

Sunday October 23rd 2011
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Twenty Two

1). Heb 6:17 *Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. 7:1 ¶ 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, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," 3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.*

a). We have seen in past weeks how God is absolutely determined to make abundantly clear to those who had fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them that His promise to Abraham and Abraham's descendants concerning rulership of the world was without the possibility of change.

b). And He did this by the two immutable things in which it is impossible for God lie – the promise itself and the oath He swore concerning the promise – these two providing witness that every word God had said would be established.

c). The hope that the heirs of the promise have fled to lay hold of is the very thing that is contained in the promise - Ro 4:13 *For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

d). Hope = Greek – 'elpis', *el-pece* = from a primary elpo (to anticipate, usually with pleasure); expectation (abstractly or concretely) or confidence:--faith, hope.

e). There is absolutely no doubt contained in the word hope as there might be in the way we would use it in common usage today. God's word is certain, as we have just seen, but that which He has said remains our 'hope', our 'confident expectation', because the realization, the manifestation, of God's word remains yet future – Ro 8:22 *For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth*

pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

f). Therefore we have fled for refuge to Christ our High Priest in order to cling with all out strength to the hope that we as yet do not see except through the eyes of faith in the confident expectation that He is able to perform that which He has promised.

g). And this hope that we cling to is fastened in the Rock of our salvation, who in turn is the very embodiment of that hope, as an anchor of our soul that leads us into the presence of the Triune God, behind the veil in the Heavenly Tabernacle - 1Pe 1:3 ¶ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

h). Not only does our hope have its mooring in the Holy of Holies, but the embodiment of our hope, in whom our hope rests, the Lord Jesus Christ, has already entered there as a 'forerunner' having initiated an entrance through a 'new and living way' into the Holiest of all for anyone who would take up their cross daily and follow Him.

i). Now our Lord's entry to the Holy of Holies, and His provision of the 'new and living way' are not accomplished just through the fact that He is the second Person of the Trinity, but rather upon the fact that - Ps 110:4 *The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."*

j). It is then the Lord's Priestly ministry according to the order of Melchizedek that enables Him to enter the Holy of Holies and make a way for those who would enter that same location with Him in that Day. And all of this is accomplished through His resurrection from the dead - 1Co 15:20 ¶ *But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

2). Now the fact that God the Father has sworn and will not relent with regards to His Son's Priestly Ministry according to the order of Melchizedek is quite remarkable given that so little is said about Melchizedek in the scriptures.

a). The actual historical record of Melchizedek is given in Genesis Chapter 14 in just 3 short verses. He is mentioned again with respect to Christ in Psalm 110, as we have just seen, and then is referenced again only in the Book of Hebrews in Chapters 5-7.

b). Everything then that scripture relates concerning Melchizedek and Christ is based entirely on the 3 verses of scripture from Genesis – again this is quite remarkable.

c). Having said that, we will also realize then that what is said concerning Melchizedek in these verses must be filled with the most significant information as it is the basis for the Lord's appointment as Priest apart from the order of Aaron and defines the whole of the Lord's ministry [and that of His joint heirs] for the entire period of the Millennial Kingdom – and this is just the thing that the writer if Hebrews is wanting to draw our attention to.

3). Heb 7:1 ¶ *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, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," 3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. 5 And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; 6 but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. 8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. 9 Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.*

a). Now we know that in the historical time of Lot's capture and eventual release by his uncle Abram, Melchizedek was king of Salem, the city we know today as Jerusalem. Not only was he the king of this city, but he was also 'priest of the Most High God' – this is the first time that the word translated 'priest' appears in the scripture and is the same word used of the Levitical priests later.

b). And maybe we will remember that which we have previously read concerning priests from Hebrews - Heb 5:4 *And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."*

c). What we can conclude then is that Melchizedek did not take it upon himself to be a priest of the Most High God, but he had been appointed to that position by God Himself for the express purpose of providing the type for the future ministry of His Son. Now exactly what Melchizedek's ministry in Salem

looked like and who in particular he ministered to, must for the time being, remain the subject of speculation. That there would be a priest of God and that there were those to whom he ministered is perhaps not entirely surprising as Abraham was only the 10th generation from Noah and so the consciousness and the knowledge of God may have been more widespread than we would think.

d). We also know from our scripture that the literal translation of the name Melchizedek is ‘king of righteousness’ and that the translation of the word Salem would also make him king of ‘peace’ and both of these titles prophetically look forward to the Kingdom of Christ, when the One who personifies both these attributes will rule over the earth.

e). Then in v3 we are told that Melchizedek is - *without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.*

f). Now what we must settle for ourselves is that Melchizedek was a man like any other and therefore he did have a father and a mother, he was born and he did die – however, as far as the scriptural record is concerned, nothing is written with regards to these people or events. And so because there is no scriptural record it appears as if Melchizedek had no father and mother, as if he had not been born and did not die. And needless to say the scriptural record would necessarily be silent in order to establish the picture fulfilled in Christ.

g). And in this absence of genealogy Melchizedek is like the Son of God, as Christ, as God’s Son, also has neither father nor mother, neither beginning of days nor end of life – Christ as the Son of Man on the other hand has a father and a mother; there is a record of His birth and a record of His death – but the Son of God has always been and always will be – Heb 13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

h). And we should note that it is in the absence of a genealogy only that Melchizedek was like the Son of God.

i). And so to follow the logic in this presentation – if there is no record of Melchizedek’s beginning, which there isn’t, then there is no record of the beginning of his priesthood and if there is no record of Melchizedek’s death, which there isn’t, then there is no record of the end of his priesthood – this being the case then it is as if Melchizedek remains a priest continually, as if he were still alive, and his priesthood consequently is without end.

j). Now there is an important distinction to note here – the Levitical priesthood was based entirely upon genealogy with no one being able to minister as a priest unless he was from the tribe of Levi and specifically from the family of Aaron; this is not the case with Melchizedek and therefore his priesthood is a different kind of priesthood to that of Aaron.

4). Let's take an aside for a moment and deal with 2 common thoughts with regards to the identity of Melchizedek.

a). Is Melchizedek actually Christ before His incarnation – something called a ‘Christophony’? No, he can't possibly be, because if he were the incarnate Christ then he would not be the type, but the reality. Also, he would not be ‘made like the Son of God’ – he would be the Son of God.

b). Then some have wondered, including me, whether Melchizedek was in fact Shem as Shem was still alive at the time that Melchizedek met Abraham and he was after all the one who had a God. But again this is not possible because of what the scriptures tell us. Melchizedek has no record of a father or mother or of birth or death, but Shem does - *Ge 5:32 And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.*

Ge 11:11 After he begot Arphaxad, Shem lived five hundred years, and begot sons and daughters.

This being said the scriptures do not contradict themselves and therefore Melchizedek is not Shem.

c). So, who then is Melchizedek? He is the king of Salem and priest of the Most High God – this is all that God has seen fit to share with us and therefore this is all we need to know.

5). Back to the scripture - *4 Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.*

a). The word translated ‘consider’ means a critical, discriminating inspection and so that which is to be given the most exacting scrutiny is just how great this man, Melchizedek, was.

b). Abraham is the patriarch, literally the ‘first father’, the one from whom the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, have their descent and the one from whom his spiritual seed by faith also descend. Not only this, but it is Abraham to whom God has given the promises concerning rulership in both the heavenly and earthly realms of the Kingdom and Abraham who is called the friend of God. And yet despite the enormity of these things Melchizedek is greater than Abraham.

c). And Abraham in giving Melchizedek ‘a tenth of the spoils’ acknowledges Melchizedek's superiority and the validity of his priesthood.

d). The word translated ‘gave’ literally means to take from the top and the whole image here is taken from the practice of collecting into a pile all the spoils that come through victory in battle. The very best of the spoils were on the top of the pile and in the pagan world the top tenth of the spoils, the very best, were given to their gods.

e). The original recipients knowledge of this practice would add extra emphasis to the esteem with which Abraham held Melchizedek and helps us to understand the full significance of Abraham's actions.

6). The idea of tithing, giving the first tenth, is then continued in the verses that follow - *5 And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; 6 but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.*

a). Under the Law of Moses the Levitical priests had a commandment to receive tithes from those who were their brethren. They received the tithe as a commandment of the Law and their brethren gave the tithe as a commandment of the Law even though they were all descended from Abraham.

b). Melchizedek though does not derive his genealogy from Levi or from Abraham and there was no commandment for him to receive tithes and no commandment for tithes to be given to him. And so, Abraham's tithe is given voluntarily, not out of obligation, and is given in response to the blessing concerning rulership of the heavens and the earth - *Ge 14:19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."*

c). Abraham's giving of the tenth to Melchizedek then is an act of faith that declares where his hope lay and can be seen in his comments to the king of Sodom *Ge 14:22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 "that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich' –*

d). Abraham's tithe then demonstrates his focus on the promises of God with respect to that future Day and not his reliance on the things of this world. In his actions in giving we might see the basis for the admonition we find in – *1Ti 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.*

e). Abraham's trust was not in 'uncertain riches but in the living God'.

f). In this whole account then we can see that Melchizedek's is a different kind of priestly ministry that is inherently superior to that which was established in the wilderness. And this thought is continued in the verses that follow.

7). *7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. 8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. 9 Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.*

a). The phrase ‘beyond all contradiction’ speaks of a universally accepted truth that is beyond dispute – and this universally accepted truth is that ‘the lesser is blessed by the better’ and most especially when the blessing carries with it not only the verbal expression of goodwill, but also goodwill achieving actual results. The fact that it is Abraham who is blessed by Melchizedek demonstrates categorically that Melchizedek is ‘the better’ and Abraham ‘the lesser’.

b). In v8 we see that the descendants of Abraham, who are ‘mortal men’ in that they live and die, receive tithes. The word ‘here’ would refer to the receiving of tithes according to the Levitical law by the Levitical priests which was still being observed when this letter was written.

c). The word ‘there’ refers to the scripture in Genesis where it is recorded that Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham.

d). The phrase ‘mortal men’ emphasizes the fact that men who die receive tithes. The Levites were men who died and passed off the scene in due time and were then succeeded by others. The record concerning Melchizedek though does not mention his death. Therefore the record testifies in this way to the fact that he is ‘still alive’. Therefore his office of priest does not pass on to another. Therefore he is still receiving tithes.

e). V9 then brings us again to the Levitical priesthood; this is what we should understand in the reference to the name ‘Levi’. It was the Levites who were commanded to receive tithes from their brethren, yet through Abraham, as Abraham’s descendants [*for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him*] the ones who receive tithes are seen as giving tithes to Melchizedek – again not in response to commandment, but voluntarily, acknowledging the superiority of Melchizedek’s priesthood.

f). So what we are seeing here once again is that Melchizedek’s priesthood with respect to the Most High God, being the first such priesthood that God established, is inherently different from and inherently superior to that established under the Law.

8). Heb 7:11 ¶ *Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?*

a). Now, let’s remember that the Levitical priesthood was established in the wilderness after the nation of Israel had been eternally saved on the night of

Passover and was therefore a ministry to those who were already eternally saved for the purpose of dealing with the sins of the saved.

b). And according to our verse the ministry of the Levites could not bring anyone to that place of completion – this ministry was purely a type, a shadow, a picture, pointing to that which would be accomplished in Christ.

c). And because this priesthood was a type and could not bring anyone to completion is the very reason for the existence of the veil barring the entrance to the Holy of Holies. The High Priest once a year, in order to enter the Holy of Holies, would brush aside the veil, but the veil remained in place and this would be repeated year after year with the veil still barring the entrance.

d). It is only then through Christ that, that which is pictured in the type is fulfilled signified by the tearing of the veil in the temple in Jerusalem. Only through Christ is access into the presence of the Triune God in the Holiest of All in the Heavenly Tabernacle possible and only through Christ that we can be brought to that place of completion receiving the salvation of our souls. –

Heb 10:19 ¶ *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

e). As our scripture from Hebrews 7:11 says – if the salvation of the soul was possible through the ministry of the Levitical priesthood ‘what further need was there that another priest should arise according to the order of Melchizedek and not be called according to the order of Aaron?’

f). Being brought to that place of completion requires a superior priesthood to that of Aaron, a priesthood that is the reality, that comes in fulfillment of the type.

9). *Heb 7:12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. 15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. 17 For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." 18 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

a). And so with a change in the priesthood there must also of necessity be a change of the law. The law established the Levitical priesthood through Aaron and his descendants.

b). Jesus however, does not come from Levi and is not of the family of Aaron but from the tribe of Judah from the family of David and the law of Moses says nothing about priests from Judah.

c). The law is fulfilled in Christ and therefore having accomplished its purpose and having been brought to fulfillment it no longer needs to remain.

d). Mt 5:17 ¶ *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

e). Ga 3:24 *Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

f). The word translated 'being changed' literally means 'to transpose, to put one thing in the place of another' therefore the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek is put in the place of the priesthood according to the order of Aaron.

g). The priests who came 'according to the law of a fleshly commandment' are now transposed by the Priest who has come 'according to the power of an endless life'.

h). 17 *For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.*

i). And here we will stop for this week. Next week, if the Lord is willing, we will continue.