



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 7:1–3; Genesis 14:1–24

“Melchizedek and Jesus Christ: Part I”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the way that they have been, by the Holy Spirit, brought to our attention, the way that they have ministered to us through the years, the way that they have unfolded for us the significance and the blessing of the ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and as we think about the subject that we are embarking upon this evening, we are particularly grateful, Lord, for the knowledge that we have a great High Priest who abides forever, as our advocate and intercessor, at Thy right hand. We thank Thee for all that the Scriptures mean when they tell us we have been in Christ from the foundation of the world, in the divine reckoning and, therefore, our future is settled and secure in the purposes of our great God in heaven. We thank Thee for those unconditional promises. We thank Thee for the commitment of our faithful Godhead to the carrying out of all of the mind of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Father, we are indeed grateful. We pray that our thoughts may become more and more conformable to the things that are found in the word of God and that the sense of Thy presence in our lives may become more significant for us and produce more fruit through us. We thank Thee for the grace of God that bringeth salvation that has come to us. We ask, Lord, that Thou wilt be with us in our studies this evening. May the Lord Jesus Christ be exalted in the things that are said.

We ask, in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well, this evening we are beginning a very significant study in Hebrews chapter 7, because now we are coming more significantly and more directly to the principle theme of this book, if we can think of something as the principle theme, the High Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And chapter 7 is of paramount importance for the Epistle to the Hebrews because the relationship of Jesus Christ to Melchizedek is so significant for this book. In fact, it is the opinion of many very accomplished students of this book that what our author has sought to do in the Epistle to the Hebrews is, essentially, to take Psalm 110 in verse 4, which obviously meant a whole lot to him, and construct this epistle around what that particular text says. “The Lord has sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”

We know if you have read the Epistle to the Hebrews, we know that this particular text and that particular Psalm are cited a number of times in the book. And, not only cited, but the thought of the book gathers around Psalm 110, verse 1, and especially, Psalm 110, verse 4. So the relationship of Melchizedek to Jesus Christ is his unique and characteristic thought.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews conceives of spirituality as access to God. Now, that's very important because, I think, it's very prominent in evangelicalism today to think of spirituality as “getting saved.” And, as a matter of fact, from my experience, you may or may not agree, from my experience, evangelicals today feel if a person gets saved then that's primarily and, almost wholly, what Christianity is all about. Getting saved.

Now, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not, of course, say that's not important. That's where we begin as a Christian. But it's clear from the whole of the New Testament and the whole of the Bible, for that matter, but especially the whole of the New Testament that we are saved in order to embark on the way to maturity. Maturity is the goal of Christian thought in this life not salvation. Salvation is a step along the way. The Apostle Paul makes that very plain in Colossians chapter 1, when he says that his goal is to bring men and women to maturity. That's what he labors for. Of course, he's interested in their being saved but he wants to bring them to maturity.

Now, this author, he thinks of salvation as access to God. Not just getting saved, but access to God, entering into the relationship with the Lord that could be called having new life and then worshiping God, access to Him. And he thinks that this is possible by three things: First, by covenant, or by the divine promises, because the covenants contain the promises and he, of course, thinks very important is the New Covenant, and he will talk a lot about that when we get to chapter 8 and 9. And, we will see how important it is for him. But, covenant, or divine promises, is one of the important ways by which we come to access to God.

He also thinks that since access to God is the important thing, therefore, sacrifice is important or, divine redemption because, of course, there can be no fulfillment of the covenant promises, unless there is a sacrifice by which sin is removed.

And finally and very significantly, the third word that makes possible access to God is priesthood or divine mediation.

So think of this, divine promises, the covenants, divine redemption, the sacrifice, the once for all sacrifice, as he puts it, and then, priesthood or divine mediation, by which priesthood becomes so significant.

The Latin word for priest is *pontifex*. And, as you know, the Pope is Pontifex Maximus. The greatest *maximus* is the superlative form of *magnus*, and so *pontifex maximus* is the greatest *pontifex*. And *pontifex* comes the word *pons*, which means a bridge, and the *fex*, the end of it comes from the verb *fecio*, which means “to make.” And so to make a bridge or to build a bridge, Pontifex. So the Pope is the greatest bridge builder; that is, he’s the great mediator between God and men. Now, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews thinks of the Lord Jesus Christ as the greatest bridge builder; and that no one is a bridge builder at all, for that matter. So priest is *pontifex*, bridge-builder, the one through whom mediation takes place. There is one mediator between God and men and that one mediator is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, just one.

I’ve been, as you know, reading the Bible. I’m on my second way through, now, I have to finish by, I think it’s August the thirty-first, for my second time through, because I now hope that I’ll

live long enough to read it three times this year, and I'm drawing near again to the passage about Korah's rebellion, with Dathan and Abiram. And you'll remember the nature of that rebellion was that Korah and Dathan and Abiram thought that Moses and Aaron were taking too much upon themselves and assuming a prominence that others also might enjoy. And you know the story and the result of that that Moses was very angry with them for not realizing that God had set out, in his own word, who would have the High Priesthood, and they were saying in effect, the High Priesthood ought to be passed around, and others ought to have that, too. And you know the judgment, of course, that God finally brought upon them. The ground opened up and swallowed Dathan and Abiram and others, in order to make plain the point that the priesthood belonged to Aaron. And when you think of Dathan, Abiram, and Korah and their rebellion, it's essentially the kind of rebellion that takes place today when an individual says, "Well, there are many ways of approach to the Lord God and Christianity is just one of them," or, perhaps, we might take the viewpoint that there is a universal fatherhood of God and a universal brotherhood of man, and everybody stands on the same basis with reference to God, and we don't even have to think about the Lord Jesus Christ as being the only way of salvation.

Bishop John A. T. Robinson, who some years ago wrote the very popular book, *Honest to God*, said, "The whole schema of a supernatural being, coming down from heaven, to save," he puts that in quotes, "'to save mankind' from sin, in the way that a man might put his finger into a glass of water to rescue a struggling insect is, frankly, incredible to man 'come of age' who no longer believes in such a *deus ex machina*," or a God out of a machine, the unlikely and extraordinary kind of intervention. But when we have individuals today who react very negatively to the one way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, we have in essence the same thing as occurred when Korah and Dathan and Abiram, and the others, rebelled against the specific position as priest, High Priest, in Israel that Aaron enjoyed.

Where did the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews get the idea of "after the order of Melchizedek?" Well, fortunately, we know where he got it. He got it from Psalm 110. And if you'll

turn over there for just a moment, I'd like to read the statement. It's Psalm 110 in verse 4; I've already cited it, but it's good for you to see it with your own eyes. After saying in verse 1, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”

Now, in verse 4, he says, “The Lord has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.’” Now, that is where the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews got the idea of Christ as a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and from that he's developed his great book.

Let me ask you, for a moment, to think about this because it's rather significant and will give you, I think, an idea of how some people have studied the word of God and, perhaps, how some of us ought to, at least, follow the direction that they, themselves, have followed.

There are 3 verses in Genesis chapter 14, that have to do with Melchizedek. There is 1 verse in Psalm 110 in verse 4, that has to do with Melchizedek; a total of 4 verses, three in Genesis 14, one in Psalm 110 that have to do with Melchizedek. Now, when the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews begins his exposition of the truths that he discusses in this book, it is something of an exposition of those four verses. Remember, we've already had him mention “priest after the order of Melchizedek.”

Now, what does that tell you about Bible study? What does that tell you about how carefully we ought to treat the word of God? This man has taken four short verses and has given us a magnificent exposition of biblical truth, by meditating upon these four verses.

In fact, in the 7th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, just to take this one chapter because it has to do, primarily, with his point, he has stretched the four verses into 28 verses; and that's not all. That will tell you, I think, a great deal about how Bible students should regard the word of God. This man regarded the word of God as extremely important.

I'd like to say this to you, Matthew Henry once said, “We shall not only be called into account for the truth we know and did not apply,” I think all of us in this room would acknowledge that, “we will be called into account for the truth that we knew that we know, and that we do not

apply to ourselves.” Will we not? Why, of course we will. We all know that. We’re going to be called to account for the truth we know and have not applied. Matthew Henry made an interesting addition to it. He said, “But also for the truth that we might have know and did not.” The time that we’ve wasted, thinking about the word of God, the time that we’ve wasted in reflection upon the word of God, the time that we’ve wasted in not growing in the knowledge of the truth of God. We’ll be called into account by that, too.

He’ll not take one of us and say, “Well, you studied and you knew the Epistle to the Ephesians, we’ll just call you to account by what the Epistle to the Ephesians says.” No! You should have been acquainted with the sixty-six books. Shouldn’t you? Come on! Nod your head! You should have! If you don’t think that then you have a few things to learn still. Because you will! You’ll be called into account for what you know and have not applied and for what you might have known but did not bother to become acquainted with.

Now, that’s a long introduction, but I want to read Genesis chapter 14, and then we’ll look at the three verses in Hebrews chapter 7. We’ll spend most of our time this evening on Hebrews chapter 14, because that’s what our author regarded as important.

We read in verse 1, of Genesis 14.

“And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness. [That means, of course, that you should know something about this. Now, remember what Matthew Henry said.] Then they turned back and came

to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar. And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five. Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains. Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram. Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. [That says he went in pursuit almost as far as Damascus, and he was living down near Beth-el in Mamre.] He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And he [that is, Abram] he gave him [that is, Melchizedek] a tithe of all. Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.” 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, 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' except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”

That's a very interesting chapter, isn't it, and it seems rather strange that so much should be devoted to the first twelve verses. It's a chapter of great antiquity and it's of great significance for those who have studied the Bible historically, because this is the first time that the biblical events are expressly coordinated with secular history or with external history. The center of gravity is the same, however. You can see that Abram, the one upon whom God has put his hand, and who has called to himself and has given him the covenantal promises, is an individual that we learn right here is “in the world” but not “of the world.” What, of course, God says of every one of us! We are “in the world” but we are not “of the world.”

The story is a simple story of five petty states who were subordinate to Chedorlaomer and the kings of the East, and they rebelled. And so it would be perfectly natural for Chedorlaomer and those who exercised authority over them to come and attack those who had rebelled against their authority. And what happened is the story of very swift punishment. Chedorlaomer and the forces that came with him were so great that he not only won the battle, he practically devastated the opponents, those five kings that sought to be released from his authority. And they came from the East and they won the battle. And they devastated their opponents. And, not only that, they took all of their goods, and then took Lot. That was a big mistake. They took Lot, Abram's nephew and his goods and left. That's very interesting, isn't it, because Lot is the one that Abram said, when they made division of the land and God said, you know, this is going to be your land and Abram told Lot to pick the part of the land that he would like to have. And in chapter 13, we read.

“And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the



land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they [Abram and Lot] separated from each other.”

And Abram was left with what may have appeared outwardly as the less desirable land. So here we have Lot, the person who chose by the look of his eyes, what seemed best for him, not what seemed best in the sight of God, but what seemed best for him. And now, as a result of what has happened, Lot's prize, of that well-watered plain, which he has chosen carnally by looking out and taking that which appealed to his eyes, rather than asking the Lord about it. He's quickly lost it and, now, he's utterly dependant upon Abram, it turns out. And Abram who has smaller resources, we may imagine since Lot took the well-watered plain now is the one who comes to, in effect, save Lot from his enemies. What a magnificent lesson that is, of what it means to be a believing person and following the Lord God. In the case of Abram, it illustrates the fact, of course, that the person who turns over the affairs of his life to the Lord God is the one who is going to be, ultimately, the strongest and most blessed of all. “He gives the very best,” the poet says, “to those who leave the choice with Him.” And Abram with genuine faith, trusting the Lord, turns out to be the victorious person.

How frequently have you heard people in the Christian community, the evangelical community, who are seeking to defend a position which they admit is scripturally wrong, say to you, “Well, I know that this may not be precisely what the Scripture teaches, but in the particular thing that I'm doing, I feel I can have a much greater and wider influence.” How often have you heard that? I still hear that. I still hear that constantly. Oh, I know, we're in such-and-such a church. “It's not really and totally in harmony with what the Scriptures teach that the church should be, but we feel that we will have a much wider influence.”

Well, the Bible says to obey is better than sacrifice and to harken than the fat of rams. In other words, if we are sure that a certain path is a scriptural path, then no amount of what might appear to be the possibility of a wider influence should be followed. We are responsible for

following the word of God. And one can see here how in the history of these two men, Abraham, following the word of God, becomes the truly influential powerful man, and Lot, the worldly, who has to depend ultimately upon Abram for his deliverance from Chedorlaomer. He lived as you know, in Sodom, and in the New Testament, Peter tells us, “He vexed his soul constantly, because he dwelt in the city of Sodom, at the gate was one of the judges.” But nevertheless, knew that he was in the wrong place and, consequently, was constantly disturbed by it.

The history of these two men proves, beyond a question, that the most effectual way to serve the world is to be faithful to it by separating from it, and testifying against it. Because, it's by that that the Holy Spirit uses that testimony, according to the word of God, contrary to the world, moves in the hearts of the worldlings, who have been elected by God and brings them to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a lesson that, sometimes, we must keep learning over and over again. It is as Samuel said, “To obey is better than sacrifice; and to harken than the fat of rams.”

Well, the story of the deliverance of Lot is told in verse 13 through verse 16. You know, faith makes us independent, but it doesn't make us indifferent. And so Abram is very disturbed when his nephew, Lot is taken captive. And he determines that it should be God's will for him to go out after Lot and to win him back. That's, I think, a rather interesting thing, too, because you would not know from what we have read so far about Abram, that this man was a military genius. Would you? You wouldn't know that. So far as I can tell, there isn't anything there that would indicate that.

And, incidentally, in the history of military warfare, there have been a number of people who have been brought into a military situation, who have in the midst of being brought into it for the first time, have turned out to have the mind of a military man in a most remarkable way. In fact, in Abram's case, he takes along such people as Mithridates and Themistocles and Julius Caesar and Oliver Cromwell and Napoleon and Stonewall Jackson, of course, and, Von Moltke, a World War I, and others you could fill in. What's characteristic of Abraham, as you can see, is one of the characteristics of military warfare. Celerity of movement, suddenness of attack, skillful division of his forces, outflanking and out marching the enemy; it's almost as if this was an Old Testament

description of the Valley Campaign of Stonewall Jackson in the Civil War, for that’s precisely what his small forces did. They were fast moving, they suddenly attacked, they moved off, he divided his forces remarkably as at Chancellorsville, and outflanked and out marched the enemy. And now we all know that in the military schools, when military strategy is studied, his strategy is studied as being significant.

So it’s like Gideon, who also we discover had military skills that didn’t appear. Moses, himself, also, for that matter; but others as well. Abram is shown here to be a magnificent military leader. And with three hundred and eighteen people he destroys the enemy and takes Lot back and brings him back.

Now, in verse 17 through verse 24, Abram has an interesting experience and this is most interesting because the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews knows this very well. And so the king of Sodom, who had been defeated by Chedorlaomer, goes out to meet Abram in the Valley of Shaveh, the King’s Valley, after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. I’ve no doubt, to give Abram thanks for what he had done. And at that point, Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine.

In one sense, the easy battle was for Abraham to go out and defeat Chedorlaomer and the enemy. The real battle, the more significant battle now, will come when he meets the king of Sodom and the king of Sodom says to Abram, we want to give all the spoils to you, Abram. And he’s forced to make a choice. Will it be taking the spoils to himself? Or will it be what God seems to be saying to him, give it away. He had it in his hands. The king of Sodom didn’t have to tell him, “We’re going to give it to you,” because it already belonged to him; he had taken it. But this is the harder battle! And you can imagine that this was a real hard battle for Abram, who has all of these spoils. And after all, what is Abram at the present time? He’s really a homeless man, at this point. So it would have been a tremendous sacrifice for him to say, “No. None of it! We’ll be satisfied with what the Lord God provides.”

Now, it was a handsome businesslike offer that the king of Sodom made to him, but in it there was the hiss of the serpent and the roar of a lion, previously. But we're interested in what is said about Melchizedek. King of Salem! Now, Salem is probably Jerusalem. It's general agreement with that. So he was a king-priest. Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. King of Jerusalem, brought out bread and wine, and he was a priest of God Most High. A king-priest! Now, the fact that he was a king-priest is very important because what is our Lord Jesus Christ? He is a king-priest.

Now, remember, in the Old Testament, Levitical law, the priests were not kings. The kings were not priests. But here we have a king-priest, Melchizedek, and, of course, we know from the New Testament, our Lord Jesus is also a king-priest. But this meeting of Abram with Melchizedek will, ultimately, as he reflects on this, move King David, who wrote Psalm 110, to sing of the greater Melchizedek; because David as a student of the Old Testament, thinking about this event here. I know he thought about it. He wrote about it in Psalm 110. He said, with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, “Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” He said that in the prophetic revelation that was given to him. So he reflected upon this and it caused him to make those magnificent statements of Psalm 110, which we're going to look at next Wednesday night, the Lord willing.

Now, right at the beginning, we know that Melchizedek appears on the scene and nothing is said about his genealogy. Have you noticed that? You've read Genesis? How many of you in this room have read Genesis? Now, how many of you honestly have read it? I'm just kidding. [Laughter] Just kidding. You know, Genesis is a book of genealogies, isn't it? Melchizedek appears without a genealogy. That's very interesting. In fact, David commented upon it as being very interesting. And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, reflecting upon Psalm 110, first, because that's where he learned that Melchizedek was a priest that Jesus, the Messiah, was a priest after the order of Melchizedek looked at these events from the perspective of what David said in Psalm 110, verse 4. So no genealogy. Genesis is full of people with genealogies; this man has no genealogy. In

Aaronic Law, nobody could be high priest who did not have a specific genealogy. In fact, it is specifically stated that you couldn't be a priest if you didn't have a genealogy. And, later on, reading through the Bible, which you are doing this year, I hope, you will discover there are some sections in the Old Testament that make that point. There are people who came back and said, “We come from the priestly family,” but they couldn't show it by specific reference to a genealogy. And they were refused priestly service, because they didn't have the papers, so to speak, of a priest. So that too is important.

So here is a man who appears on the scene, a king and a priest of God Most High; and Abram acknowledges him because he says, “I have raised my hand to the Lord, Yahweh, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth.” He acknowledges that Melchizedek is a true man of God, but Melchizedek has no genealogy. And he is an individual because he has no genealogy who lives according to a different priesthood.

Now, Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine. It's difficult to know precisely what is meant by that. Abram, perhaps, didn't need any refreshment. He had all the spoils, which he had taken in battle. Obviously, it must be somewhat symbolic perhaps symbolic of the memorials of sacrifice as the basis of communion. There's a lot of discussion over this, among the commentaries. Some of them say that this is a reference to the Lord's Supper, ultimately. And one man whose notes I have thought were very good, generally, has said that as far as he can tell there is no reference to that. And those who say that the bread and wine are reference to the Lord's Supper do so at their own responsibility. That's a strange comment to make, isn't it? Who's going to punish me for saying that the bread and wine are reference to the Lord's Supper? I do it at my own responsibility, if I do it. Well, I don't know. There isn't anything that specifically says that. And, maybe, people thought that anybody who reads the Bible will make the connection. If they read the Bible! But, we may not necessarily have to say that that this is a reference, specifically, to the Lord's Supper. It's certainly in harmony with it. And, furthermore, it is very likely that it is a symbolic reference, at least, to the memorials of sacrifice.

How is bread made? Well, bread was made in such a way that it would suggest the fact of suffering because bread was made in this way. The corn passed under the heavy strokes of the flail, the grain had gone between the upper and nether millstones. The flour had been kneaded and then baked in a scorching oven, and that suggests suffering as far as the grain is concerned. And the wine? Why, the wine, too, was from gathered grapes that had been crushed and pressed, till the blood red juice filled the flagons. So there is some reason for suggesting that the bread and wine are the products of suffering. So it may be that that is a reference to that. I'm not going to say that that dogmatic is, because I do not know specifically what could enable anyone to say dogmatically that that's what it is. But it certainly can be.

So he brought forth bread and wine, memorials of sacrifice, we will say. He was priest of “God Most High.” Now, mind you, up to this time, the details of the pre-Abraham revelation are not very full, and so what we are talking about is a person who, in the primal stages of human history, had had some contact with God Most High, whom Abram will call Yahweh Most High, because he knows Him as Yahweh. So what we have, it would seem, are some of the remnants of the revelation, the earliest revelation, that God gave of Himself to those people before Abram.

And Abram now meets Melchizedek who comes from that background. And he knows God, as “God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth.” Now, you would think that a person such as Melchizedek, would be a person who, well would, it would seem would be the person who ought to give tithes to Abram cause Abram is the chosen one of God, to do the works of God, and Abram is the one who has just won this magnificent victory. But we read, that he, Abram, gave Melchizedek tithes of all. Now, it was customary to give tithes to whom? To the one who represents the deity? But, in effect, you were giving tithes to the deity, were you not? Well, you give your money in the Lord's service; you are giving it to the Lord. And so, he, Abram, gave tithes to Melchizedek. This is an admission of the divine office of Melchizedek on the part of Abram. Now, that writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews will, of course, know and make a point on.

Now, in verse 21 through verse 24, after talking about the king of Sodom, who makes the offer to Abram, and the king of Jerusalem, who brings forth the bread and wine, now we hear some words what one who might be called the king of faith because that’s what he was, the great example of the believing man and he says, verse 21.

“Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.’ But Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have raised my hand to the Lord, [Yahweh! Yahweh!] God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 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.’”

If the “Possessor of heaven and earth” fills a believer’s vision, then the goods of Sodom have little attraction for us. That’s precisely where Abram was. The thing that he was most concerned about was the Lord God in heaven, and in the promises that had been made to him, and all of the goods that he had gathered in the struggle to bring back Lot and his family, mean nothing to him in comparison. In fact, he tells the king of Sodom, take it all, “except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.” Those of less insight than I have, let them live according to their less insight, and let them take a little bit. But I won’t take anything.

That’s very interesting, isn’t it? I’m not surprised, the next verse, in Chapter 15 reads, “After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.’” So Abram, which will you take? The goods of the king of Sodom and others? Or would you rather have the Lord God as your reward? Well, he refused the one. God assured him that he was going to have the other.

You know, this says a lot, too, about unbelievers’ gifts to the Lord’s work. There are lots of people who say, “Sure, we’ll take the money, no matter where it comes from.” And they use the

expression, preachers like to use this, “The Devil has had that money for a long time, now it’s time for the Lord’s people to enjoy that money.” To me, that’s almost blasphemous. What God says in the word of God is that he will supply the needs of his believers; and he will supply the needs of his Church; and Abram is a beautiful illustration of that.

Dan Duncan has asked me to speak on Sunday morning, on the Church and Stewardship or Money and I want to lay a little stress on that Sunday morning, in the time that I speak here in his place. So I’ll let it trump. But let me close with a couple of observations.

One is a very practical observation; genuine worldly power or genuine power is found in separation from worldly and fleshly desires unto God. That’s so illustrated there. Abram says, “No, I don’t want that.” And God says, “I’m your exceeding great reward.” And, then, a theological one; now, we know from the New Testament that the priesthood of Melchizedek foreshadows or prefigures the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. Let me read chapter 7, verse 1 through verse 3 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, because this we’ll be talking about next week when in connection with Psalm 110. The writer of the epistle says.

“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 gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,” 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.”

You know, you can almost enter into the meditation of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews as you think about this, because he’s thinking about Genesis 14 and Psalm 110, verse 4, particularly, Psalm 110, verse 4, and the truth there. And then having learned that from David in Psalm 110, he goes back to chapter 14 of Genesis, and says, “Let’s see how Genesis 14, where



Melchizedek is mentioned, illustrates the fact ‘thou art a priest forever,’ referring to the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is “a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.”

So let me just list some things for you. First of all, both are priesthoods of righteousness and peace. We read here, he’s “priest of God Most High,” he’s king of Salem, and so he is a priest of righteousness and peace. So is our Lord Jesus Christ. His name means king of righteousness; Melchizedek. *Melek*, king; *tsedeq*, righteousness. The king of Righteousness is his name and, also, king of peace. So he is king of Jerusalem or Salem, which means peace.

So the king of righteousness and the king of peace; and that is, precisely, what our Lord Jesus is. He is a righteous king and by virtue of what he has done, he also bestows peace. Notice the order, king of righteousness first, then king of peace. There is no peace if the principles of righteousness are not followed. And that’s why our Lord must die on the cross at Calvary and by virtue of that sacrifice, remove sin. Then on the grounds of righteousness, peace may follow as God’s gift.

Secondly, both of these royal priesthoods, Melchizedek’s and Abram’s priesthood, I should say, both of these priesthoods, both the royal priesthood of Melchizedek and the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ, both of these royal priesthoods, Christ’s and Melchizedek’s, are what? They are outside the Mosaic Law, aren’t they? Melchizedek is a royal high priest, but he’s not a Levitical priest; he has no genealogy. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate High Priest to whom Melchizedek pointed his priesthood and to whom the Aaronic priesthood pointed but, at the same time, it was outside of the Aaronic priesthood, because he had no genealogy that one could write down as justifying a Levitical high priesthood.

Do you get the point? The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says he’s looked at it, and he has said Melchizedek is like Christ, both have no genealogy, both are high priests, and thus, of course, it was impressed upon him, that he is a reflection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The confidence that the author of Hebrews had in the truth of Psalm 110:4, is the source of the thought that he expounds in detail in Chapter 7 of Hebrews. Confident from Psalm 110, verse 4,

that Christ is a “High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek,” and not after the order of Aaron. He expounds Hebrews chapter 7, to draw out all of the beauties and glories of this eternal priesthood.

Third, both depend on personal qualification, not inheritance. Melchizedek is the high priest or the priest of Salem and a priest of righteousness by virtue of his own personal qualifications. He’s not a priest by virtue of heredity. Every Aaronic high priest was a high priest by virtue of heredity, after Aaron. You get the point?

Our Lord is no heretical, what I mean to say, I’ve forgotten the adjective that might be used by heredity, at least, is not a high priest by heredity. So his priesthood is by virtue of his character, his personal being, not by virtue of the legality represented by the Mosaic Law. So in this Melchizedek and Christ are similar.

Fourth, both have timeless priesthoods. Now, do you know why we say Melchizedek had timeless priesthood? Do you think Melchizedek died? Yes, he died. But where in Genesis does it say he died? It doesn’t say. So as far as Genesis is concerned, this man comes on the scene, we don’t know anything about him. This specifically said here, he is king of Salem, priest of God Most High. He moves off the scene and we learn nothing else about him. So the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews sees that it is in this way that our Lord may be a type, an illustration, an example of an eternal person, who is a priest. Do you get the point?

Now, you might say that’s an argument from silence. Well, of course, it is an argument from silence, but in this case, we are talking about divine, purposeful silence. That’s different from human situations. We’ll talk about that a little time next week.

But Hebrews, chapter 7 in verse 3, says, “He abides, a priest continually.” That’s the last of the statement. After saying all of those other things, about no genealogy, no beginning of days, no end of life, he abides a priest forever. Verse 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.” That means “continually,” without exception, that *diakonos* is the Greek form.

And fifth, both superior to Levitical priesthood; both of these men superior to the Levitical priesthood that's indicated by the action of Abram, Abram, from Abram will come the Levitical priests. And those Levitical priests will pay tithes to the Lord God, will they not? So the very fact that Abram, in whom Levi was, he will say in this 7th chapter, in Abram paying tithes to Melchizedek, in effect, Levi paid tithes to him, and Levi, Aaron, acknowledges the superiority of the Melchizedekian priesthood by paying tithes in Abram to Melchizedek. Do you get it? Get it. That's what this author's thinking about. That's why he says what he will say in chapter 7.

There's a marvelous little quotation I have. I think I'm going to read it. I believe I've got time to do it if I read real fast, like Rush Limbaugh, [Laughter] “What better,” he's talking about Melchizedek entering and towering over Abraham. When we think of Abraham now, he's the father of the faithful, he appears here. But, suddenly, this man, Melchizedek comes on the scene, and he towers over Abram, because Abram will pay tithes to him. “What better type or symbol could there be of the absolute, the everlasting; because the divine high priesthood in kingship, than that phenomenal figure of Melchizedek? He comes out of the invisible, timeless eternity of the past; he belongs to the timeless assured eternity of the future. He is high priest forever.”

Both provide symbols of suffering. The bread and wine, our Lord, of course, by sacrifice makes it possible for us to sit at the Lord's Table and sit at heaven's most costly and precious feast and remember him who loved us and gave himself for us.

I love this last little stanza, and I'm going to cite it; something that could be a prayer, certainly, from me and from you, “Hail, Melchizedek divine! Thou great High Priest shall be mine! All my powers before thee fall, Take not tithe, take them all.” Isn't that the response that God would have us make? “Take not tithe, take them all.”

Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the greatness of the Son of God and the greatness of the word of God, which has so plainly and plausibly set forth for us the greatness of the Son of God.

“Melchizedek and Jesus Christ: Part I” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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Thank Thee, Father, we praise Thy name; rejoice in such a great High Priest, may we honor Him.

May, Lord, truly, our lives be determined by what Scripture says. We are so weak; we so often fail.

Hold us up, Lord, minister to us by the Holy Spirit. Give us strength and faithfulness.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.