorable victory over the kings of Canaan, and now in his making an offering to Melchizedek, he acknowledged that it was God who had given him the victory and [he recognized Melchizedek as his priest] and that Melchizedek was [God's] servant."

Abraham knew that it was God who went before him in battle. It was God who gave Abraham the victory. And now God sent Melchizedek to Abraham as His representative to essentially give Abraham the opportunity to thank Jehovah through his worship with his tithes.

This is amazing. God gives us the victory and then God even provides the means to thank Him for that victory. He provided the

spoil for Abraham, He provided the Priest-king to come before God with such a sacrifice of praise and He then provides the blessing in the same act.

We too are given all of this. We have been given the victory in Christ. We are then given all things to bring to Him for our sacrifice of praise. Our material possessions, our time, our talents, our gifts, our lives. But as we give it to Him faithfully and with gladness, He then turns around and blesses us again as only God can, in whatever way He deems best.

This Priest-King Melchizedek represents God and Abraham knows this and he humbles himself before this servant by honoring him with a tenth of all he won in battle. But from here our writer begins to open up some avenues which are not clearly brought out in the O.T. as it relates to Melchizedek.

He now begins to teach on some of the significance of this Priest-King. Here we see how the Holy Spirit illumines the mind of our writer to put into words some of the hidden truths concerning this mystery man.

He begins with his name. A name in biblical times was more than a badge to distinguish one from another. It was a means of identifying some of the characteristics of that person. Since we're dealing with Abraham we'll use him as an example.

When we first met Abraham way back in Gen.11:26, you might remember that his name at that point was not Abraham, but rather Abram. The name Abram means "exalted father". Up to this point Abram has no children.

And yet after God calls Abram from the land of Ur to follow where God would lead Him our Lord tells him that his name will be changed.

GEN 17:5-7 "No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, [Abraham means father of many], for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."

Father of many? Abraham, still has no children. But as far as God is concerned this name change is a promise of what He will do

with Abraham and his descendants of which you and I are a part by faith.

This name change is significant and carries with it the purpose God has in mind for all of the children of Abraham; "Father of many".

So too, with Melchizedek. Our writer of Hebrews says in HEB 7:2 ... "First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace."

King of Righteousness; King of Peace. This is important in light of the fact that Melchizedek is a type of Christ or a shadow of the substance found in Christ. This King-Priest Melchizedek is a King of Righteousness and King of Peace.

Jesus Christ, who is our High Priest forever, is a King of Righteousness and a King of Peace. As Arthur W. Pink points out: "Now, the king of righteousness and of peace, is the Author, Cause, and Dispenser of righteousness and peace. Christ is the Maker and Giver of peace because He is the Lord of righteousness. (Jer.23:6). Righteousness must go first, and then peace will follow after. This is the uniform order of Scripture wherever the two are mentioned together; peace never precedes righteousness."

PSA 85:9-10 "Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. 10 Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other."

ISA 32:17 "The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever."

We cannot have peace with God outside of a righteous approach to God. This is why Jesus Christ came into this world. John speaks of this in his first epistle.

1JO 2:1 "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."

ACT 7:52 "Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him -"

The murder of our Righteous One is what has secured our eternal life. But without a Righteous Representative we would have no peace with God. And before we can have peace with God we too must be made righteous. And by righteous we mean in a right standing with God according to His perfect standard.

ROM 5:19 "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."

Through the perfect obedience of Christ we are now identified with Him by faith and His righteousness becomes ours. This is what Paul means in 2CO 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Perfect righteousness is what God demands of us. Since we have no righteousness of our own to offer God to make peace with Him, only Christ could stand in the gap for us. The Father was well pleased with His Son and His sacrifice on our behalf. And thus we now have a righteousness we can bring to Him. Not our own, but our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ's.

It is precisely because of this righteousness of Christ that true peace can be accomplished with our heavenly Father. Outside of Christ's righteousness, being put to our account by faith alone in Christ, we are at war with God, deserving His wrath.

Jesus came to take that wrath away as He took our penalty which was death. And in so doing He has made peace for us.

EPH 2:13-14 "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,...."

ROM 5:1-2 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

Do you see the significance of Melchizedek's name? King of Righteousness, King of Peace. When it comes to righteousness and peace, Jesus is the Master. He has made it come to pass. Melchizedek, at best could only foreshadow God's righteousness which would produce peace with our Lord. Jesus Christ is not a shadow, He is the real thing and He has actually accomplished what we could only have hoped for as we saw the promises given to us in men like Melchizedek.

Our King-Priest, Jesus Christ, is one who is eternal. Melchizedek plays a role in identifying that only an eternal priest could accomplish our righteousness and peace.

HEB 7:3 "Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever."

Now some have viewed this portion of Scripture as that which speaks of Melchizedek as being more than human. This is simply not the case. The difficulty arises in the fact that Melchizedek is seen as one remaining a priest forever. However, we must keep the context in mind. Here Melchizedek is not spoken of as a man but as priest, which is to suggest that his priesthood did not cease like the priesthood of Aaron and the Levitical line, but it continues forever only in as much as the eternal Christ is demonstrated through the shadow of Melchizedek's priesthood.

If he is to foreshadow the eternal priesthood of Christ this would make all the sense in the world. A.W. Pink once again sheds some light on this when he says, "That Melchizedek was not a superhuman creature, a divine or angelic being, is unequivocally established by HEB 5:1 'Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.' To be possessed of human nature is an essential prerequisite in order for one to occupy and exercise the sacerdotal [priestly] office. The Son of God could not serve as Priest till He became incarnate."

But why does our writer continue to build an apparent case that maybe Melchizedek was something other than a mere man?

HEB 7:3 "Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever."

Let's look at the first part of this third verse. "Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life..."

Remember, that for the Aaronic priesthood genealogy was essential. If you could not prove that your line came from Aaron you could not be a priest in Israel according to God's law.

EZR 2:61-62 "And from among the priests: The descendants of Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by that name). 62 These searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean."

There were no exceptions. And yet what we see with Melchizedek is that he has no genealogical records to prove anything of his priestly lineage. And yet he is still considered to be High Priest before God. Melchizedek's priesthood is not limited to a particular lineage and therefore did not pass out of existence with his death.

Pink tells us that "Melchizedek was a priest of an order free from the restrictions of the Levitical law, (Num.3:10); therefore he was an accurate type of Christ, who belonged not to the tribe of Levi. Neither the book of Genesis, nor any of the later scriptures, say a word about Melchizedek's parentage, and this silence was a part of the type."

Keep in mind too that the writer of Hebrews is only stating the obvious since we are not told in the O.T. Scriptures anything about Melchizedek. But simply because the word of God is silent about the parentage of an individual does not make the person something other than human.

We're not told of the parents of the Pharaoh during the time of Israel's departure from Egypt. This does not make him eternal nor less than human. We're not told of the parents of the apostle Paul, though we are told he was born in Tarsus.

To suggest that Melchizedek was something other than human simply because we can't trace his ancestry is to miss the point our writer of Hebrews was making. He was simply saying that just as we can't point to any human ancestry to give an indication as to where Melchizedek's priesthood may have come from, we therefore cannot ascribe a human priesthood to our eternal King and Priest, Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews then takes this information, or lack thereof, and uses it as an illustration of how no one can point to any human and derive from that an eternal office that can only belong to God. And since only God chose and then used Melchizedek as His priest, He then can make that same comparison to His Son whom He chose as a priest forever to redeem His people.

Don't forget that our writer of Hebrews is comparing the temporal with the eternal when it comes to our salvation and our eternal priest, Jesus Christ. Concerning the phrase "without beginning of days or end of life", Pink continues, "this is to be explained on the same principle. The Jewish priests began their days as priests at the age of 25, when they were permitted to wait upon their brethren: Num.8:24. At the age of 30 they began their regular priestly

duties: Num.4:3. At the age of 50 years they shall cease waiting upon the service and shall serve no more (Num.8:25). But no such restriction was placed upon the [priestly] ministry of Melchizedek: so, in this too, he was an eminent type of Christ."

"Like the Son of God he remains a priest forever." Melchizedek's priesthood did not end at age 50. The natural life of Melchizedek is not at issue here but his priestly functions. Like Christ, Melchizedek was not restricted to a set time in which he could minister.

Notice who's priesthood is shown to be the greater one here in our verse. Notice it says, "Like the Son of God" and then it mentions Melchizedek. It is Christ that Melchizedek imitates in a revelatory manner, not the other way around.

In God's mercy and grace He has been revealing Himself for centuries so that we might get a glimpse of who our Righteousness and Peace would be. This is precisely why our writer begins this letter to the Hebrews in the way he does.

HEB 1:1-3 "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."

Our Almighty Savior comes to us and says, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no man comes to Father but by Me." Consider the ways in which the Holy Spirit is trying to encourage us to the fact that Christ cared for us so much that He even gave us a glimpse of His ministry in Melchizedek 2,000 years before He came into this world.

And then Jesus makes the point that like Melchizedek, He always had us in mind as He fulfilled His Priestly duties to present a pleasing sacrifice to the Father on our behalf. He was faithful to do this and because of His righteousness we now have peace with our God that will never end. Just as Christ's priesthood is eternal, so are we secure to know that His blood will ever be our covering, and our joy will be in Him forever.

Andrew Murray says, "That word forever, that we meet in the expressions, Priest forever, eternal salvation, eternal redemption, perfected forever, not only signifies without end, but infinitely more. God is the Eternal One; His life is eternal life. Eternal is that which is divine, in which there is no change or decay, but everlasting youth and strength, because God is in it. The everlasting priesthood of Christ means that He will do His work in us in the power of the eternal life, as that is lived in God and heaven. He lives forever, therefore He can save completely."

JOH 4:14 ..."whoever drinks the water I give him *will never thirst*. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to *eternal life*."

JOH 10:28 "I give them *eternal life*, and they shall *never perish*; no one can snatch them out of my hand."

2TH 2:16-17 "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us *eternal encouragement* and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word."

1TI 1:17 "Now to the *King eternal*, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory *for ever and ever. Amen.*"

It is Christ's life we now have by faith in Him, and that life is the essence of who God is, *eternal*. May we get a glimpse of how great that life is and may we appreciate that life in a way where we honor God with our lives and live to His glory each day.

We are servants of the Most High God who has given us the privilege to share in His eternity. Ask the Lord this week to give you an opportunity to be used by Him and by all means ask Him for His strength and grace to accomplish that for Him.

Let me close with an exhortation from HEB 13:20-21 "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."