

Melchizedek Mystery

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A character appears in the book of Genesis who has been the subject of mystery, of wonder, of speculation. His name as given in Scripture is Melchizedek. Who is Melchizedek, and why should his identity matter to you?

In Genesis 14 is an account of a war that occurred during the life of Abraham, sometime in the nineteenth century B.C. A number of kingdoms and city states were involved in the fighting, and finally the leaders of the cities around the Dead [or Salt] Sea area, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela, also called Zoar, went out to defend against four kings representing kingdoms to the north. The kings of the Dead Sea area were defeated, and the victorious kings took goods and provisions from the cities in the flatland around the Dead Sea, and also took captives, including Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family.

Abraham, on hearing the news, took a company of more than three hundred men, and attacking by night, with God's intervention caused the northern army to flee. Abraham and his forces recovered the property that was taken, and probably additional spoils that had been left behind, and also recovered the captives, including Lot and his family.

The king of Sodom went out to meet Abraham as he was returning from the battle. They met at a valley, probably the Kidron valley, also called the King's valley, in the area of Salem, later called Jerusalem.

"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was **the priest of God Most High**. And he blessed him [Abraham, then called Abram] and said: 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.' And he gave him a tithe of all" (Genesis 14:18-20).

Speculation versus Biblical Revelation?

The difference is stark in what the Bible says about this Melchizedek as opposed to the opinions of various religious commentators and so-called scholars about him. According to the speculation of various commentators Melchizedek was Shem, or a Canaanite prince, or Canaan himself (*Gills Commentary*). These are some of the theories about him.

What does the Bible reveal about Melchizedek? Was Melchizedek a pagan priest, was he a mere man who was a type of Christ? Or was he in fact the Eternal God?

Melchizedek King of Righteousness

The Bible identifies Melchizedek as a king. In fact, the name Melchizedek means "King of Righteousness." And he is also called "king of Salem." "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated 'king of righteousness,' and then also king of Salem, meaning 'king of peace'" (Hebrews 7:1-2).

Is anyone else identified as "king of righteousness"? There is none righteous but God. As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). But Jesus Christ lived a sinless life. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: **Who committed no sin**, Nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:21-22). Speaking of Jesus Christ, it's written, "For we do not have a **High Priest** who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, **yet without sin**" (Hebrews 4:15).

Again in reference to Jesus Christ: "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.' And of the angels He says: 'Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire.' But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; **A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness**; Therefore God, Your

God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions” (Hebrews 1:6-9). Note that Jesus Christ is referred to here as God.

In a Psalm speaking of the Messiah, “**Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne**; Mercy and truth go before Your face. Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all day long, And **in Your righteousness** they are exalted” (Psalms 89:14-16).

“The Lord reigns; Let the earth rejoice; Let the multitude of isles be glad! Clouds and darkness surround Him; **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne**” (Psalms 97:1-2).

“In mercy the **throne** will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and **seeking justice and hastening righteousness**” (Isaiah 16:5).

Another Messianic prophecy proclaims, “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “That I will raise to David a **Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth**. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**” (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

Others have blasphemously called themselves “Lord of Righteousness,” or by similar titles, as did an Amorite king of Jerusalem mentioned in Joshua chapter ten. But only God is perfectly righteous. “So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments’” (Matthew 19:17).

If Melchizedek is the king of righteousness, and Jesus Christ is the king of righteousness, each a priest of God, are the two then the same person?

Melchizedek King of Peace

Melchizedek is titled “king of salem,” or “king of peace.” The Hebrew word “salem” means “peace.” But humans don’t inherently know the way of peace. Paul wrote in Romans 3 that all human beings capable of sinning (Jesus Christ excepted, as we’ve seen) are guilty of sin, “And the way of peace they have not known” (Romans 3:17).

The Messiah is the **Prince of Peace**. “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; **And the government will be upon His shoulder**. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, **Mighty God**, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**” (Isaiah 9:6).

Note this prophecy of the Messiah tells us the Son of God is to be head of government, he is God, and he is the Prince of Peace. Who then but the Messiah, Jesus Christ, could be “King of Peace”?

“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord’s house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; **They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore**” (Isaiah 2:1-4).

Melchizedek Priest of the Most High God

Melchizedek was a king, and he was a priest, not a priest of some pagan deity, as has been alleged by some supposed scholars, but a “priest of the Most High God.” Abraham identified this God. “But Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have raised my hand to the **Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth**’” (Genesis 14:22).

The word "Lord" used here is from the Hebrew *Yahweh*, which means the Eternal, the ever living, self-existing God. He is the "Most High," or "Supreme" God. The Almighty, the possessor, or owner, of heaven and earth. The Hebrew word translated "Possessor" could also be translated "Creator." In other words, the creator and owner of all that exists, the owner of the Universe.

Later on, Aaron, the brother of Moses, was appointed to be High Priest of the Levitical priesthood. They, too, were priests of the same God. But a distinction is drawn between priests of the order, or rank, of Aaron, and the order, or rank of Melchizedek. Aaron was a descendant of Levi, one of the sons of Jacob (Exodus 2:1-10).

But Melchizedek was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, **remains a priest continually**" (Hebrews 7:3). In other words, Melchizedek was not born of human parents, he had no beginning, and no end of life. In short, he is **eternal**. He remains a priest **continually**. And he is like the Son of God. "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This [Jesus Christ] is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:17).

Abraham paid a tithe of all the goods recovered from the battle to Melchizedek. The contrast between the Levitical priests and Melchizedek is explained, "Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives" (Hebrews 7:8). In other words, Melchizedek is not mortal, it is witnessed that "he lives," he is eternal.

Now someone might argue that Jesus Christ died. He did die, only because the second person in the godhead emptied himself of his divine glory and became a human being so that he could die, to pay the penalty for our sins, which is death.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation [Greek: 'emptied himself,' as in a number of English translations], taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:5-11).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. **All things were made through Him**, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:1-4).

The "Word" is speaking of Jesus Christ, the second person of the godhead through whom all things that are created were created.

"He [God] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.** And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the **firstborn from the dead**, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:13-20).

"He was in the world, and the **world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him**. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:10-14).

“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but **with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. **He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (I Peter 1:18-21). Having fulfilled his mission as the Savior of mankind through giving his life as a ransom for all who would come to have faith in him, Jesus was resurrected to immortality, the immortality that he had before his sojourn on earth.

Did Christ have an end of life? He died, his life was interrupted, but it did not end, as he is alive today. So though he died a physical death, that death was not an end to his life, as he was soon resurrected.

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know -- Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, **because it was not possible that He should be held by it**” (Acts 2:22-24).

Verses from Psalms 110 are quoted concerning Jesus Christ, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’” (Psalms 110:1; quoted in Hebrews 1:13). And “The Lord has sworn And will not relent, ‘You are a **priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek**’” (Psalms 110:4, quoted Hebrews 7:17).

Jesus Christ is Melchizedek

So Jesus Christ is a priest, not after the order of Aaron, but of the order, or rank, of Melchizedek. The priesthood of Melchizedek is greater than that of Aaron (Hebrews 7:4-10). Aaron and the other Levitical High Priests died. Jesus Christ lives and is immortal. He has an eternal priesthood. Melchizedek is Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is Melchizedek, King of Righteousness, King of Peace, High Priest of God.

Paul wrote of Jesus Christ, “He who is the blessed and **only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords**, who **alone has immortality**, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power” (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

Only God the Father outranks Jesus Christ, and **none other is his equal** in authority. “For ‘**He has put all things under His feet.**’ But when He says ‘all things are put under Him,’ it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself [Jesus Christ] will also be subject to Him [the Father] who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (I Corinthians 15:27-28).

New World Government of Righteousness and Peace

Because Jesus Christ is the King of Righteousness, we can have faith that no matter how much evil is in the world, no matter how corrupt and evil governments become, they are going to be replaced by a government of righteousness.

“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that **scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’** For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. **The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.** But the day of the Lord will come as

a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God**, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? **Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.** Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless" (II Peter 3:1-14).

A prophecy of the Messianic age: "... the Lord shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment. **He shall judge the world in righteousness**, And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness. The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, A refuge in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You. Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion! Declare His deeds among the people. When He avenges blood, He remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the humble" (Psalms 9:7-12).

And another prophecy of the coming age: "Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns; The world also is firmly established, It shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously.' Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the Lord. For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. **He shall judge the world with righteousness**, And the peoples with His truth" (Psalms 96:10-13).

Through his power and his righteous rule, Jesus Christ will establish peace on the earth, as the king of peace. "Of the increase of **His government and peace There will be no end**, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:7).

"Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king's Son. **He will judge Your people with righteousness**, And Your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people, And the little hills, by righteousness. He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, And will break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear You As long as the sun and moon endure, Throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing, Like showers that water the earth. **In His days the righteous shall flourish, And abundance of peace**, Until the moon is no more. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth. Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him, And His enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles Will bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba Will offer gifts. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him. For He will deliver the needy when he cries, The poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, And will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; And precious shall be their blood in His sight" (Psalms 72:1-14).

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, **your King is coming to you**; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak **peace to the nations**; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth'" (Zechariah 9:9-10).

We have a God and King in whom we can trust, who is also our High Priest, to whom we can go for forgiveness, mercy and strength in time of need.

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Rejoice! For in Jesus Christ we have the King of Righteousness, the King of Peace, coming to bring peace and righteousness to the earth. And we have a faithful High Priest who is ever living and ever ready to make intercession for us.

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