

## Melchizedek

He only makes a brief appearance, but the significance of this event is extremely important for Christians. If this event didn't occur, then Jesus Christ could not have been our High Priest (Hebrews 9:11-14), meaning that we would have no way of having our sins forgiven.

There is a large amount of information available on Melchizedek, but not all of it is factual; so take a look through this article, and draw your own conclusions.

After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

*Genesis 14:17-20, NIV*

In the events that lead up to this visit from Melchizedek, Abraham's nephew Lot is taken captive by four kings (Genesis 14:11). Abraham then attacks them and recovers Lot, his family, and his possessions (Genesis 14:14-16).

What does melchizedek mean? It can be broken into two parts, with "melchi" means *king*, and "zedek" meaning *justice* or *righteousness*.

## Who was Melchizedek really?

There are a two main suggestions as to who he was, but both seem to be based on assumptions:

### Shem

"It is probable that Shem was the personage to whom Abraham paid tithes on his return from the slaughter of the kings. Abraham died thirty-five years before Shem reached his five hundred and second year, after the flood. At this date, Isaac was one hundred and ten, and Jacob fifty; so that they were contemporary with Shem for these periods of their lives. There is no account of Shem's death in the scripture; on the contrary... the person called Melchizedek still lives. Now, Melchizedek is a word expressive of the character of the person who bore it. It signifies king of righteousness, or righteous king. He was the greatest king in Canaan, and reigned in Salem, which signifies *peace*, and is afterwards called Jerusalem; so that this righteous king was King of Peace. Shem, king of righteousness, and king of peace, and priest of the Most High God, is the type, contemporary with the holder of the promises, of the Seed, or Christ, on the throne of the Kingdom of God."

*John Thomas*

A verse that could be used to support this is:

"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem!..."

*Genesis 9:26, NIV*

In the Mormon book, Doctrine and Covenants (138:41), Shem is identified as a great high priest. In the Apocrapha, Jasher (16:11) also says that Melchizedek was "the same as Shem..." Hebrew tradition indicates that at this time Shem was the oldest living human alive; making it appear to those around him that he had no parents or relatives. Generations would come and go, and Shem would still be there. *But none of these sources are inspired, none carry any authority.*

- How would an elderly geriatric rule and protect a town?
- How can one prove that it was Shem?

### Christ

This is an idea put forward by Herbert Armstrong, Plain Truth:

Since Jesus is known as the Prince of Peace, surely no other human can be called the King of

Peace... Also note that he had no father or mother or family tree. He didn't lose his records, they say, since he couldn't have become a priest (Ezra 2:62), but since he had "neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (Hebrews 7:3), he has always existed from eternity: that is, he is part of the Deity!

Because Melchizedek is always a high priest ("abides continually"), he must be Jesus Christ.

From fragments of writings near where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, shows that this idea was also held strongly by the Qumran community, as well as some Jewish and Gnostic sects of the first century AD.

But in Hebrews it says that Melchizedek was "*like* the Son of God", providing a simple argument against this interpretation. The Greek word for "like" used in this verse is used to describe two separate identities, one of which is a copy of the other.

## Himself

This may seem hard to believe, but Melchizedek was just himself. Divinely appointed by God for the role of High Priest, he was fully human, had parents, was born, lived, and died.

He did not need to prove his pedigree to become a Levite Priest (Ezra 2:62), since 400 years were to elapse before these priests came into existence.

## King of Salem

It seems that everyone agrees on this one point. Melchizedek was the king of a town called Salem. The word "Salem" means *peace*. But even when it is clear that this is Jerusalem, (e.g. Psalm 76:2), there are still other interpretations:

"It becomes very clear from this scriptural citation (Genesis 14:29-36, JST) that Melchizedek, along with his city, were translated and taken to heaven... This would also mean that Melchizedek and his people will return at the Second Coming with Enoch and his city... Perhaps, Salem was severed at the departure of Saturn... or maybe at the time of the turbulent ascendancy of the planet Jupiter. Mention should be made that "Salem" is also a name for Saturn."

*The City of Melchizedek (Salem) Flees Earth*

There are two points to be made from this quote.

- The passage of "scripture" quoted, is in **no way scriptural**. It only appears in the Joseph Smith Translation.
- Salem is not a name for Saturn: another Hebrew word is used. In Amos 5:26, the word *pedestal* ("Kaiwan" in the footnotes of the NIV) most likely refers to Saturn. See Appendix A - Gesenius

A suggestion that since he was king of a town, he was also of "royal" descent, that is his father was king before him, sounds plausible.

## "Without Father or Mother, Without Genealogy"

To work out who Melchizedek was, we need to understand what is meant by Hebrews 7:3. The writer to the Hebrews is simply indicating that records did not exist: there was no mention of either his father or mother in the Genesis account. There is no mention of his birth or death. This does not mean that he didn't have parents, or didn't die.

The rabbis had a rule of "Silence" which says that if it wasn't recorded in scripture, then it didn't happen. For example: If it didn't mention Melchizedek's parents, then he didn't have any.

The writer to the Hebrews uses this viewpoint to say figuratively that since Melchizedek lived for ever, (there is no record of his death), that it was a symbol of Christ and his living for ever.

## Bread and Wine

When Melchizedek offered Abraham bread and wine in Genesis 14:18, what was he offering him? Was it just food and drink; an ordinary meal; or was it more than that?

Given that there is no mention of this in Hebrews 7, when it would be a perfect time to do so, Melchizedek was simply offering Abraham something to eat. There was no spiritual symbolism in what he was given.

- But what do you think? Was it more than an ordinary meal?

## King and Priest - So vitally important to us

So why is Melchizedek so vitally important to us?

The writer to the Hebrews indicates the Priest(s) of order of Melchizedek were to last forever, that the system of priests through the tribe of Levi would eventually come to an end.

It is well known that the role of the Messiah was to be a king (Acts 1:6), but Psalm 110:4 is the only prophecy that indicates that he will be a priest:

The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

*Psalm 110:4, NIV*

So if the events in Genesis 14 never happened, there would be no way that Jesus could become our High Priest, and we would have no way of having our sins forgiven. See Hebrews 6:13 - 9:28

## The future

This one's a little harder to follow, but the events that occurred on that day in Genesis 14 give us an indication of what will happen in the near future, at a time known as "the last days."

The four kings can be compared to the King of the North (Russia/Germany) and the King of the South (Egypt) in Ezekiel 38. There will be a time when Lot (Israel) is taken captive by these

kings; and all will look lost. It will appear that nothing can be done to fix the problem. At that point Abraham (the saints, together with angels) will rescue Lot (Israel). Then Melchizedek (Christ) will appear on the scene.

## APPENDIX A : Gesenius

H.W.F Gesenius (1786-1842), a noted German theologian, orientalist, and Bible scholar, was the most outstanding Hebraist of his generation.

The following is an extract from his book, showing that the word "chuin" probably means *Saturn*.

3594      **כִּיּוֹן** ἀπαξ λεγόμεν. Am. 5:26, the name of an idol worshipped by the Israelites in the wilderness, i. q. Arab. **كَيون** i. e. the planet *Saturn*, regarded by the Phœnicio-Shemitic people as an evil demon, to be appeased by expiatory sacrifices (see Comment. on Isa., vol. ii. p. 353), ["prob. a statue, an image, Thes."]. To the Hebrew words loc. cit. **כִּיּוֹן** **כִּיּוֹן** **כִּיּוֹן** there answer (some of the members, however, being transposed) the Greek, καὶ τὸ ἄστρον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, 'Ραιφάν τοὺς τύπους αὐτῶν, so that it is clear that the Hebr. **כִּיּוֹן** is expressed in Greek by 'Ραιφάν Compl. 'Ρομφά, (for Rosenmüller does not convince us that this word is inserted as a kind of gloss). Now it appears pretty certain that 'Ραιφάν was an Egyptian name for Saturn (see Kircheri Ling. Ægypt. restit. p. 49; Jablonskii Opusce. t. ii. p. 1, sq.; and on the other hand, J. D. Mich. Supplem. p. 125, sq.). Others give this word the signification of *statue*, or *image*. [This is the opinion of Gesenius himself in Thes.] Vulg. *imaginem idolorum vestrorum*.

## APPENDIX B : Mormon Text on Melchizedek

This is only a small collection of passages... there are more:

"And Melchizedek lifted up his voice and blessed Abram. <sup>26</sup>Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. <sup>27</sup>And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, <sup>28</sup>it being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man, nor the will of man, neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God; <sup>29</sup>and it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name. <sup>30</sup>For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling sound have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course; <sup>31</sup>to put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world. <sup>32</sup>And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven. <sup>33</sup>And now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, and was called the Prince of Peace. <sup>34</sup>And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world; <sup>35</sup>and hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together; and the sons of God should be tried so as by fire.

<sup>36</sup>"And this Melchizedek having thus established righteousness, was called the king of heaven by his people, or in other words, the King of Peace. <sup>37</sup>And he lifted up his voice and he blessed Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God; <sup>38</sup>him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor. <sup>39</sup>Wherefore, Abram paid unto him tithes of all that he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him more than that which he had need.

<sup>40</sup>"And it came to pass, that God blessed Abram, and gave unto him riches, and honour, and lands for an everlasting covenant which he had made, and according to the blessing wherewith Melchizedek had blessed him."

*Genesis 14:25-40, JST*

"And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest. <sup>14</sup>Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever. <sup>15</sup>And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed. <sup>16</sup>Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord. <sup>17</sup>Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness; <sup>18</sup>but Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father. <sup>19</sup>Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention."

*Alma 13:13-19*