

CALLED TO A HIGHER ORDER (Melchizedek)

In God's original plan for a "holy people" He told Moses: "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). Seven hundred years later when those "holy people" were in rebellion, Isaiah still portrayed God's dream when he wrote: "Ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: *men* shall call you the Ministers of our God" (Isaiah 61:6). In that amazing chapter the prophet also looked forward to the Messiah's coming: "The spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified" (Isaiah 61:1-3).

Thus, a God in waiting still longed for a people who would become:

1. A Kingdom of Priests
2. Ministers unto God

With the anticipated Messianic kingdom came hope that a "new order" would come to God's people. They saw it, however, from an earthly context. A generation later God tried to elevate their perceptions when Jeremiah said: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (31:31). This was a new prophecy – a new type of relationship with heaven that must be anticipated. But tradition, misinterpreting prophecy and false assumptions barred their understanding.

Under the system of the original covenant promises, God provided a "template" of types that looked forward to a new order in man's redemptive recovery. Through symbols, worship liturgy and times of celebration within the Aaronic Priesthood (Levitical Priesthood), Messianic prophecy was sacredly dramatized. But it would have its end.

"The Jewish system was symbolical, and was to continue until the perfect Offering should take the place of the figurative. The Mediator, in his office and work, would greatly exceed in dignity and glory the earthly, typical priesthood."¹

Christ brought to man a new spiritual system that included priesthood and administrative assignments as ministers to God. Through Christ the Aaronic Priesthood was to "cease forever."² And this begins an incredible story.

¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, December, 17, 1872.

² White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 389.2.

The New Priesthood Order

“The Lord had made known to Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the ancient worthies, especially Moses, that the ceremonial system of sacrifices and the priesthood, of themselves, were not sufficient to secure the salvation of one soul.”³

By the time of Christ “God could do no more for man through their channels. The whole system “must be swept away.”⁴ But, in the annals of Old Testament history a prophetic light had been given that suddenly shone with new luster.

Abraham had just rescued Lot in the northern part of Canaan. The Elamite King Chedalomer was killed. Lot, his family and all prisoners were freed. This apparently occurred in the 1775–1764 B.C. era.⁵

As Abraham was returning to his home, the king of Salem met him (Hebrews 7:1).

“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” (Genesis 14:18-20).

Though God called Abraham to be the father of a great nation, Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek.

- Though we have limited information regarding this priest, he is of a higher “order” than Abraham.
- This order is tied to Christ or Jehovah as a Melchizedekian “order” of priesthood (first inferred in Psalm 110:4).

Who was this man that Abraham met? He was to become a symbol of Christ. But in the ancient Midrash the Rabbis made some exciting observations:

1. He was Shem, the son of Noah (who died shortly before Abraham passed away).
2. Salem refers to Jerusalem.
3. In the Massoretic (Hebrew) text “Melchizedek” was made up of two words: *melek* (king) and *sedeq* (righteous).
 - Philo and Josephus interpreted the name also as two words:
 - Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis*, 3.79.
 - Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* – 1.180.⁶

All this suggests that Shem was an incredible link between the antediluvian world and Abraham’s time. This “king of righteousness,” God’s stunning representative, represents a dramatic truth through Abraham’s encounter:

³ White, Ellen G.; *Lift Him Up*, p. 24.7.

⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 36.

⁵ Kitchen, Kenneth A.; *The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?*, BAR 21:02, Mar/Apr, 1995.

⁶ <http://pace.mcmaster.ca/York/york/showTest?book=1&chapter=10&textChunk=nieseSection&chunkId=179&text=anti&version=english&direction=&tab=&layout=split>

- “Melchizedek” was a king **and** a priest. Seeing that he was Shem:
 - He knew of his father’s communication with God.
 - He knew of patriarchs who communicated with Adam and Eve.
 - He was a sacred link between the past and the future.
 - He was a metaphor of a higher order than Abraham.
 - He must represent something of solemn importance even to us today!

This king of righteousness was a symbol of a king of a righteous people. That word for righteousness (*sedeq*) helps us to understand Daniel 8 and 9!

- When God’s people have victory over transgression, sin and iniquity (Daniel 9:24) – then
- Everlasting righteousness (*sedeq*) will come in (still in the future).
- *“I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory”* (Isaiah 46:13).
- But that is a divine dream still in waiting!

This is incredible. We have been told **when** this occurs! Holiness will be vindicated (*nisdaq* – a Hebrew passive verb related to the noun *sedeq*) at or after 2300 years (Daniel 8:14). Shem, Melchizekek, is an anticipatory story of future righteousness after that prophetic period!

But there is more!

*“So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but **he that said** unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. **As he saith** also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”* (Hebrews 5:5-6; cf. vs 10).

God declared Jesus as His Son. Within that wonderful insight came another divine pronouncement. Jesus was also a Priest forever after the “order of Melchisedec.” This opens up a **new order of priesthood**.

- Melchisedec was a *priest-king*.
- Jesus – Melchisedec – is a *priest-king*.
- Shocking as it may seem, **we** are called to be the same as God’s saints:
 - *“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever”* (Revelation 1:6).
 - *“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”* (Revelation 5:10).

This new order is so important that Paul chides the reader (paraphrased):

- You are dull of hearing (Hebrews 5:11).
- If you continue in drinking milk, you are not skilled in understanding righteousness (5:13).
- You should be teachers by now (5:12).
- Those who can handle “strong meat” belong to those who are maturely using their senses correctly and know good from evil (5:14).

Did you catch that? Paul is urging God’s people, “Know the things of this new order well.” Then God does something that is rarely recorded in the Bible. He takes an oath – swares – to Himself. He is doing an amazing thing to confirm the truth about this new order!!

- *“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself”* (Hebrews 6:13) – the old covenant that merged into the Aaronic Priesthood was by a similar oath.
- *“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”* (Hebrews 6:18) – God now confirms something new that He cannot lie about.
 1. The hope we have as an anchor to the soul is Jesus the High Priest within the veil (Hebrews 6:18-20).
 2. That is based on a law that is now changed (Hebrews 7:12-13).

How is this all different? The old order was through the tribe of Levi (which surrounded the tabernacle and was Aaronic). The new order is through the tribe of Judah, which is to the east and is Christ/Melchisedec oriented. There is a righteous priesthood/king kingdom orientation with all its subjects now, whereas before it was a sole priesthood nation orientation!

“The priesthood was apportioned to Levi, the kingdom and the Messianic promise to Judah.”⁷

*“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the **gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people”* (Matthew 4:23).

- A theocracy – Levitical priesthood is being replaced by (one tribe)
- A kingdom – Melchisedec priesthood (12 tribes)

Again – **God** declares an oath regarding Jesus:

- *“For **he testifieth**, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”* (Hebrews 7:17; cf. vss 20-21).
- *“For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God”* (Hebrews 7:18-19).

This is a better testament or covenant (Hebrews 7:22). How was the law changed?

Aaronic Priesthood

Theocracy – facilitated by priests
 Type
 Mediated my man
 Sacrifice – animals
 Obedience through works

Melchisedec Priesthood

Kingdom of priests
 Antitype
 Mediated by Christ
 Sacrifice – Christ
 Obedience through a being

Then the door is opened to the wonders of a new promise, a new covenant.

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 235.4.

- *“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people”* (Hebrews 8:10).
- Meaning:

From:
Laws practiced and learned
(ceremonies, appointments, sacrifices)

To:
Laws within us
(a life testifying of kingdom citizenry)

This is just the beginning of this amazing truth. Both the books of Ezekiel and Revelation tell us about the subjects of that kingdom. More as we continue later.

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