

## **INTRODUCTION**

Not knowing the meaning of something can get you in trouble. You've probably heard about the lady who texted her grown son about a death in the family. She wrote, "Your great aunt just passed away. LOL." Her son responded, "Why is that funny?" She wrote, "It's not funny, David! What do you mean?" He said, "Mom, lol means laughing out loud!" She said, "Oh my goodness!! I send that to everyone I thought it meant lots of love. I have to call everyone back oh god."

We're in a section of Hebrews that explains an obscure character named Melchizedek. If you don't know who he is you'll miss the whole point. Let's take a minute and review what Hebrews is all about. This letter was originally written to Jewish believers who had come out of a system of Old Testament rules and regulations. They were facing persecution, and some of them were considering going back to their old religion. The writer is trying to convince them to stay faithful to Jesus. I've entitled the series "Eyes on Jesus." The theme of the book is how Jesus is better. So far we've seen that (1) Jesus is better than the prophets. (2) He is better than the angels. (3) He is better than Moses. And now we're in a section that emphasizes that (4) Jesus is better than the Jewish High Priest. The main point is simple: JESUS IS BETTER THAN JUDAISM! I would say it this way: You don't need a religion to get you to heaven, you need a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I usually read the scripture first before I introduce the outline of the message, but since this is a rather lengthy passage, I'm going to divide it into two pieces. We'll talk first about this mysterious fellow named Melchizedek. But we won't talk too much about him because the main focus of this message is on the priesthood of Jesus.

### **I. MEL WAS A MYSTERIOUS KING/PRIEST WHO WORSHIPPED ELYON**

There are several names for God in the Old Testament. The most common is Yahweh, which we have Anglicized into Jehovah. Of course, there were hundreds of false gods in the pagan cultures, but this Gentile priest worshipped Elyon, which means, the most high God.

I'll never forget my first visit to the Temple of Heaven in Beijing. The Chinese worshipped many gods, and the Emperor himself was worshipped as a god. But in the Temple of Heaven there is a shrine built to the Most High God, Shangdi. This God is literally called "the God who is known only by His name." Each year for thousands of years, the Chinese Emperor would sacrifice an unblemished bull or a beautiful lamb to this most high God. He would confess that this most high God was the creator of the heavens and the earth. That sounds like the book of Genesis. There are so many similarities between the Temple of Heaven in Beijing and the God of the Bible that you can't miss the connection.

The same was true of this strange priest. He worshipped the Most High God. But who was this priest? If you were making a list of notable characters in the Old Testament, chances are Melchizedek wouldn't be on your list. He appears only twice in the Old Testament. First we read about him in Genesis 14. And then, in Psalm 110, David prophesies that the Messiah would be a priest in the order of Melchizedek. We probably wouldn't even talk much about him,

but the writer of Hebrews mentions him three times, and compares him to Jesus. So let's read about him.

Hebrews 7:1-10. "This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means 'king of righteousness'; then also, 'king of Salem' means 'king of peace.' Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever. Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder!"

Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

In this message we're going to talk a little bit about a strange guy with a strange name. We usually call him MelCHIZedek, but the Hebrew pronunciation is "Mal-kee-sedek." The name means "King of righteousness." For the sake of brevity, we'll just shorten his name to Mel. There are two important things about Mel.

### **A. He blessed Abraham**

We first meet Mel in Genesis 14. Some bad kings had kidnaped Abram's nephew, Lot. Abraham took some of his men and they perform the first Israeli rescue mission. They recaptured Lot, defeat the kings, and captured a lot of bounty from the battle. When they return to the area near Jerusalem we read: "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.'" (Genesis 14:18)

Mel was a priest of righteousness and the king of Salem, which is the basis of the Hebrew word "Shalom." There were many cities named Salem in ancient times, but scholars believe that this Salem is the location that later became known as Jeru-salem. When Abram returned from battle, Mel met him and served a meal to him and his men. And he echoed God's earlier blessing on Abram.

### **B. He was blessed by a tithe from Abraham**

Abraham understood he was blessed to BE a blessing, so he offers ten percent of all his bounty to Mel. Mel didn't demand it or require it, Abram just offered it as an expression of his gratitude to God.

The word "tithe" isn't a religious word; it's a fraction word. It simply means one tenth, just like a "half" means 50%. We see tithing is God's gold standard throughout His Word. It didn't begin with Moses and the Law. Abraham instituted it five hundred years before the Law.

Abraham commenced the tithe in Genesis 14. Jacob continued the tithe in Genesis 28. Moses commanded the tithe in Leviticus 27. God confirmed the tithe in Malachi 3. And Jesus commended the tithe in Matthew 23. He observed that the Pharisees were meticulous in tithing even the herbs of their gardens. He said that they OUGHT to have done that without neglecting the more important matters like justice, mercy, and righteousness.

But enough about Mel, the whole purpose we are introduced to him is to show us how Jesus is a better priest than the Jewish priests who were part of the tribe of Levi. So let's put our eyes on Jesus and notice what makes Him better.

## **II. JESUS IS THE ETERNAL KING/PRIEST!**

Mel was unusual because he was both a priest and a king. Later, when Israel had a king, the king could never be a priest, and a priest could never be a king. They came from two separate tribes. But Mel was both. That's why he is a great picture of Jesus. His name represented both righteousness and peace. And Jesus is the source of our righteousness and peace.

Let's read about this comparison:

Hebrews 7:11-17. "If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.'"

Mel was a great priest. But Jesus is the greatest priest. There are at least three reasons why Jesus is the greatest high priest in the order of Mel.

### **A. Jesus is the greatest high priest because of His miraculous birth**

The angel Gabriel visited a young unmarried girl named Mary in Nazareth to announce that she would give birth to a son. She was baffled. The Bible says, "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:34-35)

Mel was a very unusual guy because of three things we read about him. First, the Bible says he didn't have a father or mother. Can anybody here say that? Second, he had no genealogy. All you have to do to get your genealogy is to go to [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). Third, it says Mel had no beginning and no end.

Some have taken that description and suggested Mel was actually an angel or a pre-incarnate manifestation of Jesus. But I think he was just a man. The thing that made him different from a Jewish priest is that he had no written genealogy. The Jews were meticulous in keeping their genealogy. The Bible speaks of a man who lived a certain number of years and gave birth to this son, and he begat so-and-so. For the Jews, a priest always had to have a written pedigree of his ancestors. Mel didn't have this—and because of this, it made him similar to Jesus.

I agree with Warren Wiersbe who wrote: "Melchizedek was not an angel or some superhuman creature; nor was he an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ. He was a real man and a real king and a real priest in a real city. But as far as the RECORD is concerned, he was not born nor did he die. In this way, he is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God." (*Be Encouraged*, p. 74)

The birth of Jesus was unlike any other birth in the history of the world. When the Virgin Mary held the baby Jesus in her arms she was holding the only baby in the world who never had a human father. But Jesus didn't just come into existence in Bethlehem. He took on human flesh there, but Jesus has existed as the second person of the Godhead from the beginning of the beginning. How old is God? That's not a question that can be answered. In Psalm 90:2 the Bible says, "From everlasting to everlasting you are God."

Jesus truly had no beginning and no end. My favorite riddle is this: Who was the only baby born who was older than his mother and the same age as his daddy? That would be Jesus. He existed before Mary, his mother, and He has existed as long as His Father. So, try asking that riddle to some of your friends; it's a great way to introduce Jesus.

## **B. Jesus is the greatest high priest because of His sacrificial death**

A Jewish priest would sacrifice an animal and carry the blood into the Temple. But not Jesus. The Bible says, "He [Jesus] did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption." (Hebrews 9:12)

The theme of the blood of Jesus is a scarlet thread that runs through the entire Bible. We are first introduced to the blood of the Lamb in Genesis and this theme runs throughout the Old Testament as seen in the sacrificial system of the Jewish priests.

We're going to see in the next message that this system of sacrificing bulls, sheep, and goats NEVER actually forgave sins. It was just a way to temporarily remove the feeling of guilt for a short period of time. The priests would symbolically place the guilt of the people's sins on the animals, and when the animals died, it was as if they were taking the punishment that the

sinful person actually deserved. The animal became a substitute. For centuries, God used the sacrificial system as an object lesson to prepare the Jewish people for the time when the Lamb of God would come. And when John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." We don't need a priest to offer the blood of some lamb or goat for us, because Jesus has gone to the cross to offer His blood to forgive our sins.

Years ago I met with some Chinese pastors in Beijing and I asked them how they entered into a conversation with their friends about Jesus. Their answer surprised me. They told me they just use the Chinese alphabet. The Chinese alphabet is made up of about 700 characters, which are actually small drawings. When you combine these characters you form words.

Jesus, the Lamb of God is our source of righteousness. The Chinese word for righteousness is an interesting ideographic picture. It's comprised of two characters: A lamb or goat that is offered for me. I've been told the character for "me or I" represents a hand holding a weapon. That's the story of humanity from the beginning; we're all guilty of hurting others. So we need a sinless substitute—the Lamb of God in order to experience a right standing before our Creator.

### **C. Jesus is the greatest high priest because of His indestructible life**

We read in Revelation 1 that Jesus said, "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!" (Revelation 1:17-18)

Hebrews 7:16 says Jesus is a High Priest forever on the basis of an indestructible life. Mel lived and died, but we don't have a record of his death, so it's like his priesthood lives on in Jesus. But we know for certain that Jesus died, but He rose from the grave. This word "indestructible" appears only here in the entire Bible. It means "unable to be destroyed."

When I was growing up, I loved reading the Superman comic books. They were only a dime at the grocery store. I had found my hero. And I got to watch him on a black-and-white television as well. Superman was faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound! He was a strange visitor from another planet who came to earth with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal man. Bullets bounced off of his chest. He had heat vision and x-ray vision. He was indestructible! Well, not really, there was this substance called green kryptonite! It took away his powers. He wasn't indestructible after all.

But there is someone who is indestructible. His name is Jesus. Speaking of His body He said, "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will build it back again." There was no green kryptonite or any other substance that can destroy or disrupt the power of Jesus.

So what is the personal application of all this? Whenever you study the Bible you should always ask, "So what?" Now that I've discovered this truth, so what? How will my life change? Let me give you two Take Away Truths:

## **1. As my priest Jesus gives me access to God**

Like Mel, Jesus is a priest and a king. As a priest He gives us access to God. If you were a Jewish man or woman there was only so far you could go in the Temple complex. If you were a woman, you were forced stop at the court of the women. If you were a man, you could go a little further into the court of the Israelites, but then you were stopped. Only the priests could actually enter the Temple buildings. The priests were the ones who prayed and sang. They worshipped, you could only watch because you had no access. The priests performed the worship on your behalf.

But because of Jesus you don't have to pray through any other human. You don't need to pray through Mary. You don't need to confess your sins through some human priest. You can talk directly to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father." (John 14:13)

There are thousands of important people around the world who limit access that people have to them. They may be wealthy, or government leaders, but it would be impossible for us to get an audience with one of these VIPs. But through Jesus we have access to someone much more important than any human celebrity. We have full and instant access to the creator of the heavens and the earth!

## **2. As my king Jesus reigns as my Lord**

This world has had thousands of kings who have come and gone. But there is only one who is called King of Kings and Lord of Lords. As Americans, we don't know much about having a king. Our last king was King George III, and that didn't work out too well.

Last fall, Arnold Palmer, one the greatest golfers of all time, died. His nickname was the King. I got to meet the King on several occasions. One year I was gathered with a group of pastors who were playing golf at the Bay Hill Golf Club in Orlando, which Arnold owned. We were in the clubhouse eating lunch, when Arnold Palmer walked in. Some of us didn't know that he had a strict rule that men shouldn't wear golf hats or caps indoors. So when he walked toward our group he smiled and said, "Gentlemen, we have a rule, no hats in the clubhouse, so please remove your hats."

Nobody challenged him on that. In fact, we just about broke our arms removing our caps so quickly. Then he took the time to go around and meet all of us and shake our hands. I remember that he had a firm grip and he looked me in the eye and said, "It's a pleasure to meet you." He had already had some health issues, so I said, "Mr. Palmer, we're praying for you." He almost teared up as he gripped my hand tighter and said, "Thank you. I really appreciate that."

When the King asked us to take off our caps, everyone obeyed. Do you know how you can recognize that Jesus is your king? You are willing to obey Him immediately. That's what it means for Jesus to be the King of your life, when He tells you to do something, you don't argue with Him. You say, "Yes sir!"

## **CONCLUSION**

He is priest and King. And you can trust Him because He is indestructible.

This week I posted a video of the great African American pastor, S.M. Lockeridge paying tribute to Jesus the King. He said, "I wish I could describe Him to you, but He's indescribable. He's incomprehensible; He's invincible. He's irresistible. You can't get Him out of your mind. You can't get him off of your hand. You can't outlive him, and you can't live without him. The Pharisees couldn't stand Him; but they found out they couldn't stop Him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him. Herod couldn't kill Him. Death couldn't handle Him and the grave couldn't hold Him. That's my king!" Is He your priest and King today?

## OUTLINE

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#### A. He blessed Abraham

"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.'" *Genesis 14:18*

#### B. He was blessed by a tithe from Abraham

### II. JESUS IS THE ETERNAL KING/PRIEST!

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"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." *Luke 1:34-35*

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"He [Jesus] did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption." *Hebrews 9:12*

#### C. His indestructible life

Jesus said, "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!" *Revelation 1:17-18*

### TAKE AWAY TRUTH:

1. As my priest Jesus gives me access to God
2. As my king Jesus reigns as my Lord



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor  
Green Acres Baptist Church  
Tyler, Texas*

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