

Christ

The Importance of The Melchizedek Priesthood of The Lord - Part 1

Introduction

The ancient Psalmist wrote, “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands” (Psa. 143:5). Two of his words are not only a manifestation of the man informing us of his mental thoughts, in that manifestation he mentions three important words, they are, “remember, meditate and muse”. We live in a world where people are amused, not thinking, but to muse is to consider repeatedly like the waves of the ocean lapping on the shoreline.

- a) This can be especially so when it comes to scriptures of truth when the Holy Spirit has recorded for us deep truths concerning our Lord, two of which are His Melchizedek Priesthood and knowing Divine Persons.

In our Lord’s recorded prayer He said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Jn. 17:3). In life there are different levels of knowing people. There are some whom an individual may have casually met, others may be a distant relative or a close friend, and those who are family members. However, one thing is evident, to really know a person it is a process, necessitating close companionship. The same is with knowing Divine Persons and their works.

The Learning Process

It is an incomprehensible blessing that we can work with the Holy Spirit to be enriched by getting to know God and Christ. As we get to know God it results in glorification of Christ, for there is an increase of comprehension of the fulness of His Person and offices, but more, there is an increase of our appreciation of them. In the days of spiritual babyhood we knew certain truths such as the Lord as our Saviour but little else. Nothing was known of His High Priestly work or Advocacy, and there may have been a number of years before such offices and works became more appreciated.

Speaking for myself, it is more than forty years ago when there was brought before me with great clarity the wonderful truth that seems so evident, I can never appreciate the greatness of Christ as my High Priest until I appreciate my need for Him as such. I never saw my real need of a Saviour until I saw my plight. Even after 63 years of enjoying salvation I am still on the long journey and realize so often I am dreadfully deficient in my understanding.

As we develop spiritually we learn that the Lord did a work on earth and He is doing a work now in Heaven. This causes one to observe:

- a) When our Lord was on earth His work was two fold: “I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do” (Jn. 17:4), I which was to declare the name of God to them (Jn. 17:26) and to provide the finished eternal sacrifice for sin (Jn. 19:30).
- b) His work on earth was finished but His twofold work in Heaven is never finished, that of being a High Priest and Advocate.
- c) His work in Heaven could not be done until His work on earth was finished.
- d) His work in Heaven is dependent on His work on earth. That is, if His life on earth and eternal sacrifice had not been accomplished, there would never have been a Saviour nor High Priest and Advocate. I have learnt from experience I cannot even pray without the help of the Holy Spirit.

Who is Melchizedek?

1. There are three passages in the scriptures where Melchizedek (Melchisedec) is mentioned (Gen. 14:18; Psa. 110:4; Heb. 5:6-7:21). In each reference he just appears, with one referencing historical, one prophetic and the ones in Hebrews doctrinal.
 - a) He was a very great man having superiority over Abraham by two matters:
 - i) He blessed Abraham. That great man whom God called “my Friend” is blessed by a man who is a Priest of the Most High God (Gen. 14:18).

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- ii) He was a king in Salem (Jerusalem) (Heb. 7:2).
- 2. Who he was by birth is of no consequence for in Genesis where we read of genealogies there is none given for this man. Some think he was the Lord in a theophany, others that he was an ordinary human being with a regal and sacerdotal position. It is not that he did not have a birth, the scriptures are silent as to his birth and death for the development of the truths he presents as a priest.
- 3. It is observed that between Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 there is approximately one thousand years passed and another 1000 thousand years pass before He is spoken of in Hebrews, where he is mentioned in a variety of contexts which are:
 - a) In Hebrews 5:6 it is associated with authoritative distinguishing and relationship. The priest had to be “called of God” (Heb. 5:4) and the one who acknowledged Christ as “My Son” is God. There is no higher authoritative distinguishing. Furthermore, Melchisedec is associated with Sonship. This is the one whom God has spoke through (Heb. 1:2); whom He has appointed to the highest ranks and executed the great work of purification for sins (Heb. 1:3-4); is superior to all the angels and peers; and whose years shall not fail (Heb. 1:4-13).
 - b) In Hebrews 5:10 this priesthood is associated with re-emphasizing the Lord’s personal perfecting and being the Author of eternal salvation, and the acknowledging of His position. He is “called” of God. It indicates he was “saluted”, “invested”, and “recognized”. On July 1st 1969 in Caernarfon Castle in Wales, a young man knelt before the Queen. He was given a sword, a rod, a coronet, and a mantle and publicly declared to be the “Prince of Wales”. He had been that from birth but at that moment it was solemnize. He became officially His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales”. God looks at Christ, a man who was perfected, fully qualified in experiences to be able to be a “High Priest after the order of Melchizedec.”
 - c) In Hebrews 6:20 the Melchizedec priesthood of the Lord is not liked with His perfecting as in chapter 5:6, nor with His sonship and Authorship as in ch. 5:10, but with the Lord being the Forerunner and our anchor within the veil (ch. 6:18-20).

What is meant by “Order of Melchizedec?”

When the scriptures inform it’s readers that Christ was after the order of Aaron or Melchizedec, what does it mean by “after the order”? There are in this world different “orders” such as the order of monks, the order of saint Andrew, saint Joachim, saint Benedict and in Canada the order of saint George. It simply means an arrangement according to a certain criteria. The order of Aaron (Heb. 7:11) was a series of High Priests who had the correct qualifications, i.e.; lineage, physically healthy with no deformity. An individual after the order of Melchizedec is an individual who has, in reality, the recorded characteristics that Melchizedec had typically.

The difference between works of the Priest and High Priest

God also determined the work of the Priests and High Priests, and while some works could be done by both, there were works only the High Priest could do.

- a) To Aaron and his sons were given the responsibility of the priesthood (Num. 3:6-8), and to offer sacrifices. The priest had three major functions in the Old Testament, to discern leprosy, to teach the people knowledge, that is the truth of the Lord, and to offer gifts and sacrifices (Heb. 5:2).
- b) However, there were three works only the High Priest could do:
 - i) Anoint the horns of the golden altar on the day of atonement which was done once a year (Ex. 30:10).
 - ii) Go into the Holiest to make atonement for the sins of the people on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:1-34).
 - iii) To light the lamps of the golden candlestick and put incense on the golden altar each morning and evening (Ex. 30:7-8).

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What did the High Priest do in the Old Testament that the priests could not do?

- 1) He had the responsibility to keep the lampstand lamps burning (Ex. 27:20-21; 30:7, 8).
- 2) He had the responsibility to make atonement for the people (Lev. 16:19-21).
- 3) He was to make atonement each year with the blood of the sin offering (Ex. 30:10).
- 4) Only he could wear the garment for glory and beauty (Ex. 28:3-39).

When did Christ become a High Priest?

For Christ to be a Priest/High Priest:

- a) He had to be a man, therefore after the Lord's incarnation (Heb. 2:14, 16; 5:4-5, 7:22), note the name "Jesus".
- b) He had to know every experience any saint of God would experience on the homeward journey, therefore His priestly work could never be commenced until His death and resurrection (Heb. 2:10, 17-18; 5:7; 10:10; 13:20).
- c) As a priest after the order of Melchizedec He could not die, therefore it had to be after His resurrection (Heb. 7:16, 24).
- d) He could not be such on earth for there were priests according to the law, so it had to be after His ascension (Heb. 8:4).
 - i) In summary, the Lord could not officially be a priest or High Priest until He had been born, lived among men, lived an unsullied life before God, entered into death and rose again, and then ascended to Heaven.
 1. However, this leads to the question, "Was the Lord not a priest when on earth when He offered himself?" (Heb. 9:14], and "is John 17:1-26 not a priestly prayer?"
 2. The truth is, Christ did priestly work without being a priest. Moses is an illustration of this. Moses is called a priest (Psa. 99:6) because he interceded for the children of Israel when they sinned and offered sacrifices to the golden calves (Ex. 32:1-32). However, He was not a priest in the official capacity as Aaron was. When the Lord offered Himself a sacrifice at Calvary, that was a priestly activity. When He prayed in John 17, that was priestly intercession, but He could not be a priest officially on earth. This because he was not of the priestly tribe (Heb. 7:14) and there were priests offering sacrifices according to the law (Heb. 8:4) when He had finished all sacrifices (Heb. 10:12). The epistle to the Hebrews is taken up with three major truths, the all sufficiency of Christ to be a High Priest, the blessings that flow from it, and my richness of life because of it. Of course while it is easy to say, "I have a High Priest", that is simply like a tree trunk for it leads into a variety of branches or questions as follows:

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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