

The Mystery of MELCHIZEDEK Solved!

Mr. Armstrong's series of broadcasts on Hebrews produced thousands of requests for this intriguing article.

by Herbert W. Armstrong

FEW 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 Palestine 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 Dan and beyond. Abraham rescued Lot and his family and returned them safely to the Canaanite cities in Palestine. 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 forth bread and wine; and he was priest of God the Most High. And he [Melchizedek] blessed him [Abraham], and said: 'Blessed be Abraham of God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God the Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he [Abraham] gave him [Melchizedek] a tenth of all'—that is, a tithe of all; for a tithe means a tenth (Genesis 14:18-20).

Notice that Melchizedek was king of

Salem. That is the city of Jerusalem. In Hebrew, names have meaning. "Salem" means "PEACE." That would make Melchizedek the "King of Peace" (Heb. 7:2). The name Melchizedek itself, when translated into English, means "King of Righteousness" (Heb. 7:2).

The same individual is mentioned again 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 chose the descendants of Shem to accomplish His work. When Judah *did* place Canaanites in the house of the LORD, God said He would cause them not to serve in it (Zech. 14:21).

Then who is the mystery man Melchizedek?

One other hint before we proceed. Palestine 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 Palestine who was *divine, holy, worthy of worship?*

The Mystery Clears

Coming to Hebrews 7, we find Melchizedek identified:

"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 divided a tenth of all (being first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then 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" (Luke 18:19). 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.

To continue with Hebrews 7. Note, too, that this man was King of PEACE. Salem—from which Jeru-SALEM 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: "None is 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 Panin Numeric translation renders it: "fatherless, motherless, pedigreeless." He was not born as human beings are. He was without father and mother. This does not mean that Melchizedek's records of physical 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 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 the Most High God." Scripture says no man has ever seen the Father, 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 be 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 incapable. 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 of 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 rose again. It is the function of the High Priest to lead the way to salvation.

Melchizedek Was Worshipped

Continue verse 4 of Hebrews 7: "Now consider HOW GREAT THIS MAN WAS."

These words constitute WORSHIP! Notice a Bible definition of worship in Rev. 13:4—how men worship the "beast"—the Roman Empire—by saying, "Who is like unto the Roman Empire? Who is able to make war with it?" Such words constitute worship—"and they *worshipped* the beast."

But in Hebrews 7, inspired by the Holy Spirit in Scripture, we find this exaltation—this WORSHIP—accorded Melchizedek! Such language could be used in Scripture only of one of the Godhead. Christ is worthy of WORSHIP—even the angels worship Him! But neither angels nor archangels may be worshipped. So Melchizedek is greater than an archangel—He is of the same rank, or station, as Christ!

Yes, of course! For He and Christ are One and the same Person!