

The Mystery of MELCHIZEDEK Solved!

By Herbert W Armstrong

FEW MYSTERIES of the Bible have attracted more inter-est than the mystery of the identity of Meichizedek. Who is he?

You will read in Hebrews 6:19-20 that Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, is High Priest "after the order of Meichizedek." The plainer English of the Moffatt translation words it: ". . . with the rank of" that is, equal status with "Melehizedek."

Meichizedek Was God's Priest

First, notice from both Old and New Testaments that the man of mystery, Melchizedek, was a priest of the Most High God. Turn 'low to the account in Genesis 14. During the war between a number of ancient city-states in Canaan and Mesopo-tamia, Abraham's nephew Lot had been captured. He and his family and goods were carted off.

One of their number escaped and brought the news to Abraham, who armed 318 of his own servants and pursued the invaders to what was later named Dan and beyond. Abra-ham rescued Lot and his family and returned them safely to the Canaan-ite cities.

On Abraham's return a man of mystery bursts upon the scene. Abra-ham was ministered to by Meichize-dek.

Here is the account:

"And Meichizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. And he [Melchizedek] blessed him [Abra-ham] and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your ene-mies into your hand!' And Abram gave him [Melchizedek] a tenth of everything" that is, a tithe of all, for a tithe means a tenth (Genesis 14:18-20, RSV).

Notice that Melchizedek was king of Salem. That is the city of Jerusa-lem. "Salem" comes from the Hebrew word meaning "peace." That would make Melehizedek the "King of Peace" (Heb. 7:2). The Hebrew name Meichizedek itself means "King of Righteousness" (Heb. 7:2). The same individual is mentioned in Psalm 110:4. Speaking prophetically of Christ, David stated: "The Eternal hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Meichizedek." This verse is quoted again in Hebrews 5:6, 10.

Before we turn to Hebrews for the identification of Meichizedek, re-member that this mystery figure is a mystery only to us. Abraham and the King of wicked Sodom knew exactly who he was. They must have seen him before. He could not have been a Canaanite, for they were steeped in pagan customs. And furthermore Canaan was a descendant of Ham, whereas God basically chose the descendants of Shem to accomplish His work.

Then who is the mystery man Mel-chizedek?

One other hint before we proceed. The land of Canaan from ancient time, before the days of Moses, was known among the Gentiles as "the divine land" the Holy land" the land of the place of worship!" Why? Was there someone in the Holy Land who was divine, holy, worthy of worship?

The Mystery Clears

Coming to Hebrews 7, we find Melchizedek identified:

"For this Melchisedec, king of Sa-lem, 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 by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace" (Heb. 7:1-2).

Since God names individuals what they are, that, then is what this man is.. "King of Righteousness." Think of it! King of Righteousness.

Jesus Himself said: "There is none good but one, that is, God" (Matt. 19:17). Human self-righteousness is, before God, as filthy rags. None can be righteous but God~r one made righteous by God's power~Christ in a person! And certainly none but One of the Godhead the divine King-dom of God~ould be King of Righteousness. Such an expression, applied to any but God, would be blasphemous. Why?

Righteousness is obedience to God's Law. Since God made all laws (James 4:12), He is Supreme Ruler or King. He determines what righteousness is. "All thy command-ments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). When speaking of one of the points of that Law, Jesus placed Himself superior to it. He is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). No man is Lord or King over God's Law. Only God could be! All human beings have sinned and broken that Law of righteousness (Romans 3:23).

To continue with Hebrews 7. Note, too, that this man was King of peace. "Salem" from which Jeru-salem was named means "peace." And remember, Jesus is called the Prince of peace! No human being could be King of Peace. Men know not the way of peace. Read Romans 3:10 and 17: "There is none righteous, no, not one.... And the way of peace have they not known."

Observe further: Melchizedek was "without mother, without father, without descent," or as the Phillips translation renders it: "He had no father or mother and no family tree." He was not born as human beings are. He was without father and mother. This does not mean that Melchizedek's records of birth were lost. Without such records human priests could not serve (Ezra 2:62). But here Melchizedek had no genealogy. He must not have been an ordinary mortal. He had no descent or pedigree from another, but was self-existent. Notice Paul's own inspired interpretation of this fact: "Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (Heb. 7:3). Therefore He has always existed from eternity! He was not even created, like angels. But He is now eternally self-existing. And that is true only of GOD deity, not humanity!

Not the Father Nor the Holy Spirit

Yet Melchizedek cannot be God the Father. He was the "priest of that Most High God." Scripture says no man has ever seen the Father (John 1:18, 5:37), but Abraham saw Melchizedek. He cannot be God the Father, but rather, "made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7:3).

And there it is! In the days of Abraham, He was not the Son of God, for He had not yet been born of the virgin Mary but He was made like unto the Son of God in His manifestation to the ancients.

Notice again: Melchizedek, this scripture reveals, abides that is, remains permanently, continually, a priest. God the Father is not the Priest of God, but Christ the Son is! Yet, in the days when the Apostle Paul lived and wrote, shortly after Jesus ascended to heaven as High Priest, the scripture states that even then Melchizedek "abideth"~which means does now abide~"a priest continually." The Moffatt translation states it: "continues to be priest permanently" even while Jesus Christ is High Priest!

And notice that the order of Christ's Priesthood is named after Melchizedek. It is the High Priest's name that is placed upon an order just as Aaron's name was upon the Aaronic priesthood. Thus Melchizedek was then High Priest, in Paul's day, and even now, and He will rule forever! And at the same time Christ was, is today, and shall be forever High Priest!

Are there two High Priests'? No! Impossible! The conclusion is inescapable. Contrary to many cherished man-thought-out ideas, Melchizedek and Christ are one and the same! Some people have stumbled on the statement that Melchizedek has no "end of life." They contend that since Christ died, He had an end

of life! If that be true then Christ is still dead! But Christ is not dead. He is alive. It was not possible for Christ to be held by death (Acts 2:24). Melchizedek would never have fulfilled His office of High Priest if He had not died for the sins of the people and risen again. It is the function of the High Priest to lead the way to salvation.

Indeed, Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of our salvation (Heb. 5:9; 12:2). He is "called of God an high priest after the order of Meichi-zedec" (Heb. 5:10).

And no wonder. Melchizedek and Christ are one and the same Per-son!