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continue from 5:10

**Melchizedek
the priest –
some basic
facts and the
symbolism of
his life**

1. A king and a
priest

2. He ministered
to Abraham in a
time of distress

3. He received
from Abraham a
tenth part of the
goods taken from
the enemy

• A one-off tithe

4. He ruled in
righteousness and
in peace

Now after a long digression in 5:11–6:20 our writer is ready to pick up where he left off in Hebrews 5:10. He was wanting to speak more of Jesus' being a high priest in the order of Melchizedek (5:10). Now he continues from that point.

In the story in Genesis 14, Melchizedek appears and disappears suddenly, with nothing said about his birth, his death, or his ancestry.

First we are introduced to some basic facts. ¹*For this Melchizedek was king of Salem and a priest for God Most High. He met Abraham when Abraham was returning after defeating the kings, and when they met, Melchizedek blessed Abraham.* There are at least six items we should notice in 7:1–3.

1. In the symbolism of his life he was king and priest at the same time. In the days of Abraham, Melchizedek was a literal earthly king over the city-state called Salem (later known as Jerusalem). He knew the God of the Bible. Perhaps his knowledge was a matter of tradition passed down through people like Abel, Enoch and Noah. **So** he was also able to act as a priest for his people in Salem, as well as being their king. Nothing like this could ever happen with the kings and priests of ancient Israel. The kings of Israel came from the tribe of Judah. The priests came from the tribe of Levi. Jesus is not and never was a Levite. He was the **fulfilment** of the Mosaic law and as a Jew he kept it perfectly. But in his earthly life he could never be a Levitical priest, for the priests of Israel had to come from the tribe of Judah. Jesus was never allowed inside the earthly temple in Jerusalem. But Melchizedek was literally a king over an earthly city, and he literally functioned as a unique high priest over his people.

2. Melchizedek ministered to Abraham in a time of distress. Genesis 14 tells us the story of how on one occasion when Abraham was returning from a battle this priest of 'God Most High' came out to meet him on his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and his allies. He prayed for Abraham and shortly after that Abraham received a fresh revelation that God was his shield and reward. Melchizedek presented Abraham with bread and wine, to sustain him in his physical tiredness.

3. Melchizedek received from Abraham a tenth part (a 'tithe') of the goods which had been taken from the enemy. ²*Then Abraham gave him a tenth of everything he had won in the battle. First, Melchizedek's name means 'king of righteousness', and then he is also king of Salem, that is, 'king of peace'.*

Abraham tithed (once, a tithe of all he possessed!) under the leading of the Holy Spirit. There was no Mosaic law at that time and Abraham's tithing had nothing to do with any legislation. He tithed because he was led by the Holy Spirit to do so. It was his way of expressing gratitude. He 'fulfilled' the law without knowing the law.

4. In the symbolism of his life he ruled in righteousness and in peace. 'Melchizedek' means 'king of righteousness'. His name may be compared with that of a later king of Jerusalem, Adonizedek¹, whose name means 'lord of righteousness'. Melchizedek

¹ Joshua
10:1,3

also ruled over 'Salem' – a word which means peace. So Melchizedek is a picture of Someone who reigns in righteousness and in peace. Righteousness comes first! But then in righteousness, our Lord Jesus Christ found a way of bringing us peace

5. Priesthood was directly given to him by God the Father

• Not inherited from his parents

A picture of the Lord Jesus' ministry

• No beginning nor end mentioned

• In all respects a picture of Jesus our King and Priest – who sustains and refreshes us

5. Melchizedek's priesthood was directly given to him by God the Father. Our writer goes on to say: There is no record of Melchizedek's father or mother; he has no genealogy. ³He has neither beginning of days nor end of life. Melchizedek is like the Son of God; he remains a priest for ever. He is referring to the Old Testament. It does not mean that Melchizedek was a supernatural figure supernaturally born. Rather it means that in the Old Testament there is no reference to his ancestry. The genealogies of all of the key figures of the book of Genesis are given to us – but not any genealogy of Melchizedek. His priesthood was not inherited. It did not matter who his parents were.

There is no mention of the start or end of Melchizedek's priesthood. He appears suddenly in the story of Genesis – and there is no mention of his death. In the providence of God there was a reason why the author of Genesis said nothing about Melchizedek's birth or death. It meant that the story was an even greater picture of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. (We notice here our writer's doctrine of Scripture. Even the minute details of Scripture are controlled by God!) The fact that there is no mention of the start or end of Melchizedek's priesthood means that Melchizedek's story in Genesis resembles the story of Christ. Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He was there as the Son of God in 'the beginning', even before the world was created. He himself is not created.

In all of these respects Melchizedek was a picture of Jesus. Jesus is our king and priest at the same time. He ministers to us amidst the distress of temptations and struggles. He receives our material gifts for use in his kingdom. He rules first in righteousness but then he found a way of bringing us peace. Jesus' high priesthood was directly given to him by God the Father. He is the everlasting Son of God who in his divine power rules and reigns and brings his brothers to heavenly glory. Christian faith is a matter of feeding on Jesus as our sustaining bread and refreshing wine.



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