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Melchizedek Was a Type of Christ

7: 1-3

Melchizedek was a type of Christ **DIG**: Read Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalm 110:4-5. What picture do you get of Malki-Tzedek from these verses? How did Abraham regard him? What does Malki-Tzedek's name and city mean? How did Abraham's tithe and the blessing of Melchizedek demonstrate the greatness of Melchizedek? How do the lack of recorded genealogy and the lack of a record of death illustrate how Melchizedek was chosen? Does the writer of Hebrews really mean that Malki-Tzedek was an eternal being?

REFLECT: In your own life, how have you seen a parallel between righteousness and peace? Who in your life has been a godly example, someone who you have looked up to and try to follow, albeit, imperfectly? Have you been raised to believe that the Bible teaches you must tithe a tenth of your income whether it be gross or net? Here, and in Genesis 14, are the scriptures some point to for the need to give ten percent. Now how do you feel about giving freely and generously from the best that you have?

As John MacArthur states in his commentary on **Hebrews**, in biblical study, a type refers to a person, practice or ceremony in the TaNaKh that has a counterpart, or antitype in the B'rit Chadashah. In that sense the type is predictive; it pictures or prefigures a person, practice or ceremony. The type, though it is historical, real, and of **God**, is nonetheless imperfect and temporary. The antitype, on the other hand, is perfect and eternal.

The bronze snake that **God** commanded Moshe to set on a **pole (Numbers 21:8)**, for example, was a type of **Messiah's** being lifted up on the cross (**John 3:14**). The Passover lamb was a type of **the Lamb of God** (see the commentary on **Exodus**, **to see link click Bw - Christ and the Passover**) who was sacrificed **for the sins of the world (John 1:29; Rev 5-5-8)**. **Melchizedek was also a type of Christ**. The Bible gives very little historical information about **Malki-Tzedek**. All that we know is taken from **Genesis 14**, **Psalm 110**, and **Hebrews 5** to 7. The most detailed information, however, is here in **Hebrews 7:1-3**. It is important to understand that even though **Melchizedek** was in no way the equal of **Messiah**, **his** unique priesthood, and even **his** name, typifies **Yeshua** and **His** work, in a

number of significant ways.

The writer first introduced **Malki-Tzedek** in **Chapter 5**, but before he could explain the significance of this ancient **king-priest**, he gave the **third** (see **Ba - You Have Become Dull of Hearing**) **and fourth** (see **Bb - Once Fallen Away, It is Impossible to be Brought Back to Repentance**) **warnings** to unbelieving and hesitating **Jews** who could not bring **themselves** to accept **Christ** as **their Lord** and **Savior**. Afterwards he encouraged the true believers in that Messianic congregation about the security of their salvation (see **Bc - We Have This Hope as an Anchor for the Soul**), where **Jesus** is said to be our **Great High Priest forever, in the Order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 6:20b)**. Now the writer returns to this very interesting **type of Christ**.¹⁶²

When **Abraham** came to **Shalem**, he found a Gentile **priest of God**, ministering to believers in that city whose name was **Malki-Tzedek**. The ancient name of **Jerusalem** was **Jebus**. When **Melchizedek** was **the king and priest of Shalem**, it was called **Shalem**. The last part of **Malki-Tzedek's** name is **Tzedek**. This was a Jebusite dynastic name. Many years later when **Joshua** came into the Land, he fought against the king of **Jerusalem** whose name was **Adonai-Tzedek (Joshua 10:1)**. Hence, **Melchizedek's** name was a Jebusite dynastic name.

The Levitical priesthood: First, the entire tribe of Levi was dedicated by **ADONAI** for religious service, but only those priests who were descendants of Aaron could minister in the Temple. The other Levites served as helpers to the priests. The priesthood was strictly Jewish and strictly national. Second, a Levite could not be **king**, in fact, they were just ordinary subjects. They were set aside as a first fruit to **YHVH** for special priestly service (**Numbers 8:14-16**). Third, the priestly sacrifices, including the one by the high priest on Yom Kippur, were not permanent. They had to be repeated continually. They provided no permanent forgiveness, righteousness or peace. Fourth, the Levitical priesthood was hereditary. A man who served as a priest did so because he was born into the right family, not because he lived the right life. In fact, unless a person could prove he was a descendent of Aaron, he was disqualified from the priesthood (**Numbers 16-17**). When the **Jews** returned from the Babylon Captivity, many claimed the office of priesthood. But some could not prove they were direct descendants of Aaron and were disqualified (**Ezra 2:61-63; Nehemiah 7:63-65**).¹⁶³ Fifth, just as the effects of the sacrifices were temporary, so was the time of priestly service. A priest served from the age of 25 to the age of 50, after which his ministry was over (**Numbers 8:24-25**).¹⁶⁴

Melchizedek's priesthood was superior to the Levitical priesthood in every way, but

six specific examples are given in these verses.



1. Malki-Tzedek's priesthood was universal, not national: Abraham met this priest of the God Most High on his way back from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him" (Hebrews 7:1 CJB quoting Genesis 14:18-20a CJB). Not only was **he king of Shalem**, but **he** was also a **cohen of Ha'Elyon**; therefore, **he** was both **king** and **priest**.

In relation to Isra'el, **God** took the name of **YHVH** (see [Ac - Introduction to Hebrews from a Jewish Perspective: The use of ADONAI](#)). As a result, the Levitical priests were priests of **YHVH**. The Israelites were **God's** people and the Levites were **God's** priests. **Malki-Tzedek**, however, was **priest of the God Most High**. **God** only has one name, **YHVH**. All the other names that we use for **Him** are attributes of that name. Therefore, **God Most High**, or **Ha'Elyon**, is a more universal attribute of **God**. It represents **YHVH** as possessor of heaven and earth, **Ha'Elyon** is above all national distinctions. **He** is **YHVH** over both Jew and Gentile, and **His** priesthood is universal, just like **Malki-Tzedek's (Genesis 14:18)**.

This was extremely important for the **Jews** who had accepted **Yeshua** as **Messiah**, as well as those who were considering putting their trust in **Christ**. To **them**, there was no other priesthood established by **Ha'Elyon** but the Levitical priesthood, which was restricted to Isra'el. But here, **they** are reminded that **their** father **Abraham**, the first **Jew**, offered tithes to another type of **priest**. This **priest** served **the God Most High**, and **he** lived hundreds of years before the Levitical priesthood came into existence. It was as if the **Ruach ha-Kodesh** was saying to those unsaved **Jews**, "Even your own Scriptures recognize the priesthood that is not only completely different from that of Aaron, but existed long before his time." This was an extremely powerful argument.

2. Melchizedek's priesthood was royal, and the Levitical priesthood was not: Malki-

Zedek was **himself** a **king**. Four times in these first two verses **he** is referred to as a **king**. **Melchizedek's** universal priesthood and **his** royal office beautifully typify **Yeshua** as **Savior** and **Lord**, the perfect **priest-king**. Although never realized in Isra'el, the prophets predicted the dual role of **priest-king**. Speaking of the coming **Messiah**, **Zechariah** writes: **It is He who will build the temple of ADONAI, and He will be clothed with royalty and will sit and rule on His throne. And He will be a priest on His throne. And there will be harmony and peace between the two offices (Zechariah 6:13)**. In his psalm that mentions **Malki-Zedek**, David also looks forward to **the Messiah** who will be both **Priest** and **King**. **The LORD says to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."** **The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever in the Order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:1 and 4)**.

Because **Salem** was an ancient name for **Jerusalem**, **Melchizedek** ruled over **YHVH's** special **city**, **His holy city** that was always close to **His** heart. **For ADONAI has chosen Tziyon, He has wanted it for His home**, saying: **This is My resting-place forever, I will live here, for I have desired it (Psalm 132:13-14 CJB)**. We are not told exactly when **Ha'Shem** first considered **Yerushalayim** to be **His holy city**, but **He** had a faithful **king** who was a faithful **priest** there even in the time of **Abraham** - many centuries before Isra'el's priests ministered there, and Isra'el's kings ruled there. Therefore, because **Maliki-Zedek** was both a **king** and a **priest**, **his** priesthood was better than the Levitical priesthood. And because **Melchizedek** foreshadowed **Christ**, **His** priesthood is better than the Levitical one.

3. Malki-Zedek received a tithe from Abraham: Also "Avraham gave him a tenth of the choicest spoils" (Hebrews 7:2a CJB quoting Genesis 14:20b CJB). Although **Melchizedek** was a **king**, **he** had not fought with **Abraham** against Kedorlaomer (see the commentary on **Genesis Ec - When Abram Heard Lot Had Been Taken Captive, He Went in Pursuit as far as Dan**). Nor do we have any record, or reason to believe, that **Malki-Zedek** had ever performed any priestly service for **Abraham**. However, **Abraham** simply recognized **Melchizedek** as a deserving and faithful **priest of Ha'Elyon** and consequently gave **him** a tithe from the best of **his** spoils of war. It was a voluntary act revealing thanks to **God**. **Abraham** was under no obligation, no law or commandment, to give **Melchizedek** anything. **He** gave freely and generously, and **he** gave from the best that **he** had, not **his** leftovers.

Under grace, we are free of the demands of the Torah. The B'rit Chadashah specifies no definite amount or proportion to our money that we are to tithe to **God**. But this doesn't mean that our giving is optional, or that it should depend on our whim or personal feeling. It

means that the basis for our giving should be our love and devotion to **ADONAI**, in gratitude for **His** immeasurable gift to us. Just as **Malki-Tzedek's** priesthood is a type of the priesthood of **Jesus Christ**, so **Abraham's** giving to **Melchizedek** is a type of what our giving to **the Lord** should be. It is not a type in giving **a tenth**, but in it's being from **his** choicest possessions and being given freely, not because of any legal requirement (see **the seven principles of scriptural giving** in the commentary on **The Life of Christ Do - When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others**).¹⁶⁵ The point here is that giving a tithe was recognition of superiority. **Abraham**, by tithing to **Melchizedek**, was recognizing **Malki-Tzedek's** superior position. The fact that **Yeshua** functions as a **priest in the Order of Melchizedek** shows **His** is a better priesthood.¹⁶⁶

4. Melchizedek's priesthood was righteous and peaceful: There was no permanent **righteousness** or **peace** related to Aaron's priesthood. Although we have no historical record of **his** monarchy, we are told that **Melchizedek** was both a **king of righteousness** and a **king of peace**. **Now first of all by translation of Malki-Tzedek's name, he is "king of righteousness," and then he is also king of Shalem (Jerusalem), which means "king of peace" (7:2b CJB).** The word *shalom*, which not only means *peace* but also *health, integrity, wholeness*. **His** name and title characterized two things about **his** reign; **he** ruled in **righteousness**, which is what **his** name means, and **he** ruled in **peace**, which is what **Shalem** means. These two characteristics are also mentioned of the future reign of **Messiah** (see the commentary on **Isaiah Ck - He Will Be Called the Prince of Peace**).

Malki-Tzedek, though a **king of righteousness and peace**, could not make people righteous or give them peace. **His** priesthood was a better type of **Messiah's** than the Levitical, but it was still only a type. Only a **Divine Priest** could give **righteousness and peace**. **Therefore, since we have been justified [counted righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).** That is the necessary order: **righteousness** and then **peace**. **Messiah** gives us **peace** by giving us **His** **righteousness**. **The fruit of righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever (Isaiah 32:17).**

What **the blood of bulls and goats** couldn't do **(10:4)**, **the blood of Jesus Christ** did. The Levitical sacrifices lasted only until a person sinned again. **Yeshua's** sacrifice, however, lasts throughout eternity. Once reconciled to **YHVH** through **Messiah**, we will never be counted as sinful again, but as righteous throughout eternity. **Christ** alone is the true **King of Righteousness**. What the psalmist says so beautifully, in **ADONAI**, **"righteousness and peace kiss each other" (Psalm 85:10b)**. The two things that mankind have longed

for are a sense of **righteousness** before **God** and of being at **peace** with **Him**. These blessings have **kissed** each other and become a reality in **Jesus Christ**. **Melchizedek** pictured that.¹⁶⁷

5. Malki-Tzedek's priesthood was personal, not hereditary: There is no record of his father, mother, ancestry, birth or death; not meaning that his parents did not exist but only that there was no record of them (**7:3a CJB**). This is significant, for it indicates a different type of priesthood from the Levitical one, in which a person's genealogy was critical. In Isra'el, no man was allowed to exercise priestly functions unless he belonged to the family of Aaron. The point here is the Melchizedek's origin is irrelevant to his priesthood, whereas to the Levitical priesthood genealogy was everything. When the Bible says: **There is no record of his birth or death (7:3b CJB)**, it refers to the fact that the historical record is silent regarding his birth and death. Consequently, his priesthood was timeless; there is no record of it ending. While the Levitical priesthood had a definite beginning and a definite ending, there is no record of **Melchizedek** ever being succeeded by another priest.

In this **Malki-Tzedek** was **a type of Christ**, not because **Jesus** had no genealogy, but because **His** genealogy wasn't significant in regard to **His** priesthood. To be sure, **the Lord's** genealogy is important (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ai - The Genealogies of Joseph and Mary**). But **His** lineage is not traced to Aaron or Levi, but to Judah. **He** was not qualified for the Levitical priesthood. Like **Melchizedek**, **He** did not have a priestly genealogy because **He** needed none. **Jesus Christ** was chosen as a priest because of **His** personal worth. **He** was chosen because of who **He** was, not because of who **His** parents were. **Jesus became a priest not by virtue of a rule in the Torah concerning physical descent, but by virtue of the power of an indestructible life (7:16 CJB).**¹⁶⁸

6. Melchizedek's priesthood was eternal, not temporary: As previously stated, individually, a priest served only from the time he was 25 until he was 50. No priest, no matter how faithful, could serve more than 25 years. In addition, collectively, the priesthood was also temporary. It began in the wilderness, when the covenant with Moshe was made and the Torah was given. It ended when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. The Levitical priesthood was only viable during the Dispensation of Torah (see the commentary on **Exodus Da - The Dispensation of Torah**).

Melchizedek's priesthood, however, had no such time or dispensational limitations. **He continues as a priest** (Hebrew: *cohen*) **for all time (7:3c CJB)**. It wasn't that **he** lived

forever, but that the Order of **Melchizedek** in which **he** ministered would last forever. This fact enables the author to develop the *midrash* that **Malki-Tzedek continues as a cohen for all time, like the Son of God. Yeshua**, who had no human father (**Matthew 1:18-25**) and who existed as **the Word** before **His** birth (**John 1:1, 14**), and continues to exist after **His** death. It is important to note that the likeness of **Melchizedek** is not to **Messiah** as **Son of Man**, but to **Him** as **Son of God**. As **Son of Man He** was born and died. However, as **Son of God, He continues as a cohen for all time.**¹⁶⁹ The fact that we have no biblical or other record of the beginning or end of **Malki-Tzedek's** personal priesthood merely symbolizes the eternity of **his** priestly order. It is a **type of Christ's** truly eternal priesthood. **But because Yeshua lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. Consequently, He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He lives forever to intercede for them (7:24-25).**

Some teach that **Melchizedek** was a pre-incarnate **Christ**, but this cannot be true for four reasons. First, the writer states that **Malki-Tzedek** was **like the Son of God**, not that **he was the Son of God** in the TaNaKh. Second, According to **Hebrews 5:1**, one of the prerequisites for the priesthood was that the priest had to be human. **Yeshua** did not become a man until the Incarnation when **He** was conceived by **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** in the womb of Mary. Before that time **Jesus** appeared in the form of **the Angel of the LORD**. Anytime **the Angel of the LORD** appears in the TaNaKh, it is always an appearance of **the second Person of the Trinity (Genesis 16:7-11 and 22:11; Exodus 3:2; Numbers 22:22-35; Judges 6:12; Second Kings 1:3 and 15; Isaiah 37:36)**. Third, **Psalm 110:4** distinguishes **Melchizedek** from **the Messiah**. Fourth, **Malki-Tzedek** couldn't have been a theophany because in the TaNaKh theophanies appeared and disappeared; they held no long-term office. But **he was king** of the city-state of **Shalem. Malki-Tzedek was a real man. He was not the pre-incarnate Christ, but he was a type of the Messiah.**¹⁷⁰

Yeshua was born to die. **Isaiah** tells us that **Adonai ELOHIM** gave **Jesus** a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. **He wakens Me morning by morning, wakens My ear to listen like one being taught (Isaiah 50:4)**. By the time **He** was twelve, **He** knew who **He** was (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ba - The Boy Jesus at the Temple**), and **He** knew **His** destiny. **Adonai ELOHIM** has opened My ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away. I offered My back to those who beat Me, My cheeks to those who pulled out My beard; I did not hide My face from mocking and spitting. Because **Adonai ELOHIM** helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, I have set My face like a flint [toward Jerusalem] and I know I will not be put to shame (**Isaiah 50:5-7**). When they nailed **Him** to the cross, saying: **King of the Jews**, they might as well have written: **Melchizedek, King of**

Righteousness.

Finally, **Malki-Tzedek** shows us that when **Messiah** was raised from the dead and ascended to the heavenly Tabernacle, **He** took up an eternal **priesthood**, becoming a **priest** for our salvation forever. And because **He** lives forever, there will never be a time when our **Great High Priest** cannot show **His** blood that was shed for you. When you die and are presented before **God's** throne, **He** will be there, pointing to the wounds **He** suffered upon the cross, charging your debt to the account **He** has already paid. **His priesthood** is eternal, never-ending, and secures eternal life for you (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**).¹⁷¹