

Melchizedek

Here is a big mouthful of a name! When one first encounters it in the Bible it seems difficult to pronounce and to spell. However, it is a name one is not likely to forget, even though its mention is brief and does not seem to be of any great significance. We find this mysterious person in a living active role only in Genesis chapter 14. However his name comes up again in Psalm 110, in the sense of an example or similitude in reference to our coming Lord Christ Jesus. Had his name not been brought up again in the New Testament Book of Hebrews in connection with Jesus, it would have been relegated to the “so what” list of other Old Testament personages that seem to have little, if any, relevance for us. However, his name appears a total of nine more times in the New Testament, all in the Book of Hebrews. Again however, it is only in the context of his apparent role as a precedent type of Christ. This is but one of several ways that the Book of Hebrews attempts to prove from Old Testament verses that Christ Jesus is in fact the predicted Messiah.

The following are the mentioned Scriptural references:

Genesis 14: 17-24 “17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorla-o’mer and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king’s dale. 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: 20 and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. 21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. 22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: 24 save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Arner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”

Psalms 110:4 *“The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”*

Hebrews 7: 3 *“without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.”*

The other three references to him are found in Hebrews 5, and 6. However, they add nothing more to our learning about him, but only repeat what has already been said as to Jesus being “after the order of Melchizedek.” Now let us see if what Scripture says can provide us with clues as to just who he really was.

Let us start by making a list of everything Scripture mentions about him.

1. His name translates to “King of Righteousness”
2. It says that he was the king of Salem. Salem, or Shalom, means “peace” Therefore he was also the king of peace. It’s widely presumed that Salem was an earlier name for Jerusalem. However, what is now Jerusalem was the capital city of the Canaanite tribe known as the Jubusites. At the time of this event, 550 years before Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, the city was known as Jebus. It continued to be known as the pagan city of Jebus for many centuries. It was never effectually occupied by Israel until it was conquered by David. Therefore, it seems overwhelmingly evident that it could not have been what is here called Salem. Absent this possibility, it is difficult to justify a belief that there was such a city anywhere in this pagan occupied region where Melchizedek could have been “king.” By the way, this is the first mention of the word “peace, or “salem.”
3. He brought forth bread and wine.” Were there barrels of wine and many baskets of bread to satisfy the mass of people, both rescuers and rescued who followed Abram back after his victory over the Chedorlaomer and his fellow invaders? Or was it a ceremonial offering to God, and participated in only by him and Abram, and possibly Lot. Or was it enough for everyone there, just as occurred centuries

- later at the marriage in Canaan where Jesus turned many gallons of water into the finest wine? I suspect that it was the latter.
4. “---and was the priest of the most high God.” The most high God is the translation of the Hebrew word “El-Elyon”. This expresses what we might call the all encompassing Father, or the Triune Godhead. To have called God by this name expresses an unusual understanding of our one and only true creator God, the Triune God-Head. It expresses the same relationship with the fathers as Jesus had, and has. This is the first mention of “priest.”
 5. Abram acknowledged Melchizedek as a priest of the most high by giving him “tithes of all.” This is also the first mention of “tithes.” That’s about all we get from Genesis chapter 14.
 6. Hebrews chapter 7 gives us some additional and very interesting information about him. “...*without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.*” This is a very strange and telling characterization unique to but one Personage, Jesus!

With all of this in hand, let us see what others have concluded about Melchizedek. Some, especially the Rabbinical writers, have claimed that he was Shem, others Job, or an angel, or some unique celestial being, or Cleops, the alleged builder of the pyramids, or just a plain man of faith. The most common belief is that he was a God-fearing King of a City called Salem that later became Jerusalem. A very few have suggested that he was a Theophany. However, it seems that many have chosen to not even address the question. J. Veron McGee doesn’t seem to question his identity beyond call him a man having the described characteristic. Matthew Henry and Matthew Poole both mention the rabbinical view, that is that he was Shem, and refrain from offering any other opinion. John McArthur makes no suggestion in his study Bible as to who he was other than a man. Missler seems to have a similar view. The Haley’s commentary mentions the rabbinical view but doesn’t offer any other answer. HH Ironsides lists who he isn’t and then simply says that he was Melchizedek, nothing more nothing less. Wiersbe ignores the issue. Throughout my searching I have only found Henry Morris, and a Cindy Marcell, who I

found on a remote website, who shares most of my views about who he was. After much prayer, musing, careful study and analysis of the Word, I am fully convinced that he was in fact the son of God as a Theophany in one of His numerous earthly appearances as recorded in the Old Testament. The following are the bases for this conclusion.

1. It couldn't be Shem, unless we ignore Hebrews 7:3, because we know Shem's year of birth and death as well as his genealogy. (Shem was born in 2446 B.C, and died in 1846 B.C.)
2. While Job was a "perfect and upright man" (Job 1:8) there is nothing from the extensive probing of his life or faith that could lead to assigning him the characteristics described of Melchizedek.
3. Nowhere are angels indicated as having the spiritual authority that Melchizedek had.
4. That he was simply a great and righteous man and presumably king of a city only 19 miles from Hebron, a city that was later called Jerusalem, is an attractive and well accepted belief. However, careful contemplative examination of Scripture should leave one totally dissatisfied with that choice, as will be discussed below.
5. To conclude that he was the Son of God in one of His pre-incarnate appearance is not without its difficulties. However, in my opinion these difficulties are but superficial and can be easily scrapped away without doing any violence to God's Word. The following is the basis on which it seems compellingly evident that this was a Theophany.
 - When we recognize that Salem means peace, we can call him king of righteousness and king of peace. Who but God, as the Son of God has any right to such a title and who is the only Person described in this manner over and over again in Scripture? To be precise Jesus the Son of God is call the "Prince of Peace because effectually He is not yet King. Peace is certainly within his power, and in His kingly prerogative. He gives that peace that "passeth all understanding" to each individual who believes in Him as the King of Righteousness. That is our source of salvation, a blessing that only He can bestow. His kingdom of Peace will come after

the Great Tribulation. However, Jesus the Son of Man/Son of God came into being nearly 2,000 years later. Prior to that, all physical appearances of the Son of God were “Theophanies.”

- Could there have been a city called Salem? There is no way to know there wasn't, except that it makes no sense at all that such a city, with such a pure and godly man in charge could possibly exist in the middle of pagan Canaan centuries before any Semite, other than Abram entered the land. However, the only mention of a city by that name in Scripture is in the verses of Genesis and of Hebrews, where Melchizedek is called “king of Salem” From this some infer that there was such a city that somehow was later called Jerusalem, and earlier called Jebus. Jebus was the main city of one of the seven “nations” of Canaan. The Jebusites were known to have inhabited this particular region. To the extent that I have studied other historical evidence related to this city, it appears to have remained under Jebusite control until it was conquered by King David, over eight hundred years after the time of Melchizedek.
- This seems to be the case, notwithstanding the fact that it is referred to as Jerusalem even where the exploits of Joshua are recorded hundreds of years earlier. This is not strange, nor is it in any way evidence of a conflict simply because Scripture calls the city Jerusalem long before it was it was renamed from Jebus to Jerusalem. There are several examples in Scripture where a place or a tribe of a certain name is identified instead by a name given to it long after the recorded circumstances. This obviously happens when the writer is recording an earlier event at a time when he already knows the new name. In Judges 19:10 we find evidence suggestive of this very issue where it says “and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem”. Here we see the place still indentified as Jebus about 50 years after Joshua first mentioned the name Jerusalem. It seems to me to be all but impossible that this pagan city, or any other place in Canaan would have had a human living king having anywhere near the godly

stature along, with the true faith and knowledge as expressed by Melchizedek. Again, while nothing is impossible for God, such a champion of the faith, to be the ruler of a mystical city, that was part of, and completely surrounded by a sea of idol worshipers of the worst kind, is unlikely to the extreme, and would surely have been mentioned in some more definitive way. Therefore, king of Salem, I believe can, in this case, be safely concluded to be the King of Peace in the highest eternal meaning of the word, and not the name of any mortal, or of any particular place.

- An apparent and seemingly major stumbling block that throws so many off is found in Psalm 110 which speaks of the coming Jesus as being “*a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*” This suggests that Jesus is not Melchizedek, but only “after the order.” This “after the order” relationship is also used again in Hebrews 5:10, 6:20. The logic of this is that they cannot be one and the same person because this phrase only suggests a likeness, and not a single identity. The word “order” in Hebrew is “dibrath” which also means arrangement or character. From my viewpoint and that of a few others, this poses no problem. The pre-incarnate Christ, not Christ Jesus Himself, but singularly the Son of God who could manifest as man-like, as could angels.

However, in the flesh, this was not the man Jesus who, in order to be a real man had to be born of woman and grow up to become a genuine flesh, bones, and blood man. Thus, while the Theophany was the second “Person” of the Triune Godhead, as was the spiritual aspect of Jesus, their earthly presences were not entirely the same. To say then, that Jesus was after the order (style, arrangement) of Melchizedek is perfectly in harmony with this precept. The very spiritual essence of the Theophany, that is the, second personage of the trinity, was the same spiritual essence that later indwelled the human body of Jesus, the Son of God, Son of Man. Thus Jesus most certainly was “of the order” of God Himself as God

appeared as a Theophany to Abram, calling Himself King of Righteousness and King of Peace.

- The statement that Melchizedek was “*without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto that Son of God,...*” (Hebrews 7:13) is simply stating the true identity of Melchizedek with great precision. For those who believe that he was a man, this statement is rationalized away by simply assuming that it doesn’t actually mean what it says, that is that he had no father or mother etc. They believed that it is merely symbolic, and that the Author simply chose not to disclose these facts about this “man’s” lineage. To take this statement in any other way than literally is, in my opinion, Wrong! It is close, if not in fact, blasphemy! There is no evidence, or any reason why God would author this little vignette if it wasn’t for our learning. Melchizedek, as simply a mysterious man Abram just happened to meet, I feel tends to trivialize God’s Word. It was a historical event conveying an important message. We should recall that “Christ” singularly means “anointed”. This was not the anointed Jesus, instead it was the Anointed Son of God. It was the fact that the Spirit of Jesus was the Spirit Son of God. This later made Jesus the anointed one.

Need we go further into this? Hasn’t the case been made compelling enough to accept the fact that Melchizedek was in fact the Son of God in one of His pre-incarnate visits to His creation? This certainly was not a unique visit by any means, for we find references to such visits throughout the Old Testament. In this case it was one of several visits to Abraham, the man He chose to be the father of many nations, and especially of the line through which He would come back as Jesus the Son of God/ Son of Man.

In retrospect, as I again ponder the subject, I’m compelled to ask myself why God chose to place this bit of imagery within the earliest portion of Scripture. There seems to be no textural context to which it is related. Prior to this, and after the flood, I find no evidence or indication that God had ever appeared on earth in physical human form. That “...*the*

April 10, 2014
Dec 10, 2010
June 13, 2014

Sept 27, 2010
April 26, 2016

Lord had said unto Abram...” as recorded in Genesis 12:1 does not present itself as having been a Theophany. What seems to me to be the reason is that God wanted us along with Abram, who would be the father of the Hebrew nation, to experience first hand, the physical presence of the Son of God. This then provided the foundation for later equating Melchizedek with Jesus, as does in Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 7:3. As we know all Scripture relates to Jesus the Son of God/Son of Man. I believe that here is the introduction to that message. Notice a short time later, when 3 “men” came to Abram’s tent on their way to Sodom, he had no problem recognizing which one was the Theophany. That is because he had already met Him as Melchizedek!