



REASON TOGETHER CHURCH



WHO WAS MELCHIZEDEK?

GENESIS 14:18-20 • PSALM 110:4 • HEBREWS 7:1-28 KJV



SERMON & PASTOR'S COMMENTARY



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WHO WAS MELCHIZEDEK?

Who was the mysterious king and priest who blessed Abraham and became a picture of the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ?

Genesis 14:18–20; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:1–28 KJV

Sermon Transcript

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

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Aloha, church family.

It is wonderful to welcome you to Reason Together Church.

Whether you are here with us in the sanctuary or joining us online, thank you for spending this time with us.

If this is your first time here, we want you to know that you are among friends.

We are not afraid of questions here.

We believe that honest questions can lead us more deeply into the Word of God.

Our question today concerns one of the most mysterious people in the entire Bible.

He appears without an introduction.

He speaks only a few recorded words.

He is mentioned in only three verses in Genesis.

Then he disappears from the historical account as suddenly as he entered it.

Nevertheless, approximately one thousand years later, David wrote about him.

Approximately another thousand years after that, the book of Hebrews used him to explain the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ.

His name was Melchizedek.

Who was he?

Was he an ordinary man?

Was he a heavenly being?

Was he Shem, the son of Noah?

Was he Jesus Christ appearing before His birth in Bethlehem?

Or was he a real historical priest and king whom God used as a picture of the Savior who was still to come?

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for giving us Your Word.

Thank You for the truths that are plainly stated and for the passages that invite us to slow down, study and seek understanding.

Help us today to distinguish between what Your Word says, what it allows and what people sometimes add to it.

Give us wisdom as we study this mysterious priest and king.

Most importantly, help us see Jesus Christ, our perfect and eternal High Priest.

May everything we say honor You and remain faithful to Your Word.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Our primary Old Testament passage is Genesis 14:18–20.

The Bible says:

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

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

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

Before we proceed, let me briefly mention our giving practice.

Today's passage tells us that Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils from the battle.

We are going to study what that meant, but we are not going to use Abraham's action as a way to pressure anyone into giving money.

Reason Together Church does have ordinary expenses.

It costs money to keep the lights on, provide ministry resources and expand the work we are doing online.

Our members have been faithful in providing what is needed and we are deeply grateful.

If you are a guest, your presence is more than enough.

We do not pass a plate and we are not asking you for anything.

There is a gift box available for our members who choose to use it, but giving is never the price of admission and it is never the price of God's blessing.

If this is your first time with us, we would love to know that you were here.

Our guest card asks only for your first name and email address.

We are not building a mailing list to fill your inbox.

We simply want the opportunity to thank you for worshipping with us and to answer any questions you may have.

After the service, please join us at the Reason Together Café.

We have free locally grown coffee served in our RTC mugs.

As we like to say, COFFEE means Christ Offers Forgiveness For Everyone Everywhere.

The coffee is free and so are the refills on conversations.

Now let us return to Genesis 14.

To understand Melchizedek's appearance, we need to understand what Abraham had just experienced.

Abraham's nephew Lot had chosen to live near Sodom.

A coalition of kings attacked the region.

Sodom and Gomorrah were defeated.

Lot, his household and his possessions were taken captive.

When Abraham learned what had happened, he gathered his trained servants and pursued the invading armies.

Abraham defeated them, rescued Lot and recovered the people and possessions that had been taken.

He was returning from that victory when two kings came out to meet him.

One was the king of Sodom.

The other was Melchizedek, king of Salem.

The contrast between these two kings is important.

The king of Sodom represented a city already known for its wickedness.

Melchizedek was the priest of the most high God.

The king of Sodom wanted to negotiate with Abraham over the recovered possessions.

Melchizedek came with a blessing.

Abraham refused to enrich himself through the king of Sodom.

But he received the blessing of Melchizedek and gave him a tenth of the spoils.

Then Melchizedek disappeared from the story.

Genesis does not tell us where he was born.

It does not identify his father or mother.

It does not provide his ancestry.

It does not explain how he became a king.

It does not explain how he became a priest.

It does not tell us how long he ruled.

It does not record his death.

It does not tell us what happened to him after his meeting with Abraham.

That silence is one reason people have been fascinated by Melchizedek for centuries.

But this is where we need to establish an important Reason Together principle.

What the Bible does not record is not necessarily something that never happened.

There is a difference between saying, “The Bible does not record his parents,” and saying, “He did not have parents.”

There is a difference between saying, “The Bible does not record his death,” and saying, “He never died.”

There is a difference between silence in the record and a declaration from God.

If we fail to recognize that difference, we can make the Bible say much more than it actually says.

Let us begin with what we know.

His name was Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7 explains that his name means “King of righteousness.”

He was also the king of Salem.

Hebrews interprets that title as “King of peace.”

Righteousness and peace.

Those titles immediately cause us to think about Jesus.

Jesus is perfectly righteous.

Jesus makes us right with God.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

Through Jesus, those who were once separated from God can have peace with God.

Romans 5:1 says:

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Notice the order.

We are first justified.

We are declared righteous through faith in Christ.

Because we have been made right with God, we have peace with God.

Righteousness comes before peace.

Melchizedek was the king of righteousness and the king of peace.

His very name and title prepared us to see something about Jesus Christ.

Melchizedek was also king of Salem.

Salem is generally understood to have been ancient Jerusalem.

Psalm 76:2 connects Salem with Zion when it says:

“In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.”

That identification is reasonable and strongly supported.

But we should still be careful.

The Bible does not tell us that Melchizedek stood on the precise location where the Temple would later be built.

It does not tell us that he stood on the place where Jesus would be crucified.

Those suggestions may sound dramatic, but they go beyond what the passage reveals.

We do not need to embellish Scripture to make it powerful.

What God actually tells us is already extraordinary.

Before there was a nation of Israel, there was a priest of the most high God serving as king of Salem.

Before Moses received the Law, Melchizedek was serving God.

Before Levi was born, there was a priesthood that did not depend upon descent from Levi.

Before Aaron was appointed high priest, Abraham recognized the spiritual greatness of another priest.

That is significant.

Melchizedek also combined two offices.

He was a king and a priest.

Under the system God later established for Israel, kings and priests normally came from different tribes.

The kings came through Judah.

The priests came through Levi and specifically through the family of Aaron.

A king could not simply decide to enter the Temple and perform the duties of a priest.

King Uzziah attempted to burn incense in the Temple and God judged him for it.

But Melchizedek lived before the Levitical system.

He was both king and priest.

Psalm 110 would later reveal that the coming Messiah would also be both King and Priest.

Melchizedek was “the priest of the most high God.”

The name used in Genesis is El Elyon.

Melchizedek did not bless Abraham in the name of a pagan idol.

He said:

“Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.”

Then he said:

“And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.”

Melchizedek understood that Abraham’s victory came from God.

Abraham responded in Genesis 14:22 by speaking of:

“The LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth.”

Abraham identified the most high God proclaimed by Melchizedek with the LORD, Jehovah, the true and living God.

This raises another interesting question.

How did Melchizedek know God?

We do not know.

The Bible does not tell us when he began worshipping God.

It does not explain how God revealed Himself to him.

But his presence reminds us that God’s work was not limited to the details recorded about Abraham.

God has never been confined by the portion of His activity that He chose to record for us.

Job knew God.

Melchizedek knew God.

Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, would later be identified as the priest of Midian and would rejoice in the greatness of the LORD.

God has always known those who are His.

We should not invent Melchizedek’s history, but we should not be surprised that the most high God had a priest even before the nation of Israel existed.

Genesis says that Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine.

That detail attracts considerable attention.

Christians naturally think about the Lord’s Supper.

Jesus took bread and said:

“This is my body, which is given for you.”

He took the cup and spoke of the new testament in His blood.

Could the bread and wine brought by Melchizedek have provided a picture of Christ?

Possibly.

It is a beautiful connection and it is reasonable to notice it.

But we must also notice what Scripture does not say.

Genesis does not say that Melchizedek offered the bread and wine as a sacrifice.
It does not say that he transformed them into anything.
It does not say that he was conducting communion two thousand years before Christ.
Bread and wine were also ordinary food and drink.
Abraham and his men had returned from battle.
Melchizedek may simply have brought provisions to refresh them.
There is another detail that should encourage our caution.
When Hebrews gives us an inspired explanation of Melchizedek, it discusses his name.
It discusses his title.
It discusses his blessing of Abraham.
It discusses the tithes Abraham gave him.
It discusses his missing genealogy.
It discusses his priesthood.
But Hebrews does not build an argument from the bread and wine.
That does not mean the bread and wine possess no symbolic value.
It means we should not make them carry more theological weight than the inspired writer of Hebrews gives them.
We may say, “This reminds us of the Lord’s Supper.”
We may say, “This could be part of the picture.”
We should not say, “The Bible clearly teaches that Melchizedek administered the first communion.”
That would be turning a possibility into a doctrine.
The Bible is true.
Our assumptions about the Bible are not always true.
Part of reasoning together is learning to tell the difference.
After Melchizedek blessed Abraham, Abraham gave him “tithes of all.”
Hebrews 7:4 explains:
“Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.”
This was not a weekly paycheck.
It was not produce harvested from Abraham’s farm.
It was not the later system of tithing established for Israel.

These were spoils recovered from battle.

Abraham's action occurred centuries before the Law of Moses.

The passage does not command Christians to duplicate everything Abraham did that day.

The point in Hebrews is not primarily the percentage Abraham gave.

The point is the greatness of the person who received it.

Abraham was the patriarch.

God had called him.

God had made promises to him.

The nation of Israel would come from him.

The Messiah would eventually come through his family.

Yet Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek.

Melchizedek also blessed Abraham.

Hebrews 7:7 says:

“And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.”

The writer is telling us to recognize the relationship.

In this encounter, Melchizedek occupied the superior position.

He blessed Abraham and Abraham gave tithes to him.

Then Hebrews takes the argument one step further.

Levi, the father of Israel's priestly tribe, had not yet been born.

Levi would descend from Jacob.

Jacob would descend from Isaac.

Isaac was the son God had promised to Abraham.

In that sense, the entire Levitical line was still within Abraham when Abraham met Melchizedek.

Hebrews says that Levi figuratively paid tithes through Abraham.

The priesthood that would later come through Levi was acknowledging the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood before Levi was ever born.

That is the argument of Hebrews.

Melchizedek's priesthood was older than Levi's priesthood.

It did not receive its authority from Levi.

It did not depend upon the Law of Moses.

It did not depend upon proving descent from Aaron.

Then Melchizedek disappeared.

Nearly one thousand years passed.

Israel received the Law.

The Tabernacle was constructed.

Aaron became high priest.

Generations of priests offered sacrifices.

The Temple was eventually built in Jerusalem.

Then David wrote Psalm 110.

Psalm 110 begins:

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

Jesus later used this verse to demonstrate that the Messiah was more than merely David’s descendant.

David called Him Lord.

Then Psalm 110:4 declares:

“The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Suddenly, the name from Genesis appeared again.

God was announcing another priest.

This priest would not serve temporarily.

He would be “a priest for ever.”

He would not belong to the order of Aaron.

He would belong to the order of Melchizedek.

Why would God promise another order of priesthood if the Levitical priesthood could permanently solve the problem of sin?

Hebrews 7:11 asks:

“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?”

That is an important question.

The Levitical priesthood was not evil.

It was not a human invention.

God established it.

It served the purpose for which God designed it.
But it was never intended to be the final destination.
It taught people about holiness.
It taught people about sin.
It taught people that sin brings death.
It taught people that reconciliation with God required sacrifice.
It taught people that sinful human beings could not casually enter the presence of a holy God.
But those sacrifices had to be offered repeatedly.
The priests themselves were sinners.
The high priest had to offer a sacrifice for his own sins before representing the people.
Every priest eventually died.
Another priest took his place.
Then that priest died.
Another took his place.
Generation followed generation.
Sacrifice followed sacrifice.
The entire system pointed beyond itself.
It pointed toward a sinless Priest.
It pointed toward a perfect sacrifice.
It pointed toward a Priest who would not be removed by death.
It pointed toward Jesus.
But Jesus presented what appeared to be a problem.
Jesus did not descend from Levi.
He descended from Judah.
Hebrews 7:14 states:
“For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.”
If the only possible priesthood was the priesthood of Aaron, Jesus could not serve as priest.
But Jesus never claimed to be a Levitical priest.
He did not attempt to take a position belonging to Aaron’s descendants.
He did not enter the Temple and demand the right to offer sacrifices as a son of Aaron.

His priesthood belonged to another order.

His priesthood was established by the oath of God.

Psalm 110 did not say:

“You will become a priest if you can prove your descent from Levi.”

God said:

“Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

The Levitical priests received their positions through ancestry.

Jesus received His priesthood by divine appointment.

Their service was limited by death.

His priesthood rests upon “the power of an endless life.”

They served temporarily.

He serves forever.

Now we arrive at the question that has fascinated Bible readers for centuries.

Was Melchizedek actually Jesus Christ?

The Old Testament does contain appearances that many Christians understand to be appearances of Christ before Bethlehem.

The Angel of the LORD sometimes spoke as God, received worship and exercised divine authority.

Could Melchizedek have been another preincarnate appearance of Jesus?

Some sincere Bible students believe so.

There are reasons for that conclusion.

Melchizedek appears suddenly.

His ancestry is not recorded.

His birth and death are not recorded.

He is both king and priest.

His name and titles resemble Christ.

He blesses Abraham and receives tithes from him.

Hebrews 7:3 describes him this way:

“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.”

Read that quickly and it may sound as though Melchizedek must be divine.

But slow down and notice the wording.

It does not say Melchizedek was the Son of God.

It says he was “made like unto the Son of God.”

A picture is made like the reality it represents.

A shadow resembles the object casting it.

A pattern resembles its fulfillment.

The phrase seems to distinguish Melchizedek from the Son of God.

There is another difficulty with interpreting every phrase in the most absolute possible sense.

If “without father” meant that Melchizedek literally had no father in any sense, that would not perfectly describe Jesus.

Jesus is eternally the Son of the Father.

If “without mother” meant that he literally had no mother in any sense, Jesus had a human mother named Mary when He entered the world through the incarnation.

The passage is discussing Melchizedek’s Biblical presentation and priestly record.

Genesis contains no record of his father.

It contains no record of his mother.

It gives no genealogy.

It records no beginning or conclusion to his priestly service.

In the pages of Scripture, Melchizedek remains standing as priest.

He has no recorded predecessor.

He has no recorded successor.

His priesthood is not traced through a family line.

That made him a fitting picture of the eternal priesthood of Christ.

Others have suggested that Melchizedek was Shem, the son of Noah.

According to the chronology recorded in Genesis, Shem’s life may have overlapped Abraham’s life.

Later traditions attempted to identify Shem as Melchizedek.

But the Bible never does.

Genesis does not call Shem the king of Salem.

It does not call Shem Melchizedek.

It does not tell us that Shem met Abraham after the battle.

It is an interesting theory, but it remains a theory.

Others have suggested that Melchizedek was an angel or another heavenly being.

Once again, the Bible never says that.

Genesis presents him as the king of a location and the priest of the most high God.

Hebrews compares him to Christ, but it does not clearly identify him as an angel.

The conclusion that best fits the evidence is that Melchizedek was a real historical man.

He was a king.

He was a priest.

He knew and served the true God.

He met Abraham after the battle.

He blessed Abraham.

He received a tenth of the spoils.

Then God intentionally recorded his story without including his genealogy, birth or death.

That silence was not an accident.

God used the way Melchizedek was presented in Genesis to create a picture of a priesthood that did not depend upon ancestry and did not end within the Biblical record.

Melchizedek was not Jesus.

He was made like Jesus.

Melchizedek was not the fulfillment.

He was the pattern.

Jesus did not receive His greatness from Melchizedek.

Melchizedek's place in Scripture was designed to help us recognize the greatness of Jesus.

Melchizedek was king of righteousness by name.

Jesus is righteous by nature.

Melchizedek was king of peace by title.

Jesus purchased our peace with God.

Melchizedek's ancestry is not recorded.

Jesus possesses eternal divine life.

Melchizedek's death is not recorded.

Jesus experienced death for us and then conquered it through His resurrection.

Melchizedek blessed Abraham.

Jesus brings the promised blessing of salvation to people from every nation.

Melchizedek was a priest of the most high God.

Jesus is the eternal High Priest who brings us into the presence of God.

The mystery of Melchizedek is important.

But the majesty of Jesus is the destination.

Hebrews does not tell us about Melchizedek merely to satisfy our curiosity about an ancient king.

It tells us about Melchizedek so we can understand the kind of High Priest we have in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 7:23–24 says:

“And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

“But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.”

There were many Levitical priests because every one of them eventually died.

No matter how faithful a priest might have been, death ended his service.

Jesus died, but death could not hold Him.

He rose from the grave.

He will never die again.

He will never retire.

He will never be replaced.

He will never transfer His responsibility to a successor.

He possesses an unchangeable priesthood.

That means you will never come to God and discover that your High Priest is unavailable.

You will never learn that He has been replaced by someone who does not understand your situation.

You will never discover that His term has expired.

You will never find His throne empty.

Jesus lives.

Jesus reigns.

Jesus intercedes.

Hebrews 7:25 gives us the great conclusion:

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

He is able to save.

Not partially.

Not temporarily.

Not until your next failure.

Not until someone uncovers your past.

Not only when you feel worthy.

He saves “to the uttermost.”

That means completely.

That means perfectly.

That means for all time.

The security of salvation does not rest upon the strength of your hands holding onto Jesus.

It rests upon the strength of Jesus holding you.

It does not depend upon the continuation of an earthly priest.

It depends upon the eternal life of our heavenly High Priest.

Jesus “ever liveth to make intercession” for us.

When you fail, Jesus remains faithful.

When you are weak, Jesus remains strong.

When you do not know how to pray, Jesus continues to intercede.

When the accuser reminds you of your sin, Jesus points to His completed sacrifice.

When you wonder whether God could still receive you, Jesus remains at the Father’s right hand as the proof that His sacrifice was accepted.

The Levitical priests offered sacrifices repeatedly.

Jesus offered one sacrifice.

Hebrews 7:26–27 says:

“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

“Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”

Jesus did not bring an animal to the altar.

He offered Himself.

He did not offer a sacrifice for His own sins because He had no sin.

He offered Himself for our sins.

He did not repeat the sacrifice.

He completed it once.

The cross was sufficient.

The empty tomb confirmed the victory.

His place at the right hand of the Father declares that the work is complete.

You do not need another sacrifice.

You do not need another mediator.

You do not need another earthly priest to provide access to God.

First Timothy 2:5 says:

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

You can come to God through Jesus Christ.

You may have believed that you need to make yourself good enough first.

You cannot.

You may have believed that you need to repair your entire life before God will receive you.

You cannot repair yourself before coming to the One who repairs broken lives.

You may have believed that joining a church, receiving baptism, giving money or performing good works could erase your sin.

Those things cannot pay the penalty for sin.

Only Jesus could do that.

Religion may teach you about sacrifice.

Jesus became the sacrifice.

Religion may place a priest between you and God.

Jesus is the eternal High Priest who brings you directly to God.

Religion may tell you to keep working until you have done enough.

Jesus declared from the cross:

“It is finished.”

Who was Melchizedek?

He was a king of righteousness.

He was a king of peace.

He was the priest of the most high God.

He blessed Abraham and received tithes from him.

He belonged to a priestly order that existed before Levi and Aaron.

His genealogy, birth and death were omitted from the Biblical record.

God presented him as a picture of a priesthood that did not depend upon ancestry and did not end within the text.

He was a real historical priest-king who helped prepare the world to understand our eternal High Priest.

There are details about Melchizedek that God has not revealed.

We should be comfortable saying, "I do not know."

Those are not words of weak faith.

Sometimes they are words of Biblical faithfulness.

We do not honor the Bible by filling every silence with speculation.

We honor the Bible by speaking clearly where it speaks clearly and remaining careful where it does not.

We may not know the names of Melchizedek's parents.

We may not know how he came to know God.

We may not know how long he ruled Salem.

We may not know where or when he died.

But we know why the book of Hebrews brings him to our attention.

Melchizedek helps us see Jesus.

Melchizedek appeared briefly in history as a king of righteousness, a king of peace and a priest of the most high God.

Jesus is the truly righteous King.

Jesus is the One who gives us peace with God.

Jesus is our perfect and eternal High Priest.

Melchizedek is the picture.

Jesus is the reality.

Melchizedek is the pattern.

Jesus is the fulfillment.

Melchizedek directs our attention beyond himself.

Jesus is the One who saves us to the uttermost.

The most important question is no longer merely:

Who was Melchizedek?

The most important question is:

Do you know Jesus Christ?

I am not asking whether you know facts about Him.

I am not asking whether you attend church.

I am not asking whether you consider yourself religious.

I am asking whether you have personally placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior.

The Bible teaches that all of us have sinned.

None of us can earn salvation.

None of us can perform enough good works to remove our guilt.

But God loves us.

Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, died on the cross for our sins.

He was buried.

On the third day, He rose from the dead.

He is alive today.

He is able to save completely everyone who comes to God through Him.

You do not need to be standing inside this building for Christ to save you.

You do not need to have a pastor beside you.

You do not need to wait until next Sunday.

Whether you are sitting in this sanctuary, watching from your home, listening in your car or joining us from somewhere far away, you can come to Christ now.

Admit that you are a sinner who cannot save yourself.

Believe that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and rose again.

Repent.

That means changing your mind about your sin, yourself and the Savior.

Stop trusting your goodness, religion or effort.

Place your faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Romans 10:9 says:

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Romans 10:13 says:

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

You can call upon Him in your own words.

There is no magical prayer and there is no formula you must repeat perfectly.

Prayer does not save you because you pronounced the correct words.

Jesus saves you when you place your faith in Him.

You might say something like:

“Lord, I know that I am a sinner.

“I know that I cannot save myself.

“I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead.

“I repent and place my faith in Jesus Christ alone.

“Please forgive me and save me.

“Help me begin a new life with You.”

If you trusted Christ today and you are here with us, please speak with me after the service.

We would be honored to pray with you, answer your questions and help connect you with other believers.

If you are joining us remotely, please visit www.ReasonTogether.Church and use the contact information there to tell us about your decision.

We would love to hear from you and help you take your next step.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for giving us a Savior who is able to save to the uttermost.

Thank You that Jesus offered Himself once for our sins.

Thank You that He rose from the grave, lives forever and continually intercedes for those who come to You through Him.

Thank You for placing Melchizedek in the Biblical record as a king of righteousness, a king of peace and a priest of the most high God.

Help us appreciate the picture without confusing it with the Person it was designed to reveal.

Teach us to respect what Your Word says and to remain humble about what it does not reveal.

Strengthen those who already know Christ.

Comfort those who feel weak or unworthy.

Remind them that our salvation rests upon the completed work and continuing life of Jesus.

For anyone who has placed faith in Christ today, give them assurance, courage and a desire to grow in Your Word.

May we leave here knowing that our High Priest lives, our sacrifice is complete and our access to You is secure through Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Thank you for being with us today.

Please join us at the Reason Together Café for free coffee and conversation.

If this was your first time worshipping with us, we do not simply say goodbye.

We say, Aloha Nui Loa.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Aloha.

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

**PASTOR'S
COMMENTARY**

WHO WAS MELCHIZEDEK?

Who was the mysterious king and priest who blessed Abraham and became a picture of the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ?

Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:1-28 KJV

“And he was the priest of the most high God.” Genesis 14:18

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

Commentary in Brief

CENTRAL CONCLUSION Melchizedek is best understood as a real historical king-priest who worshipped the most high God. Scripture does not identify him as Shem, an angel or Jesus Christ appearing before Bethlehem. Hebrews presents him as a divinely arranged pattern of the Son of God and uses his unusual Biblical record to explain a priesthood that does not rest on descent from Levi and does not terminate within the Genesis account.

Genesis introduces Melchizedek without ancestry, prior history or explanation. He is king of Salem and priest of the most high God. He blesses Abraham, gives glory to God for Abraham's victory and receives a tenth of the recovered spoils. Then he disappears from the narrative.

Psalms 110 brings his name back into Scripture nearly a thousand years later. God promises the Messiah an everlasting priesthood, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews explains why that promise matters. Jesus came from Judah rather than Levi, yet His priesthood rests on God's oath and the power of an endless life.

The difficult language of Hebrews 7:3 must be read within that priestly argument. Genesis records no father, mother, genealogy, beginning of days or end of life for Melchizedek. The text does not say that the historical man literally had no parents or never died. It says that he was 'made like unto the Son of God.' The pattern resembles Christ, but Christ is the eternal reality to whom the pattern points.

This commentary develops the Biblical reasoning behind the sermon. It examines the Genesis encounter, the names and titles attached to Melchizedek, the bread and wine, Abraham's tithe, Psalm 110 and the argument of Hebrews 7. It also evaluates the leading identity theories and follows the passage to its pastoral destination: Jesus Christ, the unchangeable High Priest who is able to save to the uttermost.

1. The Genesis Encounter Supplies the Historical Foundation

A Priest-King Meets Abraham After the Battle

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God." **Genesis 14:18**

Abraham had rescued Lot and recovered the people and possessions taken by a coalition of kings. As he returned, two kings met him. The king of Sodom came from a city already associated with wickedness. Melchizedek came as priest of the most high God and spoke a blessing.

Genesis presents the meeting as history. Melchizedek rules a place, brings provisions, blesses Abraham and receives a tenth of the spoils. Nothing in the passage introduces him as a vision, angel or symbolic character. The mystery comes from what the narrative omits, not from a statement that he was nonhuman.

FIRST OBSERVATION Begin with the historical claims Genesis actually makes before asking what Melchizedek later represents.

2. His Name and Title Prepare the Reader for Christ

King of Righteousness and King of Peace

"First being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace." **Hebrews 7:2**

Hebrews gives the inspired interpretation. Melchizedek's name is associated with righteousness and his royal title with peace. These meanings do not prove that he was Jesus. They make him an appropriate pattern of the One in whom perfect righteousness and lasting peace meet.

Jesus is not merely called righteous because of a name. He is righteous in His person and work. He does not merely rule a city whose name suggests peace. Through His sacrifice, sinners who were alienated from God can have peace with God.

CHRIST-CENTERED DISTINCTION Melchizedek bears names and offices that resemble Christ. Jesus possesses the reality those names and offices anticipate.

3. Melchizedek Worshipped the True and Living God

Priest of El Elyon

“Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.” **Genesis 14:19**

“And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.”

Genesis 14:20

Melchizedek attributes Abraham's victory to the most high God. Abraham then speaks of 'the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth' in Genesis 14:22. Within the narrative, Abraham identifies the God proclaimed by Melchizedek with the LORD whom he worships.

Scripture does not tell us how Melchizedek came to know God or how his priestly service began. That silence should produce humility, not suspicion. God's activity was never limited to the portion of history recorded through Abraham's family.

REASON TOGETHER PRINCIPLE A missing history is not permission to invent one. We may affirm that Melchizedek knew and served God while admitting that Scripture does not explain how.

4. Salem Is Reasonably Connected With Jerusalem

A Strong Identification With Necessary Limits

“In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.” **Psalms 76:2**

Psalms 76 places Salem beside Zion and supports the traditional identification of Salem with Jerusalem. Ancient Jewish testimony also associated Melchizedek's city with Jerusalem. The connection is reasonable and historically strong.

The identification does not tell us the precise spot where Melchizedek stood. Genesis does not place him on the later Temple site or at the location of the crucifixion. Those possibilities may interest readers, but they should not be presented as revealed facts.

INTERPRETIVE CAUTION A well-supported general identification does not authorize precise claims the text never makes.

5. Bread and Wine Should Not Carry the Whole Argument

A Possible Echo and an Ordinary Provision

Christians naturally hear 'bread and wine' and think of the Lord's Supper. The connection may be typologically suggestive, especially because Melchizedek is later used as a pattern of Christ. Yet Genesis does not call the meal a sacrifice or explain it sacramentally.

Bread and wine were also ordinary provisions. Abraham and his men had returned from battle and Melchizedek may simply have refreshed them. Most importantly, Hebrews develops its inspired interpretation from Melchizedek's name, title, blessing, tithe, missing genealogy and priesthood. It does not build its argument from the bread and wine.

PASTORAL CAUTION We may notice a beautiful resemblance without turning a possible echo into a doctrine.

6. Abraham's Tithe Demonstrates Melchizedek's Greatness

The Tenth Was From the Spoils

"Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils." **Hebrews 7:4**

The tenth in Genesis 14 came from spoils recovered in battle. It was not Abraham's weekly income and it did not occur under the later Mosaic system. Hebrews does not use this event primarily to establish a percentage Christians must give. It uses the event to establish the greatness of the recipient.

Abraham was the patriarch and bearer of God's covenant promises. Nevertheless, he gave a tenth to Melchizedek and received Melchizedek's blessing. Hebrews states that 'the less is blessed of the better.' In this encounter, Melchizedek occupies the superior priestly position.

CENTRAL POINT The inspired emphasis falls on who received the tenth, not on converting Abraham's battlefield action into a church fundraising rule.

7. Levi Figuratively Acknowledged a Superior Priesthood

The Argument From Abraham to His Descendants

"And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham." **Hebrews 7:9**

Levi had not yet been born when Abraham met Melchizedek. Levi would descend through Jacob and Isaac from Abraham. Hebrews therefore reasons that the Levitical line was still in Abraham and figuratively participated in Abraham's acknowledgment of Melchizedek.

The point is covenantal and representative. The priesthood later associated with Levi did not create or authorize Melchizedek's priesthood. Melchizedek's priesthood stood before it and, in the Genesis encounter, above it.

ARGUMENT OF HEBREWS If Abraham honored Melchizedek and Levi was represented in Abraham, the order of Melchizedek cannot be treated as subordinate to the later Levitical order.

8. Psalm 110 Announces Another Order of Priesthood

The Messiah Is Priest by Divine Oath

"The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." **Psalm 110:4**

Psalm 110 joins kingship and priesthood in the promised Messiah. The LORD speaks to David's Lord, enthrones Him and declares Him a priest forever. This priesthood does not arise from descent through Aaron. It rests on the oath of God.

The promise also exposes the limits of the Levitical system. If that priesthood could bring final perfection, another order would not be needed. The Law was holy and the priesthood served God's purpose, but both pointed beyond themselves to a better Priest and a better covenant.

MESSIANIC HINGE Genesis supplies the pattern. Psalm 110 promises the everlasting Priest. Hebrews identifies Jesus as the fulfillment.

9. Jesus Came From Judah, Not Levi

His Priesthood Belongs to Another Order

"For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." **Hebrews 7:14**

Jesus did not qualify for Aaron's priesthood by genealogy. He came from Judah, the royal tribe. He never claimed descent from Levi and never attempted to seize duties assigned to Aaron's sons.

His priesthood rests on a different foundation. Hebrews describes it as arising 'after the power of an endless life' and confirmed by God's oath. The apparent obstacle of tribal descent becomes part of the proof that Christ's priesthood belongs to the promised order of Melchizedek.

DOCTRINAL DISTINCTION Jesus is not an irregular Levitical priest. He is the divinely appointed Priest-King promised in Psalm 110.

10. 'Without Father' Describes the Biblical Record

Silence in Genesis Serves the Typology

"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." **Hebrews 7:3**

Read as an isolated statement, these words may sound as though Melchizedek were eternal. Read within Hebrews, they address the very feature required for the priestly comparison: Genesis supplies no parentage, genealogy, birth or death by which his priesthood is inherited or terminated.

Levitical priests had to demonstrate ancestry. Their service began and ended within a regulated earthly order. Melchizedek enters the Biblical account already serving as priest. No predecessor is named, no successor is named and no end to his priestly service is recorded.

The safest wording preserves the difference between the man and the record. Scripture does not record his parents or death. That is not the same as Scripture declaring that he literally had no parents or never died.

REASON TOGETHER PRINCIPLE Do not turn an omission in the narrative into an ontological statement the passage does not require.

11. 'Made Like Unto the Son of God' Identifies the Direction

The Pattern Resembles the Reality

"But made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." **Hebrews 7:3**

Hebrews does not say that the Son of God was made like Melchizedek. It says that Melchizedek was made like the Son of God. The eternal Son is the reality and Melchizedek's place in Scripture was arranged to resemble Him.

The phrase also distinguishes the two. A person who is 'like unto' the Son is not thereby identified as the Son. Melchizedek's continuing priesthood is literary and typological within the Genesis record. Christ's continuing priesthood rests on His actual resurrection life.

APPROVED SUMMARY Melchizedek is the pattern. Jesus is the fulfillment. The pattern receives its significance from the Person it was designed to reveal.

12. Was Melchizedek a Preincarnate Appearance of Jesus?

An Understandable Theory With Serious Difficulties

The Old Testament contains appearances many Christians understand as manifestations of the Son before Bethlehem. That makes the question legitimate. Melchizedek's sudden appearance, combined offices, meaningful titles and missing genealogy can seem to support the theory.

The language of Hebrews, however, points more naturally toward typology. Melchizedek is made like the Son of God. Hebrews compares the historical priest with Christ so that the lesser pattern explains the greater fulfillment. Identifying the two can collapse the comparison the writer carefully develops.

The strongest conclusion is therefore that Melchizedek was not Jesus appearing before the incarnation. He was a real priest-king whose inspired presentation prepared readers to understand Jesus.

CHARITABLE CONCLUSION Sincere Christians may hold the Christophany view, but it should not be stated as though Scripture explicitly identifies Melchizedek as Christ.

13. Was Melchizedek Shem or an Angel?

Chronology and Tradition Are Not Identification

Shem's lifespan may overlap Abraham's within the chronology of Genesis and later traditions identified him with Melchizedek. Scripture itself never does. It does not call Shem king of Salem, priest of the most high God or Melchizedek.

Other interpretations identify Melchizedek as an angelic or exalted heavenly being. Genesis gives no such explanation. It presents a king of a place who meets Abraham in history. Later speculation can illuminate how influential the figure became, but it cannot replace the Biblical presentation.

EVIDENCE LIMIT Overlap makes the Shem theory possible. It does not make it Biblical. Mystery makes a heavenly theory interesting. It does not make it stated.

14. The KJV Uses Two English Spellings

Melchizedek and Melchisedec Refer to the Same Person

Readers of the King James Version may notice Melchizedek in Genesis and Psalm 110, but Melchisedec in Hebrews. The difference reflects the route by which the Hebrew and Greek forms were brought into English. It does not identify two people.

Modern discussions often use Melchizedek throughout for consistency. When quoting the KJV, the spelling of each passage should be preserved. The interpretive argument remains unchanged.

READING NOTE A transliteration difference should not be mistaken for a theological distinction.

15. Christ's Priesthood Is Unchangeable

Death Cannot End His Service

"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." **Hebrews 7:24**

There were many Levitical priests because death repeatedly ended their service. Every priest required a successor. Jesus died as the sacrifice for sin, rose bodily from the grave and will never die again. His priesthood cannot pass to another because His life cannot end.

The believer will never discover that the High Priest has retired, been replaced or become unavailable. The One who opened access to God remains alive at the Father's right hand.

PASTORAL ASSURANCE The security of Christ's people rests in the continuing life and permanent priesthood of Christ, not in the endurance of an earthly mediator.

16. Jesus Saves to the Uttermost

The Living Priest Continually Intercedes

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." **Hebrews 7:25**

The word 'uttermost' communicates completeness. Christ does not begin a salvation that another priest must finish. He does not save until the next failure or until the believer's past is exposed. He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him.

His intercession is not an attempt to persuade an unwilling Father to become merciful. The Father sent the Son and the Son willingly gave Himself. Christ's living presence at the Father's right hand continually represents the sufficiency of His completed sacrifice.

GOSPEL CENTER The mystery of Melchizedek is important because it leads to the majesty and sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

17. The Better Priest Offered Himself Once

No Repeated Sacrifice Is Needed

"For this he did once, when he offered up himself." **Hebrews 7:27**

Levitical priests offered sacrifices for the people and also needed sacrifices for their own sins. Jesus is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. He did not bring an animal for His own guilt because He had no guilt. He offered Himself for ours.

The sacrifice does not need repetition or improvement. The risen High Priest does not return to the altar each day. He intercedes on the basis of a completed offering whose value never diminishes.

CENTRAL CONCLUSION The order of Melchizedek helps explain why our Priest lives forever. The cross explains how that living Priest saves sinners.

18. Biblical Restraint Is an Act of Faithfulness

Confidence Where Scripture Speaks and Humility Where It Is Silent

Melchizedek invites questions because his recorded history is so brief. The temptation is to fill every blank. Yet speculation becomes dangerous when possibilities are preached as facts or traditions are given the authority of Scripture.

Saying 'I do not know' is not unbelief when God has not revealed the answer. It can be an act of submission to the sufficiency of what He has revealed. We know enough to understand the argument of Hebrews and to see the eternal priesthood of Christ.

REASON TOGETHER PRINCIPLE Speak clearly where the Bible speaks clearly. Distinguish reasonable inference from revealed fact. Let every mystery serve the truth Scripture actually emphasizes.

Questions for Personal Reflection

- Have I confused what Genesis does not record with something Genesis says never happened?
- Do I allow an interesting theory to become more certain in my mind than the words of Scripture?
- Do I understand why Abraham's tithe matters to the argument of Hebrews?
- Can I explain the difference between Melchizedek as a pattern and Jesus as the fulfillment?
- Am I trusting an earthly religious system to give me access that Christ alone provides?
- Do I live with confidence that Jesus is alive, available and interceding for His people?
- Have I personally come to God through Jesus Christ?

A Personal Invitation to Salvation

Melchizedek can help us understand the kind of High Priest we need, but Melchizedek cannot save us. Jesus Christ is the sinless Son of God who died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead. He is alive and able to save completely everyone who comes to God through Him.

You do not need to make yourself worthy before coming. You cannot erase your guilt through church attendance, giving, baptism or good works. Admit that you are a sinner who cannot save yourself. Believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose again. Repent of trusting yourself, your religion or your effort and place your faith in Jesus Christ alone.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." **Romans 10:9**

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." **Romans 10:13**

There is no magical prayer formula. Speak to God honestly in your own words. Ask Him to forgive you and save you because of what Jesus Christ has done. If you have trusted Christ, speak with a faithful Christian pastor or contact Reason Together Church through www.ReasonTogether.Church. We would be honored to pray with you and help you begin walking with Christ.

A Closing Prayer

Our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for giving us Your Word and for placing Melchizedek in its pages as a king of righteousness, a king of peace and a priest of the most high God. Teach us to appreciate the pattern without confusing it with the eternal Son it was designed to reveal.

Give us discipline to distinguish what Scripture states from what tradition suggests. Keep us humble when an answer has not been revealed and confident when Your Word has spoken clearly.

Thank You for Jesus Christ, our perfect and unchangeable High Priest. Thank You that He offered Himself once, rose from the grave, lives forever and continually intercedes for those who come to You through Him.

Strengthen believers who feel weak or unworthy. Draw unbelievers to Christ. Help them admit their sin, believe the Gospel, repent and place faith in Jesus alone. May all of us rest in the completed sacrifice and continuing life of our Savior.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Selected Sources

Primary Scripture

Genesis 14:17-24; Psalm 76:1-2; Psalm 110:1-4; Hebrews 5:5-10; Hebrews 6:19-20; Hebrews 7:1-28 KJV, with supporting use of Romans 5:1; Romans 10:9, 13; 1 Timothy 2:5 and Hebrews 10:10-14.

Major Commentaries Consulted for the Interpretive Framework

Attridge, Harold W. The Epistle to the Hebrews. Hermeneia. Fortress Press, 1989.

Bruce, F. F. The Epistle to the Hebrews. Revised edition. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Eerdmans, 1990.

Cockerill, Gareth Lee. The Epistle to the Hebrews. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Eerdmans, 2012.

Lane, William L. Hebrews 1-8. Word Biblical Commentary 47A. Word Books, 1991.

Ancient Historical Witness

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 1.10.2. Josephus identifies Melchizedek as king of Salem and associates the city with Jerusalem. This later historical witness supports the traditional location but does not establish a precise meeting site.

Interpretive Cautions

This commentary treats Melchizedek as a real historical priest-king and the Genesis presentation as a divinely arranged type of Christ. It distinguishes missing information from literal assertions about parentage or immortality. It recognizes the bread and wine as possibly suggestive without making them the foundation of the Hebrews argument. It identifies the Shem, angelic-being and preincarnate-Christ views as theories rather than explicit statements of Scripture.

Pastoral Note

This commentary accompanies the approved Reason Together Study. It does not replace the sermon transcript or internal Study Vault. Its purpose is to provide a readable public explanation of the principal Biblical reasoning, preserve interpretive and pastoral cautions and help readers place their confidence in Jesus Christ, our eternal High Priest.

REASON TOGETHER Bring your questions. Open your Bible. Let's Reason Together the Word of God.