

Ponderings in Hebrews

The following is a Messianic Study on

Hebrews 7

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Brit Chadashah (Sydney)

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For this Melchizedek... made like the Son of God

The author of Hebrews gives us another type, after Aaron and Moses; he now gives Melchizedek, as a type for Messiah. Entire volumes have been written about Melchizedek, and not just paperbacks but tomes. Can I ask that we hold off on using our sanctified imaginations (like those theologians used), and stick to the Scriptures. That way we won't allow our interpretations to wander too far, as has been the case with some who have interpreted the origin of this man. Please read Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalm 110:4 as background.

Hebrews 7:1-3

“¹ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation *of his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace. ³ Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.”

So let us explore who Melchizedek is? For it says he is king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, **without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life**, but made **like** the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

There are four common interpretations of Melchizedek:

1. Melchizedek was an angelic being.
2. Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Messiah (or a Christophany, a fancy way of saying an appearance of Messiah before He was born).
3. Melchizedek was Noah's son Shem.
4. Melchizedek was a human priest who the author of Hebrews is using as a type of Messiah.

1. Melchizedek was an angelic being.

The Essences, the people who had a settlement at Qumran and who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, thought that this Melchizedek was an angelic being who functioned *much* in the role of Michael the archangel (I will leave it to you to explore who is leading Heaven's armies: Daniel 10 & 12, Jude 1:9 and Revelation 12).

In 11Q13 (11QMelch) and (4Q401 11:3; 22:3), which are small fragmentary manuscripts found at Qumran, Melchizedek is seen as the leader of the Holy angels who are at war in Heaven against the angels of darkness. These are fragmentary documents which fall into the category of mystical documents. They offer no proof that he was an angel, but it is implied. (For more info see the chapter called The Heavenly Prince (11Q14) in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* by Geza Vermes pages 500-502). We are not able to agree with this interpretation for the following reasons. Hebrews 5:1 indicates that only humans can be

priests: “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins”.

And Melchizedek, who is mentioned in **Genesis 14:18-20**, holds two offices for he is also a king over the city of Salem (Jerusalem). This would require an angelic being to be permanently on earth functioning in the office. Finally, it would seem Melchizedek has offspring, for in Joshua 10 we meet another king of Salem with an even more impressive name than Melchizedek (מלכ־צדק), namely Adoni-zedek (אדני־צדק). Note carefully it does not say Adoni-zedek functioned in both offices and he is never seen as a type of Yeshua as he opposed God’s plan (Joshua 10).

2. Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Messiah (or a Christophany, a fancy way of saying an appearance of Messiah before He was born).

It goes beyond my purpose today to chase every reference to the Lord appearing in physical form, but let me give you seven for you to quickly read: Genesis 12:7-9; Genesis 18:1-33; Genesis 32:22-30; Exodus 3:2-4:17; Exodus 24:9-11; Deuteronomy 31:14-15 and Job 38-42 (for more see chapters 4-6 in *Discovering the Mystery of the Unity of God* by John B Metzger 2010).

Could Melchizedek be a Pre-incarnate Messiah? No, in all these appearances God appears in physical form briefly, He gives a message, has a meal, but He does not stay around. Note the contrast with Melchizedek. He holds two offices, king and priest, and both are hereditary offices. Both his father before him and his son after him (Joshua 10) would have held these titles. The other thing I noted is that when there is a Theophany (God appearing in the human form), the text clearly says it is The LORD and if it is not mentioned explicitly, we can see it is the LORD because of a statement from the people and or because of their worship of the LORD.

3. Melchizedek was Noah’s son Shem.

Some early rabbis identified Melchizedek with Shem, as in the Targum to Genesis 14:4, “And *Melchizedek*, who was Shem son of Noah, the king of Jerusalem.” This is also much later mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud in Nedarim 32b. While it is possible that Abraham could have dwelt in the tents of Shem, Shem would have been over 400 years old when Abraham was born and he has a lifespan of over 600 years (Genesis 11:10-11), but we do not have a verse that connects the two in the same location. However the main reason he cannot be identified as Melchizedek is that his genealogy is clearly mentioned in Genesis 11:10-26, so we do know who his father is, Noah (Genesis 10:1).

4. Melchizedek was a human priest who the author of Hebrews is using as a type of Messiah.

So it seems that Melchizedek was just like you and me, a man. However he held two offices, for he was both king and priest in Salem (Jerusalem), at the time of Abraham.

The point the author of Hebrews makes in regards to him having no father or mother nor genealogy, is not that he had none, but that we do not know it. Now this is highly irregular, as we look at Genesis every single significant person has his genealogy listed. But here there was none to be found.

Secondly, the genealogy was not needed as the Melchizedekian priesthood was by divine appointment, not by physical descent, as the Aaronic priesthood was. As he does hold these two offices, it would mean he was just a man with parents and children, again just like you and me, a human being.

Let me point out verse 4 “*Now observe how great this man was....*” This clearly indicates that Melchizedek was great, but he was still only a mortal man.

The last phrase of verse 3, “*he remains a priest perpetually,*” should be seen in that he is a type of Messiah, who will not change his priesthood, since there is no successor to the priesthood of Melchizedek mentioned. He might be thought of as one who remains in that office. I note in some commentaries that it says that the “Syriac Bible translation reads, ‘*his priesthood abides for ever.*’” This is, in my opinion, clearer for this would be true of the Melchizedekian order and of Messiah. This is of course based on **Psalm 110:4** The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, “*You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.*”

A reason to point this out would be to emphasize the timelessness of the order of *Melchizedek*, as there is no mention of the beginning or the end of the Melchizedekian Priesthood. This is in contrast to the Levitical Priesthood, where the Scriptures record a definite beginning, as well as its definite end.

As such the author says “*but made like the Son of God.*” He is not saying that He was the Son of God, but that Melchizedek was a type of Messiah, in that he held the two offices, being both priest and king. There is no record in the Old Testament of Melchizedek being succeeded by anyone else in his dual office and as far as the biblical record is concerned, his priesthood was timeless.

This is summarized in verse 16 “who has become *such* not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life”, literally “*endless life.*” Messiah, who has been alive forever, is the permanent holder of the High-priesthood in the order of Melchizedek. No other person in Scripture is identified as a king & priest apart from Melchizedek who is best seen as a type of Yeshua the Messiah.

*I hope this illuminates your understanding of this Melchizedek a type of Messiah
Blessings in Messiah Yeshua
Paul & Sue Cohen*