

Our Great High Priest Part V—A Priest Forever

“Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 7:17).

“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blest him, to whom also Abraham divided a tenth of all; first on the one hand being interpreted “king of righteousness”, and then also king of Salem, which is “king of peace”, without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, being made to resemble the Son of God, remains a priest forever” (Hebrews 7:1-3).

Perhaps the most important single reality in the redemptive process of God is the Priesthood of Christ. The author of Hebrews made this unmistakably clear—*“Of all the things which we have spoken this is the sum [chief]—we have such a Priest”* (Hebrews 8:1).

The priesthood is a universal symbol of the connection between man and His God or gods. There is no way that man can come unaided into the presence of the Master of the Universe. And indeed, most religions stand in awe of the Deity and rely on the priest to gain His favor. In religions where the priest is on the one hand the access to the Deity, but on the other, a barrier against any personal interaction, the people have little more than some vague sense that their offering is accepted and that the Deity is satisfied. The close personal touch with the Creator is germane, primarily, to Christianity.

A Priest after the order of Melchizedek. The priesthood of Christ was not merely an extension of the Old Testament priesthood. It was an entirely different order of things. The so-called “Aaronic” priesthood was the one established with Moses at the formation of the nation of Israel after the people had left Egypt. At this time, of course, the laws were established which would be the heart of God's people. The prophets predicted that this heart, written on tables of stone, would be exchanged for a “new heart,” written in the sacrifice of Christ. The religious aspect of the Jewish nation was administered by a priesthood which was ordained to be the province of the tribe of Levi. Aaron, the brother of Moses, was the first in the line of this priesthood. Jesus, coming from the tribe of Judah, had no legal right to participate in that priesthood. Nor could he have functioned adequately in such a priesthood to provide for mankind an everlasting atonement. So God had established a different priesthood of a spiritual and eternal nature, which would not be subject to the limitations of the flesh. And so we have the order of Melchizedek.

The story of Melchizedek is brief and simple and yet profound, and only perceived through the Holy Spirit. This, of course, is true of all the major elements of redemption. What could be more simple than the use of a sacrifice for sin, for example, and yet what could be more unfathomable than the willingness of God to provide such a sacrifice for His fallen creatures. And still more profound—the providing of a Son for that sacrifice.

Melchizedek was, by definition and description, extraordinary. It is quite possible that he was, in fact, a so-called “pre-incarnate” appearance of Christ Himself. The description in Hebrews 7 would certainly support this idea.

Melchizedek. *Melek*, “king;” and *zadok*, “righteousness.” The name embodies the essence of all that God intends for creatures who went totally the wrong way and are now, through the sacrifice of Christ, turned in the right way or “the way of righteousness.” This change comes not by the will of man, but the will of God.

King of Salem. *Shalom*—peace. *Shalom* means more than peace in the sense of cessation of hostility, but peace in the sense of harmony and well-being. It is part of the universal Jewish greeting and conveys the desire for the utmost in blessing. In the coming of Christ, God held out His scepter to His people, disowned in the Fall and now welcomed again to His Kingdom.

Without father, without mother, without genealogy. If Melchizedek were only a type, this would mean no more than the absence of a record of these things. But the text does not say “without record of.” It says, “without.” If this were, indeed, Christ, there would not have been as yet any human lineage as there was with Jesus.

Having neither beginning of days or end of life. This could only truly be said of Christ, the projection of the eternal Spirit of God. The earthly Jesus had both beginning of days and end of life, as far as His natural person was concerned, but he was, nevertheless, possessed by the eternal Spirit of God.

Remains a priest forever. As Melchizedek had an eternal priesthood, so also Christ, a priest in the order of Melchizedek. But will there be need for a priesthood in heaven? Apparently, yes. On what grounds? On the grounds of the eternal separateness between God and man. We are truly partakers of His divine nature as Peter has said, but we will never be gods. Children are partakers of the nature of their parents, but they are never the same as their parents. As God is eternally God, and we are eternally human, Christ must forever be the catalyst that maintains the intrinsic oneness.

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