

PSALM 110 : 4
LIKE MELCHIZEDEK !

*The LORD has sworn and will not relent,
 “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”*

Does anyone want to be **Like Melchizedek**? You might say, “Umm---I don’t really know much, if anything, about him. If he’s anything like his name Melchizedek, probably not.” It’s a great Old Testament name—Melchizedek. It crossed my mind yesterday, that we could have named one of our boys “Melchizedek Kanzenbach.” Quite a handle. At any rate, the Bible doesn’t tell us much about Melchizedek. We learn of him briefly in Genesis 14. He is referred to in Psalm 110, and in Hebrews 5, 6, and especially 7.

Genesis 14 speaks of Abraham. Abraham, as you know, had been chosen by God to be the forefather of the Israelite nation, from which One would be born who would be a blessing for all people of the earth. That Promised One was Jesus. Abraham took his wife Sarah and nephew Lot to Canaan, as God had directed. There Abraham and Lot became so prosperous that they had to part ways to support all the livestock. Lot chose to live in the well-watered Jordan River valley, near five cities Sodom, Gomorrah, and three more. These cities were soon attacked by four kings and were taken away captive, all the people and all the goods. Lot, family, and possessions were included. Abraham with 318 servants born and trained in his own household, went after them, as well as several friends and their men. Abraham attacked during the night and won the victory. Every person and all the possessions were saved. God had blessed his endeavor.

As Abraham and his men were returning, Melchizedek enters the scene. In Genesis 14, Melchizedek is identified as the “King of Salem.” Melchizedek, rejoicing with them, brought out nourishment, bread and wine, for Abraham and his men. A very generous, thoughtful king. However, Melchizedek was more than a king. He was also a “priest of God Most High.” A priest—one who serves as a go-between between sinful people and the holy Lord. The fact that Melchizedek was a priest is very unusual. It would still be 500 years before the Israelites, by then a huge nation, would be freed from Egypt under Moses. God would appoint Moses’ brother Aaron and Aaron’s sons as the only priests among the people of God. Melchizedek is a priest about whom we have no background and no knowledge of parentage. Nor do we ever hear of descendants and subsequent family. He was not from the family of Aaron. Yet, he was a priest of the true God. He blessed Abraham in the name of God Most High. He praised the Lord who delivered the enemies into Abraham’s hand and gave him the victory. Genesis 14 even says, Abraham gave Melchizedek “a tithe [a tenth] of all.”

The New Testament letter to the Hebrews makes a very strong point about Abraham giving Melchizedek a tenth. Consider: Abraham himself was a very important figure in God’s plan of salvation. Abraham was forefather of the Israelite nation and of the Savior Himself. Abraham was a man of great faith in God. Abraham believed God’s promise of the Savior and it was “accounted to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Abraham was saved by faith in—by trust in—the Savior-to-come. We too are saved by faith in, by trust in, the same Savior, who has come. “A man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). That was Abraham. No one saves self. Don’t try to “sell” God on how good you are and that He should open heaven’s doors for you. This Abraham, who was saved by faith, the one from whom the special priesthood of Aaron and Aaron’s sons would come, gave tithes to Melchizedek! Years later Aaron and his sons would receive tithes from the people (for needs of the tabernacle and for their own family provisions), but here they themselves through Abraham give tithes to Melchizedek! The lesser gives tithes to the greater. Who was this Melchizedek?

This incident with Abraham ends; it is the only event from Melchizedek’s life given us in the Bible. Melchizedek is referred to again in Psalm 110:4, our text for today. *The LORD has sworn and will not relent, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”* Here the LORD in heaven is taking an oath—promising, swearing on His own great, faultless, and unchanging name—assuring someone that he will be a priest, a go-between between God and man, a very special priest, forever, like Melchizedek. **FIRST:** How is Melchizedek priest “forever??” There is no statement in the Bible of Melchizedek’s birth or death. His priesthood is spoken of here and just left in mid-air. Without a beginning point or an endpoint, it just goes on—forever. **SECOND:** Who in Psalm 110:4 is the “you” to whom God is speaking? This Psalm was written by David. Was it to David that God swore the oath to be a priest forever? No, David died and did not continue. Nor was David ever spoken of as a priest. Who is the “you”?

The “you” is Jesus! How do we know? David says in verses 1 and 2 of this Psalm, *The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”* “The LORD said to my Lord. . . your enemies your footstool.” Clearly “you” or “your” is not David. It is the Promised Savior, the Messiah, the Christ, who is seated at God’s right hand, defeating all enemies at the cross and finally at Judgment Day!

Jesus Himself quoted these same verses as referring to Himself (Matthew 22:41-46). He had asked the Pharisees whose son the Christ would be? They knew the Old Testament and that the great Messiah King would come from David’s line, so they said, “The son of David.” Jesus then referred them to this Psalm, where King David said that the Messiah, seated at the Father’s right hand, would be his—David’s—Lord. “My Lord.” *The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”* The Promised Messiah would also be true God—David called him “my Lord.” Therefore, in our text from this same Psalm when David says, *The LORD has sworn and will not relent, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek,* the Psalm is talking about Jesus.

Jesus is the one “in the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7 helps us a lot at this point. It presents many thoughts in regard to Jesus being like Melchizedek and standing above the priesthood of Aaron. (Read Hebrews 7.) Jesus is our King, just like Melchizedek was King of Salem. Jesus, like Melchizedek, is our Priest, our go-between between holy, righteous, God and sinful, delinquent man. Like Melchizedek, Jesus has no beginning or end. His divinity is eternal. Like Melchizedek, He was not from the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron. He was from His King David and the tribe of Judah. He was King and Priest. Did Jesus ever offer sacrifices in the Temple where Aaron’s descendants served? No. He offered Himself on the cross to God as the one payment for our sin. Jesus was both Priest and sacrifice! Melchizedek’s priesthood was superior to that of Aaron and sons; for they, through their father Abraham, offered tithes to Melchizedek! The lesser always gives tithes to the greater. Likewise Jesus’ priesthood was superior to that of Aaron and his sons. Jesus’ priesthood, as God swore to Him, would last forever. He would never cease or need a replacement. He would never need someone to finish what He didn’t. Aaron and his sons had to offer sacrifices day after day. Jesus offered one sacrifice for sin for all time, when He offered up Himself. Jesus served in the pattern of Melchizedek. The entire Christian church brings their tithes and offerings to Him. Jesus is our Melchizedek.

How blest we are! There is forgiveness for us, once for all, in His blood. During Lent we think of His suffering and punishment for us. If you did something wrong, did your brother or sister ever step in and say, “I know he / she is guilty; but give me the thrashing instead” Unheard of! But Christ as priest had so much love for you, He offered Himself to the death for you..

The Hebrew name Melchizedek has a very fitting meaning. *Melchi* is “My King.” *Zedek* is “Righteousness.” “My King of Righteousness!” That well describes Jesus. Not only is He the King who rules over us, defends us, cares for us, He is also our Priest who makes us right with the Father and supplies righteousness for us through His own blood. Forgiven and righteous in Him!

There is more. Melchizedek was also King of Salem. *Salem* is an altered form of the Hebrew word “Shalom”—*shalom* you might know. *Shalom* means “Peace.” Jesus is also our “King of Peace.” He provides peace-and-order in this life. Even better, He provides peace with God. It’s a peace that passes all understanding. Your life and your world can be crashing down around you, but you have peace with your Father in heaven. Jesus sacrificed Himself for you. He surrendered as if in defeat, but rose again in total victory. What a Melchizedek you have!

Who really was Melchizedek? We don’t know. Some guess perhaps Noah’s son Shem (ancestor of Abraham) possibly still alive at Abraham’s time. Others conjecture that Jesus Himself, before taking flesh and blood through Mary, here appeared as a man—like the Lord and two angels visiting Abraham. We don’t know.

We do know you cannot be like Melchizedek. But Jesus was and is! And through Jesus you are God’s righteous child at peace with Him. Listen to Hebrews 7:23-27: *There were many [Old Testament] priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He [Jesus], because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---