

# The Mystery of MELCHIZEDEK Solved!

by Herbert W. Armstrong

**F**EW MYSTERIES of the Bible have attracted more interest than the mystery of the identity of Melchizedek. *Who is he?*

You will read in Hebrews 6:19-20 that Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, is High Priest "after the order of Melchizedek." The plainer English of the Moffatt translation words it: "... with the rank of"—that is, equal status with—"Melchizedek."

## Melchizedek Was God's Priest

First, notice from both Old and New Testaments that the man of mystery, Melchizedek, was a priest of the ~~Most High God. Turn now to the~~ account in Genesis 14. During the war between a number of ancient city-states in Canaan and Mesopotamia, Abraham's nephew Lot had been captured. He and his family and goods were carted off.

One of their number escaped and brought the news to Abraham, who armed 318 of his own servants and pursued the invaders to what was later named Dan and beyond. Abraham rescued Lot and his family and returned them safely to the Canaanite cities.

On Abraham's return a man of mystery bursts upon the scene. Abraham was ministered to by Melchizedek.

Here is the account: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. And he [Melchizedek] blessed him [Abraham] and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!' And Abram gave him [Melchizedek] a tenth of everything"—that is, a tithe of all,

for a tithe means a tenth (Genesis 14:18-20, RSV).

Notice that Melchizedek was king of Salem. That is the city of Jerusalem. "Salem" comes from the Hebrew word meaning "peace." That would make Melchizedek the "King of Peace" (Heb. 7:2). The Hebrew name *Melchizedek* itself means "King of Righteousness" (Heb. 7:2). The same individual is mentioned in Psalm 110:4. Speaking prophetically of Christ, David stated: "The Eternal hath sworn, and will not repent. Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." This verse is quoted again in Hebrews 5:6, 10.

Before we turn to Hebrews for the *identification* of Melchizedek, remember that this mystery figure is a ~~mystery only to us. Abraham and the~~ King of wicked Sodom knew exactly who he was. They must have seen him before. He could not have been a Canaanite, for they were steeped in pagan customs. And furthermore Canaan was a descendant of Ham, whereas God basically chose the descendants of Shem to accomplish His work.

Then who is the mystery man Melchizedek?

One other hint before we proceed. The land of Canaan from ancient time, before the days of Moses, was known among the Gentiles as "the divine land"—the *Holy land*—the land of the place of *worship!* Why? Was there someone in the Holy Land who was *divine, holy, worthy of worship?*

## The Mystery Clears

Coming to Hebrews 7, we find Melchizedek identified:

"For this Melchisedec, 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 by inter-

pretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of *peace*" (Heb. 7:1-2).

Since God names individuals what they are, that, then is what this man is: "*King of Righteousness.*"

Think of it! *King of Righteousness.*

Jesus Himself said: "There is none good but one, that is, God" (Matt. 19:17). Human self-righteousness is, before God, as filthy rags. None can be righteous but God—or one *made* righteous by God's power—Christ in a person! And certainly none but One of the Godhead—the divine Kingdom of God—could be *King of Righteousness*. Such an expression, applied to any but God, would be blasphemous. Why?

*Righteousness* is obedience to God's Law. Since God made all laws (James 4:12), He is Supreme Ruler or King. He determines what righteousness is. "All thy *commandments* are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). When speaking of one of the points of that Law, Jesus placed Himself *superior* to it. He is *Lord* of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). No man is Lord or King over God's Law. Only God could be! *All* human beings have sinned and broken that Law of righteousness (Romans 3:23).

To continue with Hebrews 7. Note, too, that this man was King of *peace*. "Salem"—from which Jerusalem was named—means "peace." And remember, Jesus is called the Prince of *peace!* No human being could be *King of Peace*. Men know not the way of peace. Read Romans 3:10 and 17: "There is none righteous, no, not one. . . . And the way of peace have they not known."

Observe further: Melchizedek was "without mother, without father, without descent," or as the Phillips translation renders it: "He had no father or mother and no family tree." He was not born as human beings are.

He was without father and mother. This does not mean that Melchizedek's records of birth were lost. Without such records human priests could not serve (Ezra 2:62). But here Melchizedek had no genealogy. He must *not* have been an ordinary mortal. He had no descent or pedigree *from* another, but was self-existent. Notice Paul's own inspired interpretation of this fact: "Having *neither beginning of days, nor end of life*" (Heb. 7:3). Therefore He has always existed—from eternity! He was not even *created*, like angels. But He is now eternally self-existing. And that is true only of GOD—deity, not humanity!

#### **Not the Father Nor the Holy Spirit**

Yet Melchizedek cannot be God the Father. He was the "*priest of that Most High God.*" Scripture says no man has ever seen the Father (John 1:18, 5:37), but Abraham saw Melchizedek. He *cannot* be God the Father, but rather, "*made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually*" (Heb. 7:3).

And there it is! In the days of Abraham, He was *not* the Son of God, for He had not yet been *born* of the virgin Mary—but He was made

*like unto* the Son of God in His manifestation to the ancients.

Notice again: Melchizedek, this scripture reveals, *abides*—that is, remains permanently, continually, a *priest*. God the Father is not the Priest of God, but Christ the Son *is!* Yet, in the days when the Apostle Paul lived and wrote, shortly after Jesus ascended to heaven as High Priest, the scripture states that even *then* Melchizedek "*abideth*"—which means does *now* abide—"a priest continually." The Moffatt translation states it: "*continues to be priest permanently*"—even while Jesus Christ is High Priest!

And notice that the *order* of Christ's Priesthood is named after *Melchizedek*. It is the *High Priest's* name that is placed upon an order—just as Aaron's name was upon the Aaronic priesthood. Thus Melchizedek was then High Priest, in Paul's day, and even now, and He will rule forever! And at the same time *Christ* was, is today, and shall be forever High Priest!

Are there *two* High Priests? No! *Impossible!* The conclusion is inescapable. Contrary to many cherished man-thought-out ideas, Melchizedek and Christ are *one and the same!*

Some people have stumbled on the

statement that Melchizedek has no "end of life." They contend that since Christ died, He had an end of life! If that be true then Christ is still dead! But Christ is *not* dead. He is alive. It was not possible for Christ to be held by death (Acts 2:24). Melchizedek would never have fulfilled His office of High Priest if He had not died for the sins of the people and risen again. It is the function of the High Priest to lead the way to salvation.

Indeed, Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of our salvation (Heb. 5:9; 12:2). He is "called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:10).

And no wonder. Melchizedek and Christ are one and the same Person! □

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