Melchizedek

 Abram’s Encounter With Melchizedek

Genesis 14:17-20 records Abram’s encounter with Melchizedek after his great victory over the Eastern Mesopotamian Kings and his deliverance of his nephew Lot.

Genesis 14:17 Then after his 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). (NASU)

A comparison of Genesis 14:17 and Hebrews 7:1 indicates that not only did Abram and his allies defeat the Eastern Mesopotamian Coalition but they “slaughtered” them.

Hebrews 7:1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter (Greek noun kope) of the kings and blessed him. (NASU)

Genesis 14:17 records that the five defeated Dead Sea kings, who were unbelievers, went out to meet Abram after his defeat of the Eastern Mesopotamian Kings, and Genesis 14:18 records that the King of Salem, Melchizedek, a believer, did as well.

Genesis 14:21 records that the Dead Sea Coalition led by Bera, the King of Sodom came to Abram empty handed and ungrateful and were preoccupied with and pretentiously demanding some of the spoils of Abram’s victory, which demonstrated their extreme wickedness and involvement with evil.

The five defeated Dead Sea kings come out to meet Abram in the sense of “confronting” him since they ungratefully and pretentiously demanding some of the spoils of Abram’s victory instead of thanking him for getting back their possessions and people who were taken as prisoners of war.

“The King’s Valley” was located a quarter of a mile east of Jerusalem and this is confirmed by 2 Samuel 18:18, which records that Absalom built for himself a marble pillar in the King’s Valley and Josephus says that it was built a quarter of a mile from Jerusalem (Antiquities 7.10.13).

The King of Salem

Genesis 14:13-16 records that Abram pursued the Eastern Coalition as far as Hobah, which was north of Damascus, Syria.

Now, in Genesis 14:17, Abram returns from this great victory and is heading back to where he started his pursuit, the oaks of Mamre, which was in Hebron and
on the way back, he would have stopped at Jerusalem, which in Abram’s day was called “Salem” and would be on his way back.

**Genesis 14:18** And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. (NASU)

The name “Melchizedek” means, “king of righteousness,” or “my king is righteous” since it is a compound word composed of the noun *melekh*, “king” and the noun *tsedheq*, “righteousness.”

Melchizedek is identified as the “king of Salem” or literally, the “king of peace.”

The name “Salem” means, “peace” in the sense of security and prosperity and was the older name of Jerusalem according to Psalm 76:2.

**Psalm 76:2** His tabernacle is in Salem; His dwelling place also is in Zion. (NASU)

*Type of Christ*

Therefore, since his name means, “king of righteousness” and Melchizedek was the king of Salem, which means, “peace,” he is a type of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is both the King of Righteousness and Peace.

He also foreshadows the result of our Lord’s substitutionary spiritual death on the Cross, which is recorded in Psalm 85:10.

**Psalm 85:10** Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. (NASU)

Melchizedek was both a king and a priest according to Genesis 14:18, which typifies or foreshadows the Lord Jesus Christ who is both a king and our Great High Priest.

The fact that Melchizedek held these two offices and was a priest with a throne foreshadows our Great High Priest who is the king of kings and Lord of lords as well as a Prophet.

Psalm 110:4 teaches that Jesus Christ’s royal priesthood is according to the order of Melchizedek rather than the Levitical order since the Lord was from the tribe of Judah.

**Psalm 110:1** The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” 2 The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of Your enemies.” 3 Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew. 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” (NASU)
Hebrews 5:6, 10 and 6:20 quotes Psalm 110:4 teaching that Psalm 110:4 speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Great High Priesthood is superior to the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood since it is according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7 gives us more details concerning Melchizedek and also teaches that Melchizedek and his priesthood typify the Lord Jesus Christ and His Great High Priesthood.

Who Was Melchizedek?

The Scriptures teach that Melchizedek was “not” an angel, or some superhuman creature, nor was he a manifestation of the preincarnate Christ (Christophany or Theophany) but rather, Melchizedek was an historical human being, who was an historical king and priest, who lived in an historical city.

**Hebrews 7:1** 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. (NASU)

“Without father” is the adjective *apator*, which means that there was no record of who Melchizedek’s father was and does “not” mean that he did not have a human father as was the case with the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Without mother” is the adjective *ametor*, which means that there was no record of who Melchizedek’s mother was and does “not” mean that he did not have a mother, otherwise, how could he have been born, even the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ had a human mother, Mary.

“Without genealogy” is the adjective *agenealogetos* parallels the expression *me genealogoumenos, “one whose genealogy is not traced”* in Hebrews 7:6 and indicates that there was no record of the genealogy of Melchizedek.

In Israel, you could not be a priest unless you came from the tribe of Levi and this had to be demonstrated by genealogy according to Ezra 2:61-63 and Nehemiah 7:63-65.

Personal genealogy was a prerequisite for the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood, thus they preserved with great care their pedigree. But in contradistinction from them, Melchizedek was priest of an order where natural descent was not regarded, an order free from restrictions of the Levitical (Nm. 3:10). Therefore, Melchizedek was an accurate type of Christ who did not belong to the tribe of Levi but rather of Judah.
Hebrews 7:3 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. (NASU)

The phrase “having neither the beginning of days nor end of life” means that there was no record of the beginning of Melchizedek’s service as a priest nor the end of his service and does “not” mean that he was eternal like the Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to understand the meaning of this statement we must understand that the writer is making a contrast with the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priests began their “days” as priests at the age of twenty-five (Nm. 8:24; cf. 1 Ch. 23:27-28) and at the age of thirty they began their regular priestly duties (Nm. 4:3).

At the age of fifty their priestly “life” ended as indicated by the phrase “But at the age of fifty years they shall retire from service in the work and not work any more” in Numbers 8:25.

The statement “having neither the beginning of days nor end of life” in Hebrews 7:3 indicates that Melchizedek did “not” have these restrictions, therefore, he was an accurate type of Christ.

Hebrews 7:3 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. (NASU)

The phrase “like the Son of God” indicates that Melchizedek was not the Lord Jesus Christ but rather he was “like” Him since the verb aphomoioo, “to make like” is employed in Hebrews 7:3 to describe Melchizedek. Being someone and being like someone are two entirely different things.

The meaning of the phrase “he (Melchizedek) remains a priest perpetually” does “not” mean that Melchizedek is still alive and holding the office of priest but rather it means that he served in his priesthood till the day of his death since he had no restrictions on the length of his service as the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood did.

Hebrews 7:4 Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. (NASU)

Hebrews 7:4 teaches that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham in terms of rank and authority since he was the priest of God, which was demonstrated in that Abraham gave a tenth of the choicest spoils to Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:5 And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. 6 But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. 7 But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. (NASU)
Hebrews 7:5-7 teaches that since Melchizedek did not originate from the tribe of Levi in Israel and collected a tenth of the choicest spoils from Abraham and blessed Abraham demonstrates the superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham and thus the Levitical priesthood, which descended from Levi through Abraham.

Hebrews 7:8 In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. 9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. (NASU)

Hebrews 7:9-10 teaches that the Levitical priesthood was inferior to the priesthood of Melchizedek since the former descended from Levi through Abraham and we noted that Melchizedek held a higher rank and authority in the kingdom of God than did Abraham and received tithes from Abraham.

The fact that the priesthood of Melchizedek was superior to the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood foreshadows the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ’s Great High Priesthood over the High Priesthood of Aaron and the Levitical priesthood.

**Melchizedek Was Not The Preincarnate Christ**

Hebrews 7:11 Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? 12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. 13 For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. 15 And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek 16 who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is attested of Him, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.” (NASU)

The term “another” also indicates that Melchizedek is not the Lord Jesus Christ since the Greek adjective that it translates heteros expresses a qualitative difference between Jesus Christ and Melchizedek and denotes “another of a different kind.” Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ’s great high priesthood was another of a different kind than Melchizedek’s.

The prepositional phrase “according to the likeness of Melchizedek” also indicates that the Lord Jesus Christ was “not” Melchizedek but rather that He was “similar,” or “like” (Greek noun homoioites, “similarity or correspondence between Melchizedek and Jesus Christ) Melchizedek.
Melchizedek Prefigures Jesus Christ

Genesis 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. (NASU)

The king-priest Melchizedek prefigures the Lord Jesus Christ in His Great High Priesthood and looks forward to the millennial reign of Christ when the Lord Jesus as a result of His death, resurrection, session and 2nd Advent will reign as a King-Priest over the earth bodily in Jerusalem (Zech. 6:12-15) and at that time, “righteousness and peace” will have “kissed each other” (Ps. 85:10).

The “bread” brought by Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High portrayed the sinless human nature of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ whereas the “wine” portrayed His substitutionary spiritual death.

The combination of bread and wine also refers to the fact that Melchizedek prepared a dinner banquet for the soldiers of the Abrahamic Coalition (cf. 2 Sam. 17:27-29; Prov. 9:5).

While, the Dead Sea Kings come empty handed and ungrateful, Genesis 14:19-20 records that the King of Salem, Melchizedek brought bread and wine for Abram’s troops and for the armies of the Amorite princes who were allied with Abram.

Melchizedek goes out to meet Abram in the sense of “greeting” him, which is demonstrated by the fact that he provides food for the victorious armies of Abram and the three Amorite princes that were allied with Abram. Melchizedek is grateful and does “not” come empty handed whereas the Dead Sea Kings are ungrateful and come empty handed.

Melchizedek Blesses Abram Who In Turn Presents Tithe To Melchizedek

Genesis 14:19-20 records Melchizedek blessing Abram and Abram in turn presents a tithe to Melchizedek.

Genesis 14:19 He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.” (NASU)

“Blessed” is the passive form of the verb barakh, which indicates that the Lord who is the Creator of heaven and earth endued Abram with power so that he was victorious over the Eastern Mesopotamian Coalition.

The statement “blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth” denotes the intimate covenant relationship between the Creator and Abram as indicated by the Hebrew verb qanah, which means, “Creator” although it is translated “possessor” in the New American Standard.
Genesis 14:20 “And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. He gave him a tenth of all.” (NASU)

“Blessed” is the passive voice of the verb *barakh*, which is used to “praise” the Lord for His sovereignty over the nations and giving Abram the victory over the Eastern Mesopotamian Coalition and denotes the covenant relationship between Abram and the Lord.

The statement “blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies in your hand” refers to the fact that the Son of God controls history and therefore, the circumstances of Abram so that he was given the victory over the Eastern Mesopotamian Coalition.

In Genesis 14:19-20, we see that Melchizedek as the priest of God, mediates God’s power and protection by placing God’s name on Abram (see Num. 6:22-27; 1 Ch. 16:2) inferring that Melchizedek is superior in rank and authority to Abram.

Melchizedek reminds Abram that his victory was the result of the Lord delivering the Eastern Mesopotamian Coalition into his hands and did not originate from his own human power or prowess as a military commander or the fighting capability of his troops. He also reminds Abram that not only is Abram’s God the Creator and origin of all things but also the Master of Circumstances and the source of his victory in the face of his trials and tribulations on earth.

The tithe given by Abram to Melchizedek was a form of taxation levied by rulers.

In Genesis 14:20, Melchizedek comes out to congratulate Abram for his victory and remind him of who was the source of his victory and “not” to collect the tithe whereas Abram gives the tithe to Melchizedek recognizing his legitimate authority over him and does this willingly rather than from obligation.

“The tithe given by Abram to Melchizedek is a one time tithe of the booty (cf. Num. 31:25-41), not the annual tithe to the priest (cf. Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21)” (Bruce K. Waltke, Genesis, A Commentary, page 235).

Church age believers are “never” commanded to tithe but are to give to the Lord like Abram, willingly and in thanksgiving rather than from obligation.

2 Corinthians 9:6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (NASU)

The fact that Abram gave a tenth of the choicest spoils of his victory over the Eastern Mesopotamian Coalition to Melchizedek indicates that Abram recognized Melchizedek’s authority and rank and expressed his appreciation and gratefulness to the Lord who gave him the victory on the battlefield.