

Jesus is Better 6

Hebrews 7 v 1 - 28

Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 are crucial to our understanding of this passage. As there are only two Old Testament references to Melchizedek I have done the references for you! It is vitally important that we understand both Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 before we can make any attempt to understand Hebrews' placing so much significance on an obscure King and Priest from the past. It is also important in order for us to understand the next few chapters to try to get to know the Old Testament system of sacrifice, and the place of Moses' Tabernacle. Today we will make a start by looking at the place of the priest - albeit rather a unique one. Next time we will look at sacrifice and after that the whole idea of covenant, worship, Tabernacle and Temple.

Before we proceed please take a moment to read Hebrews 7 v 1 - 28 and Genesis 14 (don't worry about the unpronounceable names) and Psalm 110. NB Chapter divisions and verses were never part of the scriptures nor were they ever intended to be. I find the way Hebrews has been split up into chapters etc very irritating. Ideally for the next few studies it would be good to read chapters 7 through to the end of chapter 10. Maybe you could try that. Have you tried to read the whole book? After all the writer claims to have only written briefly! Chapter 13 v 22!

What was special about Melchizedek?

He was a priest of God most High. He was also a king. He was greater than Abraham - to the Jew, that's pretty great. He was a 'type' for 'King Jesus'. Psalm 110 tells us that Melchizedek was a type of prefigure Messiah. Hebrews, in maintaining that Jesus is better, is arguing that the accepted messianic expectation has been completely fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus far outshines everything that was so much part of contemporary Judaism. This is still true.

Hebrews 7 v 1 - 10.

Just as Melchizedek was unique so too is Jesus. Melchizedek was first of all Priest most High and secondly King of peace. These two characteristics were perfectly fulfilled in Jesus as Priest Most High as well as King of Peace. Abraham was revered as the Father of the Nation of Israel. It was his obedience to the call of God, the miraculous provision of a son (Isaac) in his old age and eventually the twelve 'tribes' that were still "in his loins" when he met Melchizedek that provides the writer of Hebrews with such a good illustration. The eternal place of Jesus in God's plan of provision for His people - a Messiah - who in every way outshone all and everything that had gone before in the history of Israel. The Old Covenant was a pale foreshadowing of what was to come.

Melchizedek was greater than Abraham - he blessed Abraham, who gave him a tithe, because the blessed is always less than the person who blesses verse 7. It is interesting that the reference to a tithe is just a 'matter of fact' comment. So I will leave it at that too!

Hebrews 7 v 11 - 26

Now we move to an apparently convoluted argument about priests and their role in the history of Israelite worship and ritual. Again this is part of the writers argument to show that Jesus is better than anything that had gone before. Priests in the Old Covenant came from the tribe of Levi - Jesus descended from the tribe of Judah. Jesus, once again is uniquely God's provision; King - greater than Melchizedek and Priest for ever greater than Melchizedek! Jesus is indeed better in every respect than the history and traditions of Israel, coming as He did from a different tribe than every other priest.

Such a high priest - "holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners and exalted above the heavens" (verse 26) meets our need. How? because instead of having to continually offer up sacrifices, He Himself became the sacrifice - once and for all. He is indeed far better. This introduces us to the idea of a New Covenant - the subject of our next study.

As you read the scriptures do they make your "heart burn within you"? Ask the Holy Spirit to do for you what Jesus did for the two travellers on the road to Emmaus on the Sunday of Resurrection. Turn to the scriptures again and again and allow them to 'speak' into your situation during these unprecedented times. 2 Timothy 3 v 15 and 16.