

CHRIST AND MELCHISEDEC

BIBLE TEXT : Hebrews 6:13-20; 7:1-28

LESSON 438 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Hebrews 6:13-20

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife.

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

19 Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 7:1-28

¹ For this Melchisedec, 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.

Bible References:

Notes:

Abraham and the Gospel

"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8).

We have, therefore, in the promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), the germinating of the Gospel. This is a promise concerning the Gospel. We have Paul's word that God in this promise to Abraham was preaching the Gospel to him. This Gospel was, in its elementary form, given forth 430 years before the Law, so it took precedence over the Law.

Abraham was seventy-five years old when he received the promise, and when Isaac was born he was one hundred years old; so he waited patiently for a period of twenty-five years. This is what Paul has reference to when he brings forth Abraham as an example of patient endurance. After he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. Again we read in Hebrews 10:36:

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

Abraham had promptly obeyed the Word of God. At God's call he immediately arose, left his family, his kindred and his country, and by faith went into a land that he knew not of, that he should afterwards receive for an inheritance. It was a long period of twenty-five years before the promise was fulfilled that would make Abraham's posterity a blessing to all nations.

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans 4:20).

Therefore it was faith that carried Abraham through and gave him patience during that entire period. If we want patience we will have to have faith, the same quality of faith that Abraham had. God's delays are not denials. He often delays the fulfilment of His promises; but when He makes a promise it is going to be fulfilled! And this one was especially so because it concerned the Gospel.

The Confirmation of the Promise of the Gospel

"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath" (Hebrews 6:17).

Genesis 22:16-18 is a repetition of the first promise He made which is now confirmed by an oath. And as the writer of Hebrews said, "Because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself." Therefore we have the Gospel promise, 430 years before the Law, confirmed by an oath. When the Lord took an oath and swore by Himself because He was eternal, it meant that there was no abrogating of the promise -- it stood forever.

If He had sworn by the heavens and by the earth, which shall come to an end, His oath could come to an end at the same time. But He swore by Himself signifying the immutability of His counsel

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

⁵ And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

⁶ But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

⁷ And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

⁸ And here men that die receive tithes; but there he *receiveth them*, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

⁹ And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

¹⁰ For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

¹¹ 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?

¹² For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

¹³ For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

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

¹⁵ And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

¹⁶ Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

¹⁷ For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

¹⁸ For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

¹⁹ For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

²⁰ And inasmuch as not without an oath *he was made priest*:

²¹ (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

²² By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

²³ And they truly were many priests,

that it could never change. It stands forever.

Therefore the Law, coming in at Mount Sinai, never in any wise affected the promise that God had made to Abraham and confirmed with an oath. While the promise was confirmed with an oath, the Law was not. If the oath signified that the promise was to stand forever, and the Law which was added 430 years afterward was not confirmed with an oath, it would signify that the Law could be set aside.

"That by two immutable things, . . ."

And those two immutable things are His promise. His promise in the first place was immutable, and then His oath that confirmed the promise made it doubly immutable.

". . . in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18).

That hope is realised in Christ Jesus. The promise, which was made to Abraham was elementary. The Gospel at that time was in its germinating form; but little by little, step by step, precept upon precept it has unfolded: by example, by sacrifice, by Temple worship, by the order of priests and their service. Every step pointed to the fulfilment of that germinating Gospel which finally found its completion in Christ Jesus in every form. So Jesus became our hope. That is what Paul says about Him:

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope" (I Timothy 1:1).

Christ Jesus is that hope today. All the converging lines of the Old Testament prophecies meet and focus in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is become the hope of those who are the heirs of the promise today.

". . . we might have a strong consolation, . . ."

That word "consolation" has more than Just a sentimental meaning. It has a meaning of fulfilling that which nothing else in all the world could fulfil; that upon which all our hopes, aspirations, and desires centre. ". . . who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

This harks back to those Cities of Refuge in the Old Testament. These Cities of Refuge are a beautiful type of Christ. In Christ Jesus we have, as it were, a City of Refuge to which we may flee when being pursued; and having gained entrance there we are amply secure from the avenger.

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, . . ."

Here the picture changes to that of a ship at sea, being tossed upon the waves.

Melchisedec and Christ

". . . and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

He resumes the trend of thought, which he took up in the fifth chapter, when he brought up the case of Melchisedec. It was interrupted by that long exhortation and warning against apostasy.

The first mention of Melchisedec is in Genesis 14. When Abraham returned from the pursuit of the kings who had come down to Sodom and had taken Lot and his family and other spoils in the city, Abraham overtook them, despoiled them, brought back the spoils and the families, and restored them to Sodom.

While Abraham and his men were returning, Melchisedec, King

because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

²⁴ But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

of Salem, came out to greet him and to bring him refreshment. He blessed Abraham; and that blessing was without doubt a repetition of the same blessing with which God had originally blessed Abraham: that he would be the father of a great nation, and that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Abraham recognised Melchisedec's position and the fact of his being a priest of the Most High God. Abraham paid him a tenth of all his spoils. Had this been all there was to it, it would probably have been just a passing incident. But that which makes it all the more important is the fact that five hundred years later David, in the 110th Psalm, writes:

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

This is a Messianic Psalm. The Lord Jehovah here is addressing these words to the Messiah: ``The LORD said unto my Lord," therefore this is a prophecy concerning Christ.

No other mention is made of Melchisedec throughout Scripture until in the fifth chapter where the writer of Hebrews takes up an explanation of this strange character, Melchisedec. It is important that we get this thoroughly fixed in our minds because of the bearing that it has upon the office of Jesus Christ.

Melchisedec was a priest, and he was outside the Abrahamic line entirely. He may have been a personage who had found the true and living God, perhaps without any of God's inspired revelation at hand, just as Job had; or as the wise men had who came to visit Jesus. They found the true and living God. Some even believe that Melchisedec was Jesus Christ revealed here. At any rate he is a most wonderful person.

"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" (Hebrews 7:3).

The point of being without father or mother may mean, as far as the Scriptural account of him is concerned, that his genealogy is not given. This is in contrast to what was required of the Levitical priesthood. Their genealogy was kept very strictly, because their succession to the priesthood depended upon their genealogy, to be sure that it measured up to the requirement of the Mosaic Law.

But here was one who was a priest of the Most High God without any genealogy. He appears upon the pages of history and disappears, having no beginning and no end. The writer uses this as a type of Christ; for that is what David made out of it when he said, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." This is that Melchisedec, a type of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, which came later.

King and Priest

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

We are given so little history of him that we do not know very much about his greatness, only this: that he was a priest of the Most High God, and that he was also king, which is another divergence from the Levitical priesthood. They were never kings; they were priests only. Here is one who was both king and priest in perhaps the most important city of the Promised Land -- Salem, which was afterwards Jerusalem.

Those are the offices, which Jesus Christ Himself assumed, and for which He was ordained. He entered officially into His

office as Prophet when He was baptised and the anointing of the Lord came upon Him, and He started upon His ministry. He entered officially into His office of Priest when He ascended on High and disappeared from the sight of the disciples as they were gathered there upon the Mount of Olives. He entered into the Holiest of All in Heaven. He will enter His office as King when He leaves His mediatorial Throne and comes back to this world again.

But at the same time, these offices are all considered as applying to Him irrespective of any date or time. For instance, Pilate said to Him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" And He answering said unto him, "Thou sayest it." He was a King then although He had not yet officially entered upon His reign. He was also a Prophet and Priest at that same time. So His Priesthood, His prophetic office and His Kingship all continue without beginning and without end.

Abraham and Melchisedec

To understand the greatness of Melchisedec we shall have to get a little idea of the greatness of Abraham. Here was Abraham in the land of the Chaldees. We are told in Acts in the speech of Stephen, that God had called Abraham in Ur before He called him in Haran. He simply had tarried at Haran, perhaps on account of the sickness of his father who died there. Then the call was repeated in Haran. God called him out from among his brethren and his kindred and from his country, into an unknown land.

There He tried him out: tried his patience, tried his faith, his endurance. And because Abraham stood through the trials he not only became the head of a great nation, but through him should all the nations of the world be blessed. Through his line there should come that Seed that would be the channel of blessings that God promised to Abraham. He was the greatest among the patriarchs -- the father of faith. He stands out as being a monument of what God can do for a man who makes an unconditional surrender, as Abraham did.

Yet Melchisedec was greater than Abraham: Abraham gave him a tenth, and Melchisedec blessed him. The lesser is blessed of the greater. That is true also in the paying of tithes. Abraham recognised the greatness of this man.

Under the Law the Levites received tithes. They lived upon them. But Abraham was the head and father of the Levitical priesthood and stood out far above them, and yet he paid tithes to Melchisedec; he recognised Melchisedec's authority and position.

Change of the Priesthood

Now mark you, the priesthood and the Law were inseparable. The establishment of the priesthood was for the administration of the Law, that it might be carried out in the ceremonial law, which God ordained. Therefore they are inseparable; they stand together or fall together.

". . . what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec?" (Hebrews 7:11).

If God had planned that the consummation of things should be carried out through this Levitical priesthood that He ordained, why was there any provision made for another priesthood? There would not have been the provision. In the very economy of God there was a limited place for the Levitical priesthood. It served its purpose.

"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."

There is an annulling of the commandment that went before with the coming in of the New Commandment. The Old

Commandment is automatically annulled; it becomes ineffective.

The Weakness of the Law

"For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did: . . ." (Hebrews 7:19).

Are we to understand by that that righteousness was not attained under the dispensation of the Law? Or does it mean that there was a defect in the Law by which it was impossible to attain unto righteousness? Paul hits the mark in that matter when he says:

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:3, 4).

The inability of the Law to bring about perfection was not through any defects or imperfection in the Law itself; the imperfection lay in the inability of man to measure up to the Law.

The Better Hope

". . . but the bringing in of a better hope did; [And that better hope was Jesus Christ] by the which we draw nigh unto God" (Hebrews 7 :19).

That is brought out in contrast with the old Tabernacle service where the people stood near when the high priest went into the Holiest of All to minister. The congregation drew nigh on the outside of the Tabernacle, and there they worshipped while the high priest ministered in the Holiest of All before the Mercy Seat.

"And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest."

The promise made to Abraham of the New Covenant and the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec were both promised before the Law ever came in. They were confirmed with an oath, both of them taking precedence over the dispensation at the Law. Their being confirmed with an oath contrasts them with the Law in that the old priesthood was not confirmed with an oath. God swore by Himself because He could swear by none higher, that both the promises to Abraham and the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec were eternal -- never ending.

"By so much was Jesus made a surety [The word "surety" means mediator] of a better testament" (Hebrews 7:22).

That word "Testament" is the same word that is in other places translated "covenant." When we speak of the Old Testament and the New Testament we could just as well say Old and New Covenant, because the words are the same in the original. There He was made the mediator of a better Covenant.

A Priest Forever

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

There was a succession in the descendancy of Aaron, so that the priest's office should never be left vacant but should be filled from generation to generation by Aaron's successors. But here that was no longer necessary, because here was One who was made after the power of an endless life: therefore there was no order or succession, but one Priest to abide forever.

Saved to the Uttermost

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

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost. . ."

That word "uttermost" is one of the most emphatic words to be found in the Greek language. It means not only a point of time-forever -- but it means in point of perfection -- that it is a perfect salvation.

There is nothing wrong with the salvation, which the Lord offers humanity. If there are any failures or any shortcomings or anything in which that salvation appears weak, remember it is not the salvation. If there is any weakness, it is in the one who has failed to lay hold of the Lord in order to have sufficient power to enable him to stand. This salvation is unto the uttermost. That means it is not only perfect, but it is all comprehensive and to the entire bounds of the earth, taking in all at humanity, all races, all walks of life, every kindred, nation and tongue.

A Sinless High Priest

". . . that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to makes intercession for them.

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

Is there anything left unsaid that could be said? That means "without one taint, absolute perfection" in the spiritual sense -- holy God Himself with all His holiness; and separate from sinners, but not in the sense that He withheld Himself from sinners. The Pharisees brought the complaint that He ate with sinners and was found with them. It means that He was entirely separate from their sins and iniquities in not being a partaker of any of their evil ways. In that same sense the people of God are separate from sinners -- but not in the sense of "holier than thou."

"Who needeth not daily, as those high priests to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, . . ."

He had no sin. If you will read the Levitical Law you will find that when the priests came to offer sacrifice, a bullock was offered; and they took of the blood of the bullock and went into the sanctuary and offered it first for their own sins. Those are the priests who serve by groups. Next they offered it for the cleansing of the sanctuary. Then was a second offering made, and they took of that blood and offered it for the sins of the people in the same way on the Day of Atonement. That was the day that the high priest went into the Holiest of All. That occurred on the 10th day of the 7th month just before the Feast of Tabernacles, at the end of the harvest.

That Day of Atonement became typical of the day of grace in which Jesus Christ became a scapegoat, not for the Jews alone, but for all the world.

A Perfect Sacrifice

". . . for this he did once, when he offered up himself."

The sacrifice which Jesus offered is all availing sacrifice at all times. Just as the office of priest was filled by one generation following another, so the sacrifices themselves were also repeated. The high priest repeated this sacrifice once a year, while there were also the daily morning and evening sacrifices by the priests in their regular course. This was kept up continually while the Tabernacle and the Temple stood.

The Lord ordained that the Law should be kept in such a way that His people should be in communion with Him, in touch with Him continually. If our worship falls into a mechanical routine and becomes a mere ceremony, we have lost the kernel of the whole thing; we have nothing left but the husk. That is where the

nominal church today has utterly failed.

Jesus offered Himself once for all, a standing sacrifice never needing to be repeated. He offered Himself once, and has been available from that time on down throughout the countless generations of humanity, for every man, woman and child.