

WHO WAS MELCHIZEDEK?

THAT Jesus Christ as the chief of the angels of God it was who, in his pre-human days, appeared as Melchizedek to Abraham, is a revealed truth of great significance. And that he (Melchizedek) suddenly appeared on earth as a priest-king having neither beginning nor end of days, with no ancestry or descent, and in the same way disappeared, is therefore understandable, certainly, it was a divinely guided act that Abraham on meeting him was able at once to recognize his importance and superior authority.

Among ecclesiastical scholars opinions are divided as regards the identity of the person of Melchizedek. The indecisive and unauthoritative manner in which many have written or spoken about him is evident of their own difficulties.

The *Chamber's Encyclopedia* states that Melchizedek "was perhaps a priest-king of a type known from Mesopotamian sources". It goes further: "The passage is difficult. In Psalm cx a promise is made 'to my Lord' (presumably to a Hebrew king of Jerusalem) that he is 'a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek'; and many associate it with Simon Maccabaeus. This also is very problematical."—Vol. 9, page 231.

The view that Melchizedek who appeared to Abraham was a "Gentile" is shared by many writers among whom are well-known theologians. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* has this, among other things, to say: "Melchizedek is an old Canaanite name meaning 'My King is Sedek,' Salem, of which he is said to be king is surely Jerusalem (Ps. 1xxvi, 2). The god whom he serves as priest is 'El Elyon,' again a name known from Canaanite provenance, probably designating the light god of the pantheon... That Abraham should so recognize the authority and authenticity of a Canaanite priest-king is startling; nothing similar is reported in biblical literature." – Vol. 15, page 127.

It is not possible to ascertain the true identity of Melchizedek without a spiritual understanding of the Holy Scriptures. The things of God must always be judged in the light of His Spirit if we should be free from errors. – 1 Corinthians 2: 11- 14.

The appearance of Melchizedek on the scene of religious history was sudden and as well very brief. It was when Abraham had returned from the war in which he gained victory over Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, with his allies, that he was met by Melchizedek who was both a king and a priest. Here is the full record: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he 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 hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all." – Genesis 14:18-20

Spiritual Character

Although Abraham settled in the land of Canaan, the biblical record does not state that Melchizedek was a Canaanite. Before the occasion on which he met Abraham and after throughout the Jewish history, before Christ, nothing more was written about him.

Melchizedek was not in any way connected with any family. There was no record as to his life-history – his birth, growth or death. All was blank about his ancestry and his descent.

A comprehensive account of Paul the apostle concerning Melchizedek, reveals that he was not an ordinary man – but a unique spiritual character. St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews wrote: “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; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” – Hebrews 7:1-3

The apostle’s description of Melchizedek as one having no father, no mother, no lineage and so on, gives the understanding that he was not an offspring of Adam. And the fact that he had neither birth nor end of life leads to the conclusion that he was an angel who materialized and appeared to Abraham, and after having fulfilled his mission dematerialized.

According to the Scriptures it is a positive idea that Melchizedek who met Abraham was the chief of the angels of God, the Logos, who was later sent to the world by the Almighty Father and known as Jesus Christ. By his appearance to Abraham as a priest who was competent to receive tithes, God had established a pattern of priesthood as distinct from that of Aaron, which he the Logos would in due course assume fully for the benefit of humankind.

Truly, when Jesus Christ came to this world on his mission of redemption he showed definitely that he had lived before Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, and was superior to him. He also stated that Abraham counted it a pleasure to see him in his pre-human days. These facts were vividly brought to light by Christ himself when he, in a stirring argument, took the unbelieving Jews to task. Those Jews claimed Abraham to be their father, yet they did not believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. During the exchanges between them, Jesus declared: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keeps my saying, he shall never see death.” (John 8: 51) The Jews then said to him: “Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?” – Verses 52, 53

Jesus Christ, as was characteristic of him, was categorical in his answers to the Jews. On his part there was the force of reason and truth which the errant Jews could not withstand. And their reaction in the long run was but a manifestation of bitterness that springs from ignorance. The passage reads as follows: “Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my

Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”

The strength of Christ’s argument is at once perceivable. However, let us consider a few points that are pertinent to the subject under discussion:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day”, said Jesus Christ, “and he saw it, and was glad.” This was indisputably a statement of fact. Indeed Abraham saw Jesus Christ in his pre-human days when he appeared as Melchizedek, the King of Salem and priest of the Most High. The remarkable greatness of the priest so overwhelmed Abraham with such a tremendous impression that he gave him tithes of all his booty.

St. Paul, in his lively comments concerning Melchizedek, wrote: “Now consider how great this man *was*, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. 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: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.” – Hebrews 7:4-7

The Jews for lack of the knowledge of Christ’s pre-human existence, which knowledge in fact was too high for them, were astounded when he said that Abraham saw him, and they went on to calculate his age in terms of years from the time he was made flesh and born by the Virgin Mary. And so when they raised a query as to how it was possible for him to have seen Abraham when he was not fifty years old, Jesus Christ in a more assertive tone said: “*Before Abraham was, I am*”

Firstborn

There is abundance of scriptural evidence to show that Jesus Christ was the first thing ever created by the Almighty God; he existed before the heavens and earth and he was the agent through whom the Father created all perfect things, visible and invisible. Thus he is rightly designated, “the beginning of the creation of God.” – Revelation 3:14

St. Paul wrote of him as the one “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:” He added: “For 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: all

things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” – Colossians 1:15-17

And so when Jesus said “Before, Abraham was, I am”, he was perfectly in order. It was from the spirit plane as an angel, highest in rank and next in command to God Almighty in heaven he was transformed to a human foetus in the womb of Mary and was born into this sinful world. The reason for his incarnation was for him to possess blood which, in God’s order of things, was absolutely necessary in accomplishing his mission of redemption. For it is written: “...and without shedding of blood is no remission.” – Hebrews 9:22

What is more, St. Paul wrote concerning our Redeemer thus: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” – Hebrews 2:9, 10

The apostle continued: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham.” – *Verses 14-16*

Priest

Long before the advent of Jesus Christ it had been shown in prophecy that there would be a priest of a system different from the Levitical priesthood, as it is written: “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” – Psalm 110:4

St. Paul was a highly spiritually talented apostle and as he himself confessed. (Ephesians 3:1-7) He by revelation had a wonderful understanding of the mystery of Jesus Christ. In his epistle to the Hebrews he made it known that the Psalmist’s prophecy referred to Jesus Christ. He stated: “So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another *place*, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec... 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 salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” – Hebrews 5:5-10

According to the law that God gave the Israelites through Moses the priestly office was given to Aaron and his sons who belonged to the tribe of Levi. By the terms of that law Jesus Christ could

not be a priest since he was not from the tribe of Levi but that of Judah. And so God, knowing the end from the beginning and making sure that there should be no taint of contradiction in His purpose, caused Melchizedek to appear to Abraham as a priest in whose order, which is far superior to that of Aaron. His Son would be ordained a priest everlastingly for the salvation of mankind. – Hebrews 7: 11-17

The apostle further laid stress on the excellence of the priesthood of Jesus Christ when he added: "(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." – Hebrews 7:21-25

It is very wrong, therefore, for certain theologians and clergymen to think of Melchizedek as a Gentile. It is a pity that some, who claim to be the vicars of Christ and teachers of his word, are almost as blind as the flocks they lead. The danger involved in such an incident in which the blind lead the blind is common knowledge. – Matthew 15:12-14

Much as we have not the least intention to bring anybody into ridicule, the truth must not be covered. The training that qualifies some to be ordained as ministers of the gospel is basically academical but with a veneer of religion in the name of Christ. It is not a surprise, therefore, that some men in the clerical orders show lack of knowledge of the Holy Bible in vital issues of doctrine and cause their followers to err. – Isaiah 9: 16; Jeremiah 2:8