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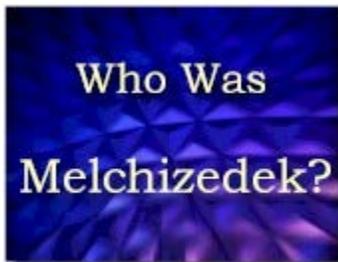
• Internet: www.askelm.com •

Email: askoffice@askelm.com

Who Was Melchizedek?

by David Sielaff, January 2011

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for January 2011](#)



The question of the identity of the individual named Melchizedek has been asked by most every reader of the Bible. Beginning with the first mention of Melchizedek in the Book of Genesis, until the final references and explanations in the Book of Hebrews regarding Christ's role as a priest "after the order of Melchizedek," it is natural to wonder, "Who Was Melchizedek?" This article will focus on the biblical evidence to answer that question.¹

Everyone seems to have a comment on who Melchizedek was. The Jewish Targums, rabbinic writings, Philo, and Josephus all hold that Melchizedek was a human being, often identified as Shem, the son of Noah.² The Dead Sea Scrolls document 11Q13 holds that Melchizedek was an angel or "a godlike being" who was part of the Divine Council referred to in Psalm 82:1 and Psalm 7:7–8).³ However, only the information contained in the Bible is truly relevant.

The First Mention of Melchizedek in Scripture

The first part of Genesis chapter 14 set the stage. Four (4) kings from Mesopotamia set themselves to rule over five (5) kings who ruled the small but prosperous cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (which is Zoar) near where the Jordan River empties into the northern portion of the Dead Sea. The 5 kings were vassals of King Chedorlaomer the apparent leader of the 4 Mesopotamian kings. The 5 vassal kings rebelled (Genesis 14:4) and Chedorlaomer came with the other three kings and their armies to punish the 5 errant vassal kings. Chedorlaomer's army was victorious and the king of Sodom was taken captive along with all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 14:11). Lot, the nephew of Abram (later to be named Abraham), lived in Sodom and was taken captive along with his valuables (Genesis 14:12).

¹ My article, "[Christ as High Priest](#)," for February 2009 is somewhat a companion piece to this current article, although its topic was broader. This current article is more focused, dealing with a specific question.

² Gareth Lee Cockerill, "Melchizedek without Speculation: Hebrews 7:1–25 and Genesis 14:17–24" in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Ancient Contexts*, Richard Bauckham, et al., eds. (NY: T&T Clark, 2008), p. 134.

³ Michael Wise, et al., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), pp. 456–457.

Abram gathered 318 fighting men, attacked Chedorlaomer's army, and defeated them gaining great spoil from Sodom and the other cities. Lot was rescued along with all his goods and property (Genesis 14:16).

“And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother [nephew] Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.”

• **Genesis 14:16–17**

Then comes the first mention of Melchizedek. He is not introduced nor is there an explanation about his background:

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he [Melchizedek] 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 has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And he gave him tithes of all.”

• **Genesis 14:18–20**

This short passage tells us some information about who he is:

- The name Melchizedek means “King of Righteousness,” derived from *melchi* (king) + *tsedeq* (righteousness). This is more of a title than a name.
- He is identified as **“king of Salem.”** The word Salem means “peace.” Salem is commonly understood to be Jerusalem, which later under Canaanite control came to be called Jebus. Only later did it become known as Jerusalem. During the time of Abraham, every “city” had a local king but in fact, all cities were very small by later standards.
- He spoke and blessed Abram, having authority to bless Abram on behalf of God.
- He called for blessings upon the most high God.
- He had authority to receive Abram's one-time tithe, one-tenth of the spoils from Abram's military victory. This was likely a token of appreciation. Abram was giving a tithe of the plunder to God in thanksgiving for the victory.
- He was a priest, a *cohen*, **“of the most high God”** who is YHWH (see verse 22). Interestingly, this is the first occurrence of the Hebrew word “priest” [*cohen*] in the entire Old Testament.

As this passage states, Melchizedek was both the king (**“of Salem”**) and a priest **“of the most high God.”** This is all the obvious information that can be gained from this passage.

The Second Mention of Melchizedek in Scripture

Melchizedek is not mentioned again until Psalm 110, where again reference is made to him without explanation provided. Again, one gets the impression that the original readers and listeners to Psalm 110 had background information that we do not possess in our current canon of the Bible. Psalm 110 is only 7 verses long, so here is the entire psalm for context:

“YHWH said unto my Lord [Adonay], Sit you at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

YHWH shall send the rod of your strength out of Zion: rule you in the midst of your enemies. Your people shall be willing in the day of your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: you have the dew of your youth.

YHWH has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest for ever [*olam*, for the age] after the order of Melchizedek.

The Lord at your [YHWH's] right hand

- [1] **shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.**⁴
- [2] **He shall judge among the heathen** [*goyim*, nations, Gentiles],
- [3] **he shall fill the places with the dead bodies;**
- [4] **he shall wound the heads over many countries.**
- [5] **He shall drink of the brook in the way:**
- [6] **therefore shall he lift up the head** [hold his head high].”

• *Psalm 110:1–7*

The one who would sit at YHWH's right hand was sworn by Him to be **“a priest for ever [*olam*] after the order of Melchizedek”** (Psalm 110:4). This individual will rule by YHWH's side. His role as a priest will last to the eon.⁵ He will initiate the Day of YHWH's wrath, judging nations, killing many, and he will do so with righteousness and with a serenity that allows him to drink quietly from a brook and lift his head with assurance.

Psalm 110 tells us that Melchizedek was part of a priesthood, and that the individual referred to in the Psalm was a priest in that priestly order of Melchizedek. This is new information from Genesis chapter 14. References and allusions to Psalm 110 are throughout the New Testament. In fact, Psalm 110 is referred to in the New Testament more than any Old Testament section of Scripture.

Jesus' Admission and Reference to Psalm 110

After Jesus was arrested and taken prisoner in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Jewish officials brought Him before the Sanhedrin for judgment. He was questioned by the High Priest:

“But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, ‘Are you the Christ [“the Messiah,” with the definite article], the Son of the Blessed?’

And Jesus said,

- [1] **I am** [the Christ]: **and**
- [2] **you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and**
- [3] [you shall see the Son of man] **coming in the clouds of heaven.**

Then the high priest rent his clothes, and said, ‘What need we any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy: what think you?’ And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.”

• *Mark 14:61–64*
(*cf. Matthew 26:63–66; Luke 22:66–71*)

Jesus made a stunning and powerful 3-part admission:

- [1] First, He admitted being the Christ, the Messiah (and admitting He was **“the Son of the Blessed”** as the high priest said, meaning the Son of YHWH or the Son of God).
- [2] Second, Jesus directly referenced Psalm 110. He did this to identify Himself as the individual spoken of in that Psalm. And not only did verse 1 of Psalm 110 apply to Him, but the entire Psalm applied to Him, including verse 4. Every member of the Sanhedrin understood the claim He was making. Psalm 110:

⁴ “The Day of his wrath” is likely the Day of the Lord's wrath (Isaiah 34:8–10ff), or the Day of the Lord. Isaiah 13:6–14, 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and 2 Peter 3:10 are just a few of the verses.

⁵ Psalm 110:4 does not give us enough information to determine which eon is being referenced. It is likely the superlative eon, the eon of the eons after the millennium.

“YHWH said unto my Lord [Adonay], ‘Sit you at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’ ... YHWH has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest for ever [*olam*, for the age] after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord [Adonay] at your [YHWH’s] right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.”

• *Psalm 110:1, 4–5*

[3] Third, Jesus made a direct reference to Daniel 7:13, which again, everyone in the room understood:

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

• *Daniel 7:13–14*

By His 3-part answer and admission to the high priest, every member of the Sanhedrin knew that Jesus was making an overt claim to both the High Priesthood of Melchizedek and He was making a claim to His right to rule as Messiah and King.⁶ In a sense, He should be judging them; they should not be judging Him. Truly, they had no choice but to convict Him. They should have bowed down, obeyed, and worshipped Him (which they shall do in the future), or they should have condemned Him for blasphemy and let God sort things out. (Which would you choose?) What if they were wrong?

German scholar Oscar Cullmann wrote about Jesus’ self-identification as Melchizedek High Priest, expressing it well:

“When Jesus answers the high priest in Mark 14:62, he combines a reference to Daniel 7 with the reference to Psalm 110: ‘You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven’ ‘Sitting at the right hand’ is inseparably connected with the thought of the priest-king after the order of Melchizedek.

Is it not significant that Jesus applies to himself a saying about the eternal High Priest precisely when he stands before the Jewish high priest and is questioned by him concerning his claim to be the Messiah? He says in effect that his messiahship is not that of an earthly messiah ... but that he is the heavenly Son of Man and the heavenly High Priest.”

• *Oscar Cullmann, Christology of the New Testament*⁷

Jesus identified Himself with Melchizedek, but what is His relationship to Melchizedek?

Peter’s Understanding of Psalm 110

The apostle Peter understood clearly that Psalm 110 applied to Christ:

“[David] Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ [Messiah] to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ [Messiah], that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we [apostles and disciples] all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted [at this moment!], and having received of the Father the

⁶ See Dr. Martin’s article “[Types of Messiah in the Old Testament.](#)” They were willing to accept him as an important teacher, one who does miracles, and perhaps even as a prophet, but not as king, Messiah, or Melchizedek high priest. John 3:2:

“Rabbi, we know [we, the religious rulers and teachers of Israel know] that you are a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that you do, except God be with him.”

⁷ Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. S.C. Guthrie and C.A.M. Hall (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), pp. 88–89. This quote is also given in my article “[Christ as High Priest.](#)”

promise of the Holy Ghost [Spirit], **he** [Jesus] **has shed forth this, which you now see and hear** [the outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit at Pentecost].

For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he [David] **says himself** [in Psalm 110:1], **‘YHWH said unto my Lord, Sit you on my right hand, Until I make your foes your footstool.’**

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ [Messiah].”

• *Acts 2:30–36*

Peter says that King David was not speaking of Himself in Psalm 110. So, we have the self-admission of Jesus that He is the individual of Psalm 110. We also have Peter’s witness of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. We have the outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit upon the multitude at Pentecost — all involving and relating to Psalm 110, particularly verse 1. If verse 1 applies to Christ, so does verse 4, which talks about the high priest **“after the order of Melchizedek.”**

Peter also says (in Acts 2:32 above) that what was sworn to in Psalm 110:4 was an oath prophesied by David. It was God’s oath to Himself. That oath was fulfilled. The evidence of that fulfillment was Jesus’ resurrection from the dead that they had witnessed. This information was likely explained to the apostles after Christ’s resurrection and before His ascension.

Early in chapter 1 of the Book of Hebrews, Psalm 110:1 is referenced two times. The first reference is:

“[The Son] **Who**

[1] **being the brightness of his** [the Father’s] **glory, and**

[2] **the express image of his** [the Father’s] **person, and**

[3] **upholding all things by the word of his** [the Father’s] **power,**

when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

• *Hebrews 1:3*

Each of these three items occurred after His resurrection, not before, because our sins were not purchased until the blood was sprinkled on the altar in heaven.

The second reference contrasts the weak authority of angels with the glory of the Son:

“But to which of the angels said he at any time, ‘Sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool?’ [from Psalm 110:1] Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

• *Hebrews 1:13–14*

Everything in the Book of Hebrews has a post-resurrection perspective. The audience of Hebrews fully accepts Christ’s resurrection and glorification.⁸ The stage has been set, so let us look at how the Book of Hebrews uses the important verse of Psalm 110:4 with its mention of the Melchizedek priesthood.

Melchizedek Priest in Hebrews Chapter 5

There are two other sections of Scripture dealing with Melchizedek or his priestly order. One is a brief mention in Hebrews chapter 5 and the other is a lengthy comparison of the order of the Melchizedek priesthood with the Levitical priesthood in Hebrews chapter 7.⁹ The context of the mention of Melchizedek in Hebrews chapter 5 begins in verse 4:14:

“Seeing then that we have [now, at present] **a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which**

⁸ See Dr. Martin’s article [“The Book of Hebrews”](#) for a detailed background analysis of this deep and fascinating book.

⁹ See [“Christ as High Priest”](#) for further discussion.

cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

• *Hebrews 4:14–16*

The Son of God is at the throne of grace of God the Father, just as Psalm 110:1 says He is.¹⁰ When we will approach that throne (as Paul says each of us shall **“boldly”** do in the future), we have a high priest who will advocate and mediate on our behalf (**“making intercession for us,”** Romans 8:34). Paul then shows how Christ (as the Son) became high priest: He was appointed. With this appointment, the subject of Melchizedek (alternately spelled Melchisedec in the New Testament) comes up again:

“So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he [God the Father] that said unto him, ‘You are my Son, to day have I begotten you’ [as in Hebrews 1:5, quoting Psalm 2:7].

As he says also in another place, ‘You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec’ [quoting Psalm 110:4]. Who in the days of his [Christ’s] flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him [God the Father] that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.”

• *Hebrews 5:5–7*

Melchizedek did not offer **“prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears,”** but Christ did. In this passage the mention of Melchizedek merely refers to **“the order of Melchizedek,”** not the individual. As always, Christ is the focus and the object of the entire passage, just as He is the focus for the entire Book of Hebrews and the entire Bible. Continuing on, Paul next refers to Christ as the **“Son”** from Psalm 110:4:

“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal [eonian] salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing.”

• *Hebrews 5:8–11*

Note the last sentence. The apostle Paul wanted to impart new information (**“many things to say”**) to them about Melchizedek, but Paul could not do so because the recipients of Hebrews were **“dull of hearing.”** They should be teaching others about Christ as high priest and how that relates to Melchizedek.

“For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and [you] are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.”

• *Hebrews 5:12–13*

Stunted Growth

Paul’s audience already knew about Christ’s relationship to the Melchizedek priesthood. In fact, it was one of the **“first principles”** they learned from their Christian teaching, but they regressed and forgot those first principles. They had not grown. They needed to go back again to the basics of the faith (which Paul lists in 6:1–2). Note what Paul says next:

¹⁰ Psalm 110 is extremely important in the Book of Hebrews. Gareth Cockerill observes that Hebrews 7:1–25 is a continuous and coherent Christological interpretation of Psalm 110:4 supplemented by Genesis 14:17–24 that leaves no speculation about a heavenly or angelic Melchizedek. Melchizedek is not like the Son of God, the Son of God is like Melchizedek. Cockerill, “Melchizedek without Speculation,” p. 133. George Wesley Buchanan believes that Psalm 110, an enthronement psalm, is the basic text of most of the Book of Hebrews from 1:1–12:29. See *The Book of Hebrews: Its Challenge from Zion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), p. 172.

“But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; ...”

• **Hebrews 5:14–6:1**

Babes, those who still require milk, will have difficulty discerning **“both good and evil”** even though such matters should be simple for Paul’s audience, for they have been believers for a long time. The matter of the order of Melchizedek relates to **“the doctrine of Christ.”** It is a basic teaching. Paul’s audience (and we also) should already know about the role of Christ from earlier writings (when the teaching about Christ is studied in the correct canonical order).¹¹ If you lack knowledge about the doctrine of Christ, then discerning good and evil may be difficult and your life greatly complicated. As the trite saying goes: “No Christ, no peace. Know Christ, know peace.” Peter tells us about the importance of having knowledge of God.

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that had called us to glory and virtue.”

• **2 Peter 1:2–3**

Paul understood that they (and we) have all the information we need to be fully informed. Fortunately Paul goes on in chapter 7 of Hebrews and discusses at length **“the order of Melchizedek”** and the Son.

Melchizedek in Hebrews Chapter 7

Actually, Paul’s discussion continues from the last two verses of Hebrews chapter 6:

“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast [secure and confirmed], and which enters into that within the veil [of the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle in heaven]; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever [for the eon] after the order of Melchisedec.”

• **Hebrews 6:19–20**

Jesus was a high priest after Melchizedek’s order of priesthood. In the first two verses, Paul gives a straightforward account of events in Genesis chapter 14. Paul then reviews and begins a Midrash, a commentary, adding to it the later information from Psalm 110:

“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; 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; ...”

• **Hebrews 7:1–2**

In these verses Melchizedek’s two titles are given, and two events are described, Melchizedek blessing Abram, and Abram’s tithe to Melchizedek.

“Without father, without mother, without descent [pedigree or genealogy], having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God [in Greek, “the Son of the God”]; abides a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was,¹² unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.”

• **Hebrews 7:3–4**

¹¹ For example, from Christ’s self-identification as Messiah, King, and High Priest from Mark 14:62 and other passages.

¹² The word “man” is not in the Greek. Neither is the verb “was.” If it would be, the term would be *anthropos*. In fact, the Greek has no word “man” in the text. It is an inclusion by the King James Version. It should read: **“Now consider how great this [one was] ...”**

Melchizedek is “**like unto the Son of God**” (Hebrews 7:3) on the one hand, while Christ, the Son, is high priest “**after the similitude of Melchizedek**” (Hebrews 7:15) and “**after the order of Melchizedek**” (Hebrews 7:17). The comparison is complete, one from the perspective of Melchizedek’s, the other from the perspective of Christ.

“**And it is still more superabundantly sure, if a different priest [other than Melchizedek, i.e., the Son] is rising according to the likeness of Melchizedek, Who has not come to be according to the law of a fleshy precept [the Law of Moses], but according to the power of an indissoluble life. For He is attesting that ‘You [the Son] are a priest for the eon according to the order of Melchizedek’ [quoting Psalm 110:4].**”

• *Hebrews 7:15–17, Concordant Version*

Hebrews Chapter 7 in Parallel

Read most of Hebrews chapter 7 (and a bit of chapter 8, all from the King James Version) noting the ordered comparison of the Levitical and Melchizedek priesthoods:

Levitical Priesthood	Melchizedek Priesthood
	<p>⁴ Now consider how great this [one was], unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.</p>
<p>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:</p>	<p>⁶ But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him [Abraham] that had the promises. ⁷ And without all contradiction the less [Abraham] is blessed of the better [Melchizedek].</p>
<p>⁸ And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he live. ⁹ And as I may so say, Levi also, who receives tithes, paid 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 [Psalm 110:4], and not be called after the order of Aaron?</p>	<p>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 pertain 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 spoke nothing concerning priesthood. ¹⁵ And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there arises another priest, ¹⁶ Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment [the Law of Moses], but after the power of an endless life. ¹⁷ For he testifies, ‘You are a priest for ever [for the eon] after the order of Melchisedec’ [Psalm 110:4].</p>
<p>¹⁸ For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. ^{19a} For the law made nothing perfect,</p>	<p>^{19b} but the bringing in of a better hope did [make perfect]; by the which we draw nigh unto God. ²⁰ And inasmuch as <u>not without</u> [i.e., with (double negative)] an oath he was made priest:</p>
<p>^{21a} (For those [Levitical] priests were made without an oath;</p>	<p>^{21b} but this with an oath by him that said unto him, ‘The Lord swore and will not repent, You are a priest for ever [for the eon] after the order of Melchisedec’: [Psalm 110:4]) ²² By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.</p>

<p>²³ And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:</p>	<p>²⁴ But this man [in contrast with Levitical priests], because he continues ever [for the eon], has an unchangeable priesthood.</p> <p>²⁵ Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever [always] lives to make intercession for them.</p> <p>²⁶ For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;</p>
<p>²⁷ Who need 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.</p> <p>^{28a} For the law makes men high priests which have infirmity;</p>	<p>^{28b} but <u>the word of the oath</u>, which was since the law [after the law], makes the Son, who is consecrated for evermore [for the eon].</p> <p>^{8:1} Now of the things which we have spoken <u>this is the sum</u> [the conclusion]: <u>We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;</u></p> <p>^{8:2} A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.</p>

Distinguishing the two priesthoods could be continued through Hebrews chapters 8, 9, and down to Hebrews 10:18 with a multitude of comparisons to be made. Complete that study on your own.

Dr. Ernest Martin's Views

Dr. Martin's book *The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine* has gone through three editions, as indicated below. The book grew out of articles and then a *Bible Manual* which was originally written for Sabbath-keeping groups that comprised the majority of Dr. Martin's readers.

Chapter Title	2004 Print / Internet Edition (brown cover) ¹³	2001 Edition (light blue cover)	1999 Edition (dark blue cover)
<p>"The Antichrist Will Establish the Mosaic Law"</p>	<p>(Chapter 21, p. 342)</p> <p>Though Christ is not an angel (Hebrews 1 & 2), he does use a special angel to represent Him (Revelation 1:1).^{4 or 111}</p> <p><i>[footnote 4 in the Internet edition, footnote 111 in the printed edition]:</i></p> <p>Christ is shown in superior rank on the Father's right hand; and in Psalm 110 Christ is intimately united with the "King of Salem," or Melchizedek. The "King of Salem" is NOT an angel. He has Christ's title.</p>	<p>(Chapter 21, p. 342)</p> <p><i>[Same as the 2004 edition]</i></p>	<p>(Chapter 21, p. 354)</p> <p>Though Christ is not an angel (Hebrews 1 & 2), he does use a special angel to represent him (Revelation 1:1).</p> <p>Christ is shown in superior rank on the Father's right hand, and in Psalm 110 Christ is intimately united with the "King of Salem," or Melchizedek. The "King of Salem" is NOT an angel. He has Christ's title.</p>

¹³ Page numbers only apply to the print edition. By necessity, the internet edition requires footnotes be renumbered for each book chapter. Also, I add, change, or delete footnotes as necessary.

<p><i>[same as above, different page]</i></p> <p><i>[Melchizedek is proposed to be a Son of God who has an angel assigned to Him. That angel is the second cherub before the throne of God.]</i></p>	<p>(Chapter 21, p. 345)</p> <p>In a past Prophetic Report I gave historical proof that Tyre was colonized by Edomites and that the literal “King of Tyre” was actually an Edomite. The other cherub was “the Angel of the Lord” who was the Angel of the King of Salem (Melchizedek, who was a Son of God, not an angel). Actually, the early Canaanite city of Jebus was finally named “Salem” which subsequently became “Jerusalem.” These two cherubs are top angels. The right hand cherub was the Angel of the King of Salem (Jerusalem) and the other cherub was the Angel for the human King of Tyre.</p>	<p>(Chapter 21, p. 345)</p> <p><i>[Same as the 2004 edition]</i></p>	<p>(Chapter 21, p. 357), <i>[minor word change]</i></p> <p>In a past Prophetic Report I have given historical proof that Tyre was colonized by Edomites and that the literal “King of Tyre” was actually an Edomite. The other cherub was “the Angel of the Lord” who was the Angel of the King of Salem (Melchizedek, who was a Son of God, not an angel). Actually, the early Canaanite city of Jebus was finally named “Salem” which subsequently became “Jerusalem.” These two cherubs are top angels. The right hand cherub was the Angel of the King of Salem (Jerusalem) and the other cherub was the Angel for the human King of Tyre.</p>
<p>“Chaos in the Churches”</p>	<p>(Chapter 23, p. 370)</p> <p>Christ is different! He is like Melchizedek.</p> <p>“Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but [as Christ was] made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually.” <i>Hebrews 7:3</i></p>	<p>(Chapter 23, p. 370)</p> <p><i>[Same as the 2004 edition]</i></p>	<p>(Chapter 23, p. 382)</p> <p><i>[Same as the 2004 edition]</i></p>
<p>“God’s Divine Headquarters”</p>	<p>(Chapter 31, p. 501)</p> <p>In summation, <u>Melchizedek is simply a name of Christ</u> before His incarnation and again after His resurrection. It is the name Christ holds <u>in His role of being a priest for the entire human race</u>. But Christ was at first (and still is) the chief of the heavenly group of divine beings who make up the Family of God. He sat on the right hand side of YHVH because He was God’s firstborn Son (Colossians 1:15) of all the “Sons of God” in heaven.¹⁴</p>	<p>(Chapter 31, p. 501)</p> <p><i>[Same as the 1999 edition]</i></p>	<p>(Chapter 29, p. 511)</p> <p>In summation, Melchizedek is simply a name of Christ before His incarnation and again after His resurrection. It is the name Christ holds in His role of being a priest for the entire human race. But Christ was at first (and still is) the chief of the heavenly group of divine beings who make up the Family of God. He sat on the right hand side of YHVH because He was God’s firstborn Son (Colossians 1:15) of all the “Sons of God” in heaven.</p>

The chapter in *Essentials*, “God’s Divine Headquarters” has an extensive discussion of Melchizedek by Dr. Martin. His “summation” could be considered his final understanding on the matter. Melchizedek was a Son of God. In fact, He was the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was God’s original creation (Revelation 3:14). Note how Christ’s priority in creation is phrased by the apostle Paul in Colossians:

¹⁴ For emphasis I added the underlining in the Internet edition (only).

“Who is the image of the invisible God,

- [1] **the firstborn of every creature** [creation]: **For**
- [2] **by him were all things created**, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers:
- [3] **all things were created by him**, and for him: **And**
- [4] **he is before all things**, and by him all things consist. **And he is the head of the body, the church:**
- [5] **who is the beginning,**
- [6] **the firstborn from the dead**; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”

• **Colossians 1:15–18**

In six ways Paul emphasizes that the Son is first in “time” as well as first in power, authority, and status. In fact, He is the first of every creature,¹⁵ in every way, just as He is the first of the redeemed children of God. Do you think the audience of Paul’s statements would have understood this passage in any other way? Would they have understood this passage as theological symbolism? No, they would have read and heard this in the plainest and simplest sense: that Christ was the first in time as well as in status.¹⁶

So, Who Was Melchizedek?

We come back to our four sources of information about Melchizedek:

- (1) Genesis chapter 14, and the information given to us in
- (2) Psalm 110,
- (3) Hebrews chapter 5, and
- (4) Hebrews chapter 7.

That is the extent of the information we are given about Melchizedek and the priestly order associated with him. Psalm 110, a Davidic Psalm, is a clear Messianic declaration and identification. Jesus and the apostles confirm this to be so (as shown in Mark 14:62 at His trial, Christ identified Himself as the individual in Psalm 110). So, He who sits on God’s right hand is the Messiah of Israel. He is also the priest after the order of Melchizedek.

With all this in mind, is Christ the same individual named Melchizedek as presented in Genesis chapter 14? Yes, He is, but ... why did Paul not say that Jesus was Melchizedek (Jesus = Melchizedek)? In fact, Paul in Hebrews was extremely careful **NOT** to make that identification.¹⁷

The passages below clearly denote a distinction and a difference between Melchizedek and Christ by using comparative words:

- **“after the order of”** in Hebrews 5:6 (but not identified with Melchizedek beyond the relationship of the “order” of the priesthood),
- **“after the order of”** in Hebrews 5:10,
- **“after the order of”** in Hebrews 6:20,
- **“made like unto the Son of God”** in Hebrews 7:3 (in context from vv. 1-3).

¹⁵ In Greek, it reads that Christ is the firstborn of every creation, not just the firstborn of every creature. This translation is used in most all modern versions.

¹⁶ See my presentation “[Elohim and the Son of God — Part 2](#)” where I demonstrate that Christ existed before He was born of Mary. Of course, it is best that you read or listen to Part 1 first, then Part 2, and then Part 3.

¹⁷ This list is from my Commentary from March 14, 2005, “[About Melchizedek](#).” I have since rejected my conclusion in that Commentary, although the data are relevant.

These verses do not say Melchizedek was the Son of God, which would have been easy for Paul to do:

- “**after the order of**” in Hebrews 7:10f,
- “**after the similitude** [likeness] **of**” in Hebrews 7:15,
- “**after the order of**” in Hebrews 7:17 (quoting Psalm 110:4),
- “**after the order of**” in Hebrews 7:21.

The answer, once stated, is easy to understand: Jesus ceased to be Melchizedek during the period He was in the flesh. This would be from the time He was born of Mary until His death at the resurrection. This would be from the time He took His first breath in the flesh until He took His last breath at death. After His resurrection, He became a priest “**after the order of Melchizedek.**” But He was no longer Melchizedek. Paul nowhere says He was Melchizedek.

“Having, then, a great Chief Priest, Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, we may be holding to the avowal [of our faith]. For we have not a Chief Priest not able to sympathize with our infirmities, but One Who has been tried in all respects like us, apart from sin. We may be coming, then, with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may be obtaining mercy and finding grace for opportune help.”

• *Hebrews 4:14–16*

Who Met with Abram?

The individual who met Abram in Genesis chapter 14 was perhaps Christ, but it also could have been an angelic representative, an agent who had the authority to act on behalf of the principal that he represented. Such an angelic representative was used in Revelation 1:1. If this was the case, keep in mind that the angel was NOT Melchizedek, but the angel would have received the tithe and blessed Abraham as agent of the Son of God. This may be an additional component of the story of the encounter in Genesis chapter 14, and a reason why Paul did not directly identify Melchizedek with Jesus.

After all, the messenger called “**the angel of the Lord**” has delegated authority to speak for YHWH. See Dr. Martin’s chapter 2 of *The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine*, “[The Law Was Given by Angels](#)” where “**the angel of the Lord**” is identified and thoroughly discussed. I believe this explanation covers all evidence about Melchizedek from all verses and ignores no evidence that I can see. The key to a proper knowledge in this matter is Dr. Martin’s unique and perceptive understanding that is clearly shown in Chapters 1 and 2 of the Book of Hebrews:

- The Son of God is not an angel, and
- conversely, angels are not sons of God.

“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

• *Hebrews 2:16–17*

Look at this same passage in the Concordant Version:

“For assuredly it is not taking hold of messengers, but it is taking hold of the seed of Abraham. Whence He ought, in all things, to be made like the brethren [meaning Israel, so that ...], that He may be becoming a merciful and faithful Chief Priest in that which is toward God, to make a propitiatory shelter for the sins of the people.”

• *Hebrews 2:16–17, Concordant Version*

This opens up a unique consideration of who Melchizedek truly is. He is not an angel. He is the Son of God. I believe Dr. Martin understood correctly but in one section of *Essentials of New Testament Doctrine*

he made a confusing statement in chapter 21, even though later he was clear in chapter 31. The contradiction, I am glad to say, is only apparent.

Of course, I have muddied the waters with my own writing. I too am growing in grace and in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). I have put a notice in my March 14, 2005 Commentary, "[About Melchizedek](#)" on the ASK website, indicating my change of understanding.

Without Father, without Mother

Look at Hebrews 7:3. How can this passage be explained?

"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; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually."

• *Hebrews 7:2–3*

Before He became flesh born of Mary, in His office of Melchizedek, Jesus was indeed without father, without mother. He was directly created as God's first creation (as per Colossians 1:15–18 above). He did not have a beginning of days. He made the eons (Hebrews 1:2). He was before time, before days were created. What about the phrase "**end of life**"? He did not die as Melchizedek, rather He "**emptied Himself**":

"For let this disposition be in you, which is in Christ Jesus also, Who, being inherently in the form of God, deems it not pillaging to be equal with God, nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity, and, being found in fashion as a human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross [tree].

Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father.

• *Philippians 2:5–11, Concordant Version*

In light of this Philippians passage, go and reread Hebrews 1:1–8.

Again, before He was born of Mary He was also known as the Word. The word "**was made flesh**":

"All things were made by him [the Word]; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ...

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. ...

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

• *John 1:3–5, 10, 14*

This table may be helpful:

Before He became flesh	While He was flesh (some 32 years)	After His resurrection
The Father created all <u>through</u> Him	September 3 BC to Passover 30 AD (Dr. Martin's reckoning)	The Second Adam, the exact image of God, fulfillment of creation for mankind
In the form of God (Philippians 2:6)	Emptied Himself (Philippians 2:6); Sown a soulish body (1 Corinthians 15:44)	Exalted by God (Philippians 2:9), Raised a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:45)

He was <u>the Word</u> “through which all things were made” (John 1:3).	“Only begotten” and “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14, 18).	“For the word of God [is] quick [living], and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).
Melchizedek meets Abram (Genesis 14:18–20) He is the object of Psalm 110:4	Jesus admits to being Messiah, King, and Melchizedek (Mark 14:62, et al.)	<u>Now</u> high priest for the age after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4 begun, Hebrews 5:6, 6:20, 7:17, 21)
“... without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life” (Hebrews 7:3)	Christ came in the flesh. (Luke 24:39; John 1:14, 3:6; Acts 2:30f; Romans 1:3, 8:3; Ephesians 2:15, 5:30; Colossians 1:22; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 5:7, 10:20, 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 4:2f; 2 John 1:7)	Our Savior resurrected to spiritual body of flesh and bones (no blood, Luke 24:39) “An high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26)
Melchizedek “like” the Son of God (Hebrews 6:20–7:3)	Jesus <u>as</u> the Son of God (Mark 14:61–62; Luke 1:35; John 20:31)	Mark 14:62; Romans 1:4 “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is <u>set down at the right hand of the throne of God</u>” (Hebrews 12:2).
First of the Sons of God	Our elder brother “For it became him, for whom [are] all things, and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to <u>make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings</u>” (Hebrews 2:10).	“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29). “Beloved, now <u>are we the sons of God</u>, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, <u>we shall be like him</u>” (1 John 3:2).

Before Jesus became flesh, one of His roles and titles was as Melchizedek. He satisfied every condition that the Book of Hebrews says Melchizedek needed to fulfill. To say simply that Jesus was Melchizedek is incomplete. He was not **“made like unto the Son of God”** (Hebrews 7:3) until the Son was begotten of the Father and became flesh through His birth to Mary (John 1:14, 18, Hebrews 1:5). Such things are for our benefit and study. We should learn from them. Discuss them, challenge them, argue about them.

“Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, ...”

• **1 John 4:2–3**

“For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”

• **1 Peter 3:18**

Keep in mind that all the words that Paul wrote were written to us as well as to His original audiences

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

• **Romans 15:4**