

MELCHIZEDEK – A TYPE OF CHRIST

Thesis: To discuss Melchizedek, a type of Christ and its significance.

- I. Jesus is the Antitype of Melchizedek.
 - A. What is the definition of a type.
 - B. What are the two major views of interpreting types.
 - C. How is a type portrayed in Scripture.

- II. Melchizedek is the forgotten figure of Genesis.
 - A. The current teachings concerning Melchizedek.
 1. He was an angel.
 2. He was the pre-incarnate Christ.
 - B. The Biblical and historical information found in Gen. 14.
 1. He was a contemporary of Abraham.
 2. He was before Aaron the priest.

- III. Jesus is Greater than Melchizedek.
 - A. Melchizedek is greater than Abraham.
 1. He received tithes from Abraham.
 2. He blessed Abraham.
 - B. Melchizedek had authority over Abraham.
 1. Aaron was in the loins of Abraham.

2. Melchizedek had a better priesthood than Aaron.

IV. Jesus is Greater than Levi (Hebrews 7:10)

A. An eternal ministry is found in Melchizedek.

1. Jesus offered Himself once and for all through His sacrifice for sin.
2. Jesus is alive and therefore His priestly duties continue.
3. The Levitical Priesthood was entirely hereditary.

B. Jesus is after the order of Melchizedek.

1. How Jesus is likened unto Melchizedek?
 - a. Jesus was a king.
 - b. Jesus was a priest.
2. Jesus' name is significant
 - a. Righteousness is given by the sacrifice of Christ.
 - b. Peace is received by being right with God.
3. No genealogy is written in the Scriptures concerning Melchizedek.
 - a. He has no end like Abraham and the priests.
 - b. The priesthood of Levi changes but Christ is eternal.

MELCHIZEDEK – A TYPE OF CHRIST

“In the Bible, a type refers to an Old Testament person, practice, or ceremony that has a counterpart, an antitype, in the New Testament. In that sense types should be predictable. The type pictures, foreshadows, or prefigures the antitype.” The type is historical, real, of God, and will find total fulfillment in some other reality. The antitype, on the other hand, is the reality that has, so to speak, come out of the shadows. The study of types and antitypes is called typology (which has nothing to do with the study of typewriters). Dr. Sauer defines type, “As a divinely purposed, historical illustration that actually existed and prefigures its corresponding reality (Video lecture, lesson 18). C.I. Scofield proposed the following definition, “A type is a divinely purposed illustration of some truth, it may be a person, event, thing, institution, or a ceremonial.” Through my research, it seems most types are found in the Torah (Law) and that the fulfillment of the type is found generally in the New Testament. Hebrews seems to be a dominant book in the New Testament for the use of types.

Scholars and others using typology range over a very wide field of interpretation. On one extreme, everything in the Old Testament has a greater truth. On the other extreme, if the word type is not mentioned in the context of the New Testament, then it is not a type. As I have learned, I do not find myself in the middle of these two views. I do hold more to the latter and conservative view, but not dogmatically. A person must take extreme caution in the study of typology for this practice can easily be exaggerated.

Types correspond to the person or thing to which they are compared only in certain ways and sometimes only in one way. Dr. Sauer gave the example of the bronze serpent symbolizing Christ in that it was lifted up for all the people to see and receive deliverance by looking upon it. Through Melchizedek, his unique priesthood, and even his name, Jesus Christ and His work are compared in a number of significant ways.

I have chosen to examine Melchizedek, the priest of the most-high God, and his significance in this paper. What Melchizedek is in type – Jesus is in reality. Most people could not tell you where Melchizedek is found in the Bible. He is easily overlooked and draws no

attention in the book of Genesis. But God had a major plan for this quiet and unnoticed man of early Genesis. There are some who contend that Melchizedek was not a literal man; therefore much conjecture surrounds him. Some insist he is an angel who took human form for a while during the time of Abraham. But the priesthood was a human, not angelic, function (Heb. 5:1). Others suggest that Melchizedek is not a type but is actually Jesus Christ Himself. This view, which means Jesus took on a pre-incarnate form during Abraham's time, is the view of Dr. Henry Morris. But Melchizedek is described as made like the Son of God (Heb. 7:3), not as being the Son of God and this seems to be the central argument between both sides. Scripture does not say that Melchizedek was the Son of God—just that he was “like” the Son. I believe that Melchizedek was a historical human being, whose priestly ministry typifies that of Christ, a man whom God designed to use as a picture of Jesus Christ.

As mentioned earlier, the Bible gives very little historical information about Melchizedek. All we know of this rather obscure, yet very important individual, in the Old Testament is recorded in Genesis 14:17-20.

17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

18 And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

20 And blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

Melchizedek lived in roughly 2000 BC, but the Levite priests were set up around 1400 BC. Obviously, this man must have been a priest in a different order than the Levitical order. Melchizedek met the great patriarch Abraham as he was returning with the booty he won from a battle rescuing his nephew Lot. Notice that in verse 19, Melchizedek blesses Abraham (This is further emphasized in Hebrews 7:6-7). Both Melchizedek and Abraham realized that of the two of them, Melchizedek had greater stature. We know how great Abraham was; it becomes hard to understand how Melchizedek could be even greater with only several verses in all the Old Testament to proclaim it. Yet Abraham viewed Melchizedek as greater. The seventh chapter of the book of Hebrews clarifies this by stating that, “the less is blessed of the better” (7:7).

In addition, notice that in verse 20 Abraham gave 10 percent of the spoils of war to Melchizedek. This would indicate that Abraham recognized Melchizedek as his priest even though Melchizedek was not a Levite. Both the blessing and the tithe point to Melchizedek as the priest of the Most High God (vs. 18-19). “He stands as a priest when there were no priests and is greater than Abraham.” After all, Abraham was the only living Jew at the time this story occurred; in the same chapter (Gen 14:13), he is called the first Hebrew. This short incident demonstrates an extremely important point that there is a priesthood of God outside of Judaism.

Therefore John MacArthur notes that “Melchizedek was priest of the Most High God (Ēl ‘Elyôn, a more universal name of God). The Most High God is over both Jew and Gentile, and is first mentioned in Scripture in relation to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18).” The significance is this: Jesus is not just the Messiah of Israel, but of the world. His priesthood is universal, just as Melchizedek’s. This was an extremely important truth for Jews who had come to Christ, as well as those who were considering putting their trust in Christ. This priest served the one true God, but he lived hundreds of years before the Levitical priesthood came into existence.

Since Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, he is also greater than Levi, therefore establishing that his priesthood is of greater importance than the Levitical priesthood. MacArthur then goes on to say, “Even your own Scriptures recognize a priesthood not only that is completely apart from that of Aaron, but that existed long before Aaron’s.” This was a powerful argument to the Jew concerning Jesus being the great high Priest. From this, the author

of Hebrews constructs his argument: 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. The author knows that Levi didn't actually pay tithes to Melchizedek, but in a way he did. "The point is this, Abraham is greater than Levi, since Abraham is Levi's predecessor, and Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, because Abraham paid tithes to him, therefore Melchizedek is greater than Levi."

The Levitical priests die, but Jesus has been made a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:20). This priesthood places Jesus as the mediator between God and man, completing the redemption of man, and thereby indicating an end to the era of the Levitical priest.

The whole concept of Melchizedek is an amazing insight into the fact that God wrote the Bible. Think about this, in Genesis we have only three verses about Melchizedek. After Genesis 14, and a thousand years later, King David briefly mentions Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4, declaring for the first time that the Messiah's priesthood would be like Melchizedek's. This teaching is found nowhere else in the entire Old Testament. Let us consider Psalm 110:1-4:

1 Of David. A psalm. The LORD says to
my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make
your enemies a footstool for your feet."

2 The LORD will extend your mighty
scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst
of your enemies.

3 Your troops will be willing on your day of
battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the
womb of the dawn you will receive the dew

of your youth.”

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not
repent, Thou art a priest forever after the
order of Melchizedek.

According to verse 4, the LORD promises that the Messiah will be a priest in the order of Melchizedek. This eliminates the problem of Jesus not being in the tribe of Levi. Jesus is not to be a priest in the Levitical order. He is a different kind of priest, an eternal one. This eliminates the problem of the priesthood after the priest dies. No one needs to take over, Jesus is a priest forever.

After another thousand years, the writer of Hebrews tells us even more of Melchizedek’s significance. “The book of Hebrews tells us that Psalm 110:4 is about Jesus. It briefly mentions this in chapter 5, and then again at the end of chapter 6, telling us that Jesus “has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” Chapter 7 then explains this in more detail.”

The writer introduces Melchizedek in Hebrews 5:6. Before he could explain the significance of this ancient priest-king, he gave the warning to the immature Jews who could not bring themselves to accept Christ as their Savior (5:11-6:20). However, The most detailed information is in Hebrews 7:1-3. The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary provides the following interpretation of the seventh chapter of Hebrews:

Within the interpretation of Ps. 110 that occupies much of the epistle to the Hebrews, Hebrews 7 builds on Gen. 14:18-20. Abraham’s acknowledgment of the legitimacy of Melchizedek’s priesthood becomes an argument for the priority of that priesthood over the “descendants of Levi” (vv. 4-10). The messianic ruler of Ps. 110 is, therefore, a priest of a line prior to the Levitical priesthood (“after the order of Melchizedek”; Heb. 7:11-19; KJV “Melchisedec”; cf. 5:6, 10; 6:20). That the narrative of the king-priest Melchizedek is introduced so abruptly into Genesis becomes an argument for Melchizedek’s being “without father or mother or genealogy, “i.e., beginning or end (7:3), and so not only a predecessor but also a type of Christ as “a priest for ever” (cr. Ps. 110:4). The legitimacy

of the Levitical priesthood depends on its descent from Levi; as it has a beginning, so it has an end in the understanding of the author or Hebrews.

Chapter 7 is the focal point of the entire book of Hebrews. It concerns the central and the most important part of Judaism – the priesthood. No sacrifices could be made except by the priest and no forgiveness of sins could be had apart from the sacrifices. Obedience to the law was exceedingly important, but the offering of sacrifices was even more important. And the priesthood was essential for offering them. Consequently, the priesthood was exalted in Judaism. “We today do not fully understand the importance of this office to the Jewish people for whom the book of Hebrews is written. In the Old Testament, Jews were raised believing that a priest was absolutely necessary in their relationship with God. The priest was the mediator who was necessary because of the holiness of God. God planned that certain men should approach him on behalf of the people. They would offer sacrifices to God for the sins of the people.”

The law God gave Israel was holy and good, but because the Israelites, as all men, were sinful by nature, they could not keep the law perfectly. When they broke the law, fellowship with God was also broken. The only way of restoring fellowship was to remove the sin that was committed, and the only way to do that was through a blood sacrifice. When a person repented and made a proper offering through the priest, his sacrifice was meant to show the genuineness of his obedience to God’s requirement. God accepted that faithful act and granted forgiveness.

How was that fulfilled in Jesus Christ? The argument of the author of Hebrews to the wavering Jews was to use Old Testament Scripture to prove that Jesus is the only priest forever. Anyone intending to approach God must do so through Jesus alone, thus rendering the Levites, the temple, and its sacrifices powerless. Hebrews 7:1-10 first presents, then proves, the superiorities of Melchizedek’s priesthood over that of Aaron. The following is given in Hebrews 7:1-4:

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 by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of Peace;

3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

Hebrews 7:1-2 is essentially a summary of the Genesis 14 account.

Melchizedek was himself a king. Four times in two verses (7:1-2) he is referred to as a king. Ruler ship of any sort was totally foreign to the Levitical priesthood. Melchizedek's universal priesthood and his royal office beautifully typify Jesus' saviorhood and lordship, as perfect Priest and perfect King. "Christ unites these offices in their highest sense (king . . . priest)." "Though never known in Israel, the dual role of priest-king was predicted by the prophets." After remembering mentioning Melchizedek in Psalm 110 verses 1 and 4, David looks forward to the Messiah who will be both Priest and King. Because Salem was an ancient name for Jerusalem, Melchizedek ruled over God's special city.

The unusual name of Melchizedek also typifies Jesus Christ in several ways. "The Hebrew word *melek* means king, and *tsedek* means righteousness, so his name is explained as meaning 'king of righteousness.'" Although we have no historical record of his monarchy, we are told that he ruled righteously and peacefully. And since shalom means peace, he was also the "king of peace" (v. 2). These titles are significant because Melchizedek prefigures Jesus Christ."

Melchizedek, however, was king both of righteousness and of peace. The purpose of the Aaronic priesthood was to obtain righteousness for the people. The sacrifices were made to

restore the people to a right relationship to God. They were only a prefigurement, a type, of the one perfect sacrifice that could and did remove sin. They symbolized the sacrifice that makes men righteous – and thereby brings men peace – but they themselves could not make men righteous or give men peace.

“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). “That is the necessary order: righteousness and then peace. Christ gives us peace by giving us righteousness. What the blood of bulls and goats could not do, the blood of Jesus Christ did. Jesus’ sacrifice lasts through all eternity.”

The priesthood was strictly Jewish. The priestly sacrifices, including the one by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, were not permanent. They had to be repeated continually. They provided no permanent forgiveness, no permanent righteousness, no permanent peace.

“The Levitical priesthood was entirely hereditary, through Aaron. Melchizedek’s was personal. From the beginning of the Aaronic priesthood, genealogy determined everything, personal qualification nothing. If you descended from Aaron, you could serve; if you did not, you could not. Consequently, the priests often were more concerned about their pedigrees than their holiness.” Nehemiah 7:64 teaches us,

“These sought their registration among those who were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found; therefore were they deemed as polluted, put from the priesthood.”

A Jewish priest must be from the tribe of Levi. Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi but from the tribe of Judah. That meant that Jesus was disqualified for priesthood, and if He were a priest, He had returned to Heaven. Therefore another priest would need to fulfill his role. If this held true, then Jesus’ sacrifice for our sin would be null and void.

That is why the case for the high priestly ministry was waged in the book of Hebrews. Let us consider what the Scripture teaches. In the Old Testament record, nothing is said of Melchizedek’s parents or origin. His position as priest did not depend on his parents or his genealogy, unlike the Levitical priests. His priesthood was a different kind, a different order. He did not create a lineage of priests, each dying and passing the priesthood to a son. “What is the

meaning of ‘without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life?’ (Heb. 7:3) Levitical Priests were Priests because of their genealogy. But Melchizedek, without genealogy, was the recognized priest of the human race at that time.” I believe the concept of Hebrews 7:3 is not that Melchizedek did not have a literal father or mother, but rather that no record of his genealogy is found in the Bible.

“It is interesting that the single Greek word *agenealogētos* translated without genealogy, is found nowhere else in Scripture – in fact nowhere else in Greek literature.” The Greek word *agenealogētos* means this word “denotes ‘without recorded pedigree’ . . .” Vine’s goes on to say that “the narrative in Genesis 14 is so framed in facts and omissions as to foreshadow the person of Christ.” The point in Hebrews is that Melchizedek’s parentage and origin are irrelevant to his priesthood. We might say today that he came out of nowhere, and then disappeared. “He remains a priest forever . . . is declared to be living” (vv. 3, 8). This mysterious Melchizedek is the prototype of Jesus Christ.

Melchizedek was a type of Christ, not because Jesus had no genealogy but because Jesus’ genealogy was not significant in regard to His priesthood. To be sure, Jesus’ royal genealogy is important. It is given in some detail by both Matthew (1:1-17) and Luke (3:23-38). Matthew’s gospel, in fact, begins as “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ” (1:1). But His lineage is not traced to Aaron or Levi, but to Judah. Jesus Christ, though God’s own Son, was not qualified for the Levitical priesthood. Like Melchizedek, as far as his priesthood was concerned, He had no priestly genealogy and He needed none.

Dr. Sauer said that Jesus Christ was chosen as a priest because of His personal worth, His quality. He was chosen because of who He was, not because of where He came from genealogically. Hebrews 5:5, 10 and 6:20 all echo that Christ was “made a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.” The Levitical priesthood had been superseded.

Psalms 110 predicted that the Lord would be a priest in the same way; not according to genealogy, but by special appointment. “This order of priests was significant in several ways: 1) it was more important than the Levitical priesthood, 2) it implied that the Levitical priesthood was temporary and 3) the new order was permanent.”

Collectively, the priesthood was also temporary. The Levitical priesthood was for the Old Covenant and only for the Old Covenant, the covenant of law. Melchizedek's priesthood, however, had no such time restraints. He abides a priest perpetually. Christ, "because He continueth forever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Hence, also, He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through Him, since He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:24-25). This better hope of Hebrews 7 is the new relationship we have with God. With Christ as our priest and sacrifice, we know that we can receive permanent forgiveness of sins.

"Jesus Christ, of course, is the reality, the true Priest who is eternal, of whom Melchizedek is but a picture. Jesus Christ is a priest, the only Priest, who is alive forevermore. He is a greater priest because He is a living priest, not a dying one. He is the only Priest for all time of the only priesthood that can bring God to men and men to God." Jesus has totally and forever replaced the Old Testament priestly order.

McCullum gives additional thought in stating, "Isn't it amazing that with one mention of Melchizedek in 2000 BC only three verses long, and another in 1000 BC only one verse long, we have ironclad proof that Jesus Christ is the only proper priest then and now? This should teach us something about the Word of God. Although the book spans 2000 years, it is a perfect unit. Also, it seems plain that the author of Hebrews would never have been able to put this all together by himself. God directed him to it." But Jesus abides the same forever; He has a priesthood that is not transmitted to others no needs to be. The book of I Timothy 2:5 gives us the concluding fact, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus."

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