**PREFIGURING OF JESUS (#4)**

***Jesus and Melchizedek***

“Mel who?”

That’s what the first century Christians who had refused to mature in their faith were saying when they received the letter to the Hebrews. These spiritual babies, who by this time in their walk of faith should have been adult-level teachers, could not pronounce, much less explain, the “*order of Melchizedek*” Priesthood (Heb. 5:12-14). The author had said, while bringing up this type of Christ, that he would have loved to compare these two spiritual giants, but they were too ignorant of such weighty topics because they had not studied their Bible diligently.

In his own words he put the superiority of Christ’s priesthood this way, *“And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing”* (Heb. 5:9-11).

So in Hebrews 5-6 he backs up and begins to go over the first principles again so that he could take another running leap at explaining “Mel who.” All of Hebrews 6 is shaming these lazy Christians for their failure to grasp the basics of the faith. They had made a “D-” in Christianity 101. But after going back over the fundamentals he launches into the powerful significance of Melchizedek’s priesthood in chapter 7. It’s beautiful and worthy of putting on your work boots, grabbing a shovel, and digging deep into the story of this mysterious man who became a Type of Christ.

The Latin word for priest is *Pontifex*, meaning “*bridge builder*.” Priests were given to bridge the gap between God and man. In the Old Testament the Israelites had to go through the priest to secure forgiveness and fellowship with God. Jews looked to the Levitical priesthood for their salvation. Aaron and his descendants, who were from the tribe of Levi, were chosen as God’s priesthood. But we have to go back 500 years before Aaron to trace his lineage to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Of Jacob’s 12 sons the third one was Levi. So that means Abraham had lived before Levi was even born! Think about that. That’s critical as we now learn the connection between Melchizedek and Abraham.

One day Abraham found himself playing soldier, leading a rag-tag army of 318 servants 160 miles north to Damascus to attack a powerful army that had just wiped out four kings and stolen their goods, including his nephew Lot. In a surprise attack he defeats this far superior force and rescues his Lot and brings back the spoils they had stolen. Coming near the city of Salem (later Jerusalem) a stranger comes out to meet Abraham. His name is Melchizedek. He is not only the “*King of Salem*,” but also “*priest of God Most High*” (Gen. 14:18).

Do you know what Abraham did? He gave a tithe (10%) of all the spoils to this King / Priest. After that we hear nothing more about him until we read just one verse in a Messianic psalm: *“The LORD has sworn and will not relent, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”* (Psa. 110:4).

There it is again – that “*Order of Melchizedek*.” We do not read one more word about this until we come to Hebrews 7. Just four verses in the entire Old Testament about him, then suddenly there are three full chapters (Heb. 7-9) about Christ’s *Melchizedek priesthood*.

Out of total obscurity this mystery man takes on incredible significance to us. From “Mel who?” he suddenly takes center stage and becomes a “Who’s Who” in our Hall of Fame. We come to realize that the priesthood of Melchizedek has everything to do with our making it to heaven! That should get our attention. Suddenly I love Melchizedek!

What’s the point? The point is that these Jewish Christians were threatening to return to Judaism. They loved the old ways. They yearned for their old priesthood. They were nostalgic for the traditions of Abraham. He was their hero. But then we learn that ***Abraham paid tithes to a Gentile king and priest***! Now we learn that **Jesus’ priesthood was after the order of this Gentile king** from Jerusalem!

Mel who? Just WHO is this masked man? Well, it’s not the Lone Ranger. But it is a man who has no known genealogy, no record of his birth or death, thus making his “*order*” without end. His priesthood was greater than Aaron’s Levitical priesthood. Jesus comes along and takes both the priestly ephod from Melchizedek’s chest, and the royal crown from his head, and wears them all the way to Heaven. He now sits as both King and High Priest, ruling and interceding for us (Heb. 7:25). Only now will you grasp the significance of Hebrews 4:14-16,

14 Seeing then that we have a great **High Priest** who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the **throne** of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

These Jews had made the mistake of believing their religion and faith had begun with Abraham. Not so. They failed to see that even their founding father saw a Gentile king and priest greater than himself. Thus, we must necessarily infer that salvation belongs to all men, both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus’ kingly priesthood now proves that.

Melchizedek was a *Type of Christ*. He prefigured Jesus. His priesthood foreshadowed the kind of priesthood Jesus would have in His heavenly kingdom. Levi’s priesthood had a retirement age of fifty (Num. 4:3). Jesus is ageless (Heb. 13:8), which makes His priesthood eternal.

Do you remember the Peanuts comic strip where Lucy played the neighborhood psychiatrist? Charlie Brown would come to her booth, look at Lucy laid back with her hands behind her head, then see the words “*The Doctor Is In*.” She would give him her “sage” advice and then say, “that will be 5 cents please.”

Like Melchizedek, with Jesus “The Doctor Is In.” He is our High Priest in whom we can come boldly before His royal throne to receive mercy and grace in our time of need.
“Mel who?” Mel-chizedek, “*priest of God Most High*” – that’s who. Perhaps he is now in heaven praising his “High Priest” who has forgiven him of his sins.

Now, aren’t you glad you grabbed that shovel and dug deep? I love you. - Rick