

Able to Save to T/uttermost 02 Because of His Greatness

by James R. Cochran

The greatness of the Lord Jesus is established through the background of Melchizedek, a king and priest who blessed Abraham, and the Lord Jesus' exaltation to a position of supremacy over all things.

Duration: 37:37

Scripture: Isaiah 52:13, Hebrews 7:1-2, Hebrews 7:4, Hebrews 7:7-8, Hebrews 7:17, Revelation 7:17

Topics: "Jesus Christ", "Divine Greatness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the greatness of the Lord Jesus and how it is revealed in different ways. They mention that God's promise in the Bible is that His servant, Jesus, will be exalted and made very high. However, in the world today, it may seem the opposite is true. The speaker explains that the greatness of Jesus can be understood by looking at historical incidents, comparing His ministry to those in the Old Testament, and contrasting time with eternity. They also highlight how Jesus, in His greatness, cares for and shepherds His people.

Transcript

I would like you to turn again this evening to Hebrews, chapter 7. We'll read from verse 1. Hebrews, chapter 7, and verse 1. For this Melchizedek, 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. Verse 4. Now consider how great this man was, and to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily, they that are of the sons of Levi, who received 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. And here men that die receive tithes, but there he receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. Verse 24.

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. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Again, we trust that God will add his blessing this evening to the portion of his word we have just read together.

When we speak of the greatness of the Lord Jesus, we must find a background against which to deal with the subject, and in the Bible this is done in different ways. It is done historically by thinking out of sacred history, not history in general, but that special history of God which we have recorded in the Bible, certain incidents which we understand and can grasp. And then, against that background, we see the greatness of the Lord Jesus.

It is done sometimes by taking a ministry in the Old Testament, and then against that ministry which we can understand and grasp, of the ministry which is incomparable of the Lord Jesus. Then it is also done sometimes by just making a contrast between time and eternity. All the things that belong to time and that we understand, and especially those things that are set out in the word of God, only serve as object lessons to take us to the eternal reality.

If it wasn't for that background, it would be very difficult to speak about the greatness of the Lord Jesus. In our subject this evening, the historical background is the man called Melchizedek. We find in verse 1 that he is both a king and a priest.

That itself gives us reason to understand just how great this man was. He was a king and he was a priest. In Psalm 110, which we have not read but which is quoted in chapter 7 of Hebrews at least twice, references made to the Lord Jesus, he is ordered, commanded, to sit at the right hand of God and wait until all his enemies are placed under his feet.

That is, he is the rightful king. He does not strive to become king. He is king in virtue of his person, and he sits at the right hand of God and he waits until all his enemies are placed under his feet.

But in verse 4, God gives his word and his quote as he states concerning the Lord Jesus, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. The background for those words in Psalm 110 undoubtedly are the victories of David. When the people of Israel entered into the promised land, many of the tribes went to the northern part of the promised land.

Some of them remained in the southern part. Running right across the promised land was a rise, and on the highest part of the rise was a stronghold. That is the place that today is called Jerusalem.

That is the place that Melchizedek governed as king of righteousness and king of Salem. But when the people of Israel entered into the new land, that particular place was in the hands of people called Jebusites, and they were strong people and they had this fort. And the tribes, as they moved into the promised land, did not conquer that high place.

Rather, they settled round about it. Many years went by, and because of that natural division, the people, instead of being one, almost developed into two separate and distinct nations. When David became king, one of the first things he did was to go and conquer the Jebusites.

They mocked him. The story is found in 2 Samuel. They laughed at this man who came to conquer them, but David came with purpose and determination in his heart, and he conquered that place.

He not only conquered it, but he made it his home in the capital city of a united kingdom. As he took that place, it was named Jerusalem, which is the place that Melchizedek governed so many centuries before. Now, David and his heirs symbolically become the successors both to the kingship and the priesthood of Melchizedek.

Now, in spirit, David speaks about his coming son who will be the chosen Messiah, and in that voice of prophecy, reference is made to his lordship. He is to sit at the right hand of God until his enemies are made his footstool. But then also the voice and promise of God is heard, his word and his oath.

Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. David only symbolically occupied that position. There was already established by God the Levitical priesthood, and it would not have been right to have two functions at the same time.

But when David took that place symbolically, he became, and his heirs, the successor to the kingship and the priesthood of Melchizedek. Let this man Melchizedek, from ancient history, be truly a great man. He is king, and he is also priest.

Now, to understand his greatness, just a comment about Abraham. Abraham was the great man. Verse 1, he returns from conquering the pagan kings from the east.

We referred to that last night. They had come in, and they conquered all before them in Genesis chapter 14. After they established their rule over the conquered kings of the Transjordan area, that went on for some years, but the kings finally rebelled.

Then the kings from the east came back in the fourteenth year, and sweeping in a wider circle, they conquered all. Then they conquered the rebellious kings, and when they conquered the king of Sodom, they took with them lot and all that belonged to him. And when news came to Abraham, Abraham with his trusted men went after the kings from the east, and he found them, great strategy, went under the cover of night, and he found them, and he destroyed them.

Now, in that particular moment in the life of Abraham, he is a man of unequal greatness. Kings from the east are destroyed by Abraham. All of the kings of the Transjordan area have fallen before the kings of the east, so that when Abraham conquers the kings from the east, he is the unequal victor, conqueror over all of that territory.

He comes back then in great wealth with a spoil of the wars. He comes back with great glory and great victory. Not only is he great in that particular moment in his life, but back in chapter 12 of Genesis, he becomes great for all time through the promises that were given to him by God.

God would not only bless him and his descendants, but through Abraham and his descendants, God was going to bless all the peoples of the world. But potentially, Abraham is an extremely outstanding man. He receives the promises of God, and then in chapter 14 he is the unchallenged conqueror of all the Transjordan area.

He is a great man. But Melchizedek is greater. For you find here in this particular portion in Hebrews that two things are mentioned about Melchizedek which are mentioned to point out that he is greater than Abraham, but that can only be understood when we grasp how great Abraham really was.

The first thing that is mentioned about Melchizedek at the end of verse 1 is that he blessed Abraham. Now, if you move quickly down to verse 7, you read, And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. That is, in the very fact that Abraham received the blessing from Melchizedek, he recognized how great Melchizedek was.

This is not a blessing from Melchizedek himself. According to Genesis chapter 14, he blessed Abraham with the blessing of Almighty God, the Most High God. In giving that blessing, and especially as Abraham receives it, the greatness of Melchizedek is established.

He is greater than Abraham. But not only did he bless Abraham, but you'll find that he also received from Abraham a tenth of all the spoils. This is mentioned in verse 4. Now, consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

There is no indication in Genesis 14 that Abraham did that reluctantly. I would judge from the story, though very concise with very few details, that Abraham gladly spontaneously gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek. Remember that the tenth, or the tithe, were not just the tenth part.

They are the best part. It's inconceivable that any spiritual man would take from the things that belong him a tenth part which represents the inferior part. When a true man of God gives a tenth to God, he not only gives the tenth part, he gives the best part to God.

And Abraham, coming back, and it must have been great wealth that he brought in the spoils from that victory, he gives the tenth and the best part to Melchizedek. Very possibly, in doing this, it is a frank offering to God, the Most High God, and a recognition that God helped him in the victory over the pagan kings. He gladly spontaneously gives to Melchizedek the tenth of the spoils.

In doing this, I emphasize once again, Abraham recognizes the superiority of Melchizedek. Abraham was grim, but Melchizedek is great. The author of this book to the Hebrews seems to have a feeling that he wants to really establish how great Melchizedek is.

Now, you know the book is directed originally to Hebrew Christians, with reason they were very proud of the Levitical priesthood. Now, beginning in verse 5 of chapter 7, and right down to verse 10, the writer of this book wants to establish that in giving the tenth part to Melchizedek, Abraham was recognizing not only personally but nationally in Israel how great Melchizedek is. Now, the argument is a little complicated, but follow it with me in verse 5, and verily they 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.

Now, this is written many long years, many long centuries, after Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek. From this point of view, the author refers to all of Israel. They are the direct descendants of Abraham.

In the great multitude of people, there is a select few who have been chosen to serve as priests of God. They belong to the tribe of Levi. They, by the word of God, have right to receive from their brethren who are also descendants of Abraham the tithes.

In receiving the tithes, they are recognized as superior. This is done by the word of God. Even greater than the priest is Levi.

He is the father of the tribe. Even greater than Levi is Abraham, who is the father of the whole nation. Now, it is not uncommon in the Old Testament that in ancestors the thought is given that in them they contain all of their descendants.

There are many cases of this in the Old Testament, just one which is the most outstanding case. It is referred to by Paul in Romans chapter 5, and I read the verse to you, "...wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." One man sinned, but in the mind and the heart of God, all his descendants sinned. All sinned when Adam sinned, for they were all contained within their common ancestors.

Now, this is the argument in connection with the payment of the tithes to Melchizedek. You see, it is not just Abraham who paid the tithes. Levi paid the tithes, who is his direct descendant.

Also, the priests of the tribe of Levi paid when Abraham paid, and not only the priests, but all the nations of Israel. Thus, symbolically, when Abraham gave joyfully the tenth part to Melchizedek, all of his descendants did likewise, and they all recognized how great Melchizedek is. There is a little awkward phrase in verse 9 which reads, "...and as I may so say," and let me say that again, "...and as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." That little phrase means, as an illustration, symbolically, "...as I may so say, Levi, the priests in all Israel recognized in Abraham, their common father, just how great Melchizedek is." Now, if Melchizedek is great, the Lord Jesus is infinitely greater.

Remember that the priesthood of the Lord Jesus is not patterned after the priesthood of Melchizedek. Rather, Melchizedek is made like unto the Son of God. The whole story of Melchizedek is presented in such a way that he beautifully describes the reality, referring directly to the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is not patterned after Melchizedek. Melchizedek is made like unto the Lord Jesus. When the contrast, Melchizedek disappears before the true greatness of the Lord Jesus.

Now, his greatness is referred to down in verse 26, the last two phrases. Last night we referred to the opening phrases in connection with the moral perfection of the character of the Lord Jesus. Remember that old beautiful hymn, "...there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin." The Lord Jesus, the stopless one, gives his life for us.

He carries our sins. He dies for our sins, and no one else could do that. Let me remind you, briefly, without going back again into the subject of last night, that even in the Bible, the great men of God, Abraham was known as the friend of God.

But a careful study of Abraham brings out the flaws of his character, and some of those moments when he was deceptive. David was called the man after God's own heart. But the blunders and the stains in the life of David, there are some cases in the Bible like Nehemiah and Daniel of whom, as far as I know, nothing is recorded of them in an adverse way.

They appear without any moral stain, but they were great men. You may remember the birth of them. When they come before God in intercession for the people of Israel, they don't stand aside and point over and say, Lord, I pray for the people of Israel who have sinned.

Rather, they say, we have sinned before God. And though there's no record of Nehemiah's sin or of Daniel's sin, they include themselves amongst the people of God, the sins which we have committed

before the Lord. For they, too, were men of sin and of like passions of ourselves.

No one could take our place and pay the price of sin, only the Lord Jesus. And having made that purchase of our redemption through his own blood, he today stands out in a greatness that is unequaled in any other character in the Bible. And tonight there are two phrases that come to our minds in verse 26.

First of all, he is separate from sinners. Now, he always was and is morally. That was the subject of last night.

But now, in his resurrection and exaltation, the Lord Jesus is separate from sinners. While he was here in the world, he was the object of their ridicule, of their mockery, of their malice, of their hate and of their injustice. Now, in his resurrection and exaltation, he is separate from sinners forever.

Never again will the Lord Jesus be the object of their mockery and injustice and cruelty. Let me remind you that the Lord Jesus, his heart is always open to receive any repentant sinner who comes in faith. But he is separate now forever from sinners as to their malice and their mockery and their injustice.

Never again will our Savior be the object of such things. He is separate from sins. Phillips renders the phrase, and I think it's a beautiful rendering, beyond the very reach of sin.

It's not just the sinners in themselves, it's what the sinners did to the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus now is beyond the very reach of sin. His exaltation is of such a nature that sin never again will pass by the Lord Jesus. He is in that place of glory and brightness for us.

The second phrase refers to his exaltation, and it reads, "...made higher than the heavens." Let me share with you that in Hebrews there are a number of references to the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. They are all very beautiful. Chapter 1, on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

That is confirmed again in chapter 8, in verse 1, where you read that he is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. Now, let me take the key words in these phrases. Majesty, referring directly to God and the incomparable glory of God.

I don't know what concept you have of God, but the brilliance of what God is is referred to as Majesty, and the Lord Jesus sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high, that great, incomparable glory of God. The word throne refers to his unchanging sovereignty. I remember Psalm 22, and think of it often in the confusion amongst the nations in the world.

There is a phrase there that refers to the Lord. He is governor above the nations. God is unchanging in his sovereignty.

Not only glory, but there is a throne, the sovereignty, the authority of God. Then in chapter 1 on high, in chapter 8, in the heavens, and both of those phrases refer to the supremacy of God. There is nothing, and words are inadequate, but there is nothing beyond or above God.

He is absolutely supreme. Was it last Sunday we referred to the phrase, he is God of God and Lord of Lords? He is absolute Lord and supreme God. Now, this one in that eternal glory, who is Majesty, where there is a throne on high above all things, in supremacy at his right hand, sits the Lord Jesus.

And again, the thought is that for the Lord Jesus there is supremacy over all things. I was reading this afternoon when Gabriel came to talk to Zechariah as he ministered in the house of God, with the

announcement of the coming child who would be John, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. That great celestial being said to Zechariah, I am Gabriel, but stand in the presence of God.

All angels, all spiritual beings, they stand in the presence of God. It is an attitude ready to obey the will and the word of God. The Lord Jesus sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and the beautiful illustration from the Old Testament is that of David.

The Bible says, and King David went in and sat before the Lord. Only a simple illustration from ancient history of one today who does not struggle for his position, but he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Let me remind you this evening what the Lord Jesus said while he was here in the world.

He answered, Shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God? He said that when he was here in the world. He said that because that is his place by right, and having finished the work of redemption, he returned to that pinnacle of eternal glory, and he sits there tonight at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is difficult to describe this.

Paul says, Therefore God also hath highly exalted him. And our understanding of that exaltation is always linked to our understanding of his deep humiliation. He came down so very low in order to win us and bring us back to God.

In contrast, he has been highly exalted. The actual phrase in verse 26 of our chapter reads as follows, He was made higher than the heavens. In this connection, there is a similar phrase in Ephesians 4, and I read it to you, Ascended up far above all heavens.

We referred to that earlier this week. The Lord Jesus, now in his exaltation, is above all created order. There is nothing above him.

He sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. You remember his words in that great high priestly prayer in John 17. The Lord Jesus said, And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Now, to understand those words, I take you back to Isaiah 42, where the Lord speaks, I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another. There is a glory, a glory that belongs to God, because God is God. That glory cannot be shared with another.

God says, I am the Lord, that is my name, my glory I will not give to another. The Lord Jesus, when his work was finished, his prayer was, Glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. That is above all created order.

The Lord Jesus existed in eternal glory, and when his work was finished in humiliation, he returned to that place of glory. He is made higher than the heavens, the transcendence of the Lord Jesus. Not just supreme, but transcendent.

And then in chapter 4 of Hebrews, precious thought for all of us tonight, where you read that he passed through the heavens, the Father, in passing through he opened the way whereby those who belong to him will follow him into that sphere of endless glory. The Lord Jesus, then, is made higher than the heavens. It is because of his exaltation that he is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him.

Now, I take you in closing tonight back to Isaiah again. We referred to a similar portion last night. Here again is the testimony of God.

Behold, my servant shall be prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. Now, that's God's promise concerning his servant, the Lord Jesus. You and I believe that today.

We believe as an act of faith. There is nothing in the world that we can see that confirms to us that the Lord Jesus has been exalted, extolled, and made very high. The very opposite is what we see in the world today.

But God says, Behold, my servant shall be prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. Now, God in his grace, in the book of the Revelation, takes that curtain which separates us from eternity, and he just moves it aside so that though we are still in time, honor, part of history, we can look out and see that it is true that he has been exalted and extolled and made very high. You remember chapter one? The Lord Jesus moves amongst the candlesticks.

He moves amongst the local churches, for he is the head of the church, and in that capacity he is seen with all the glory of deity. The ancient of days in Daniel, the term symbolism is used of the Lord Jesus. Now, I speak kindly tonight and respectfully.

Many of us have been impressed when we read that the new Pope, John Paul I, has requested that there be no coronation, no infirmment, no use of the triple crown, not to be carried on the shoulders of twelve men, but he wants to walk, and the beginning of his administration will be marked by a simple but solemn mass. We respect that, but we come back to the scriptures and we remember that in the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, the first thing that shines out in the Revelation is that he is the only and true head of the church, and he is clothed with the brilliance of deity, and he walks amongst the candlesticks. Look in his exaltation.

He is seen as the head of the congregation of the church. In chapter five, you have the revelation of God's throne, and in his right hand there is a book, and no one in heaven or on earth can approach the throne and take the book. And John weeps, and he weeps with grief, and then one speaks to John and tells him, Don't weep, John, anymore.

Here comes the line of the tribe of Judah, the rote of David, and he turned and he saw a lamb as it had been slain. In connection with the headship of the church, the Lord Jesus is seen in the brilliance of his deity, but that book in the hand of God has to do with the destiny of our mankind, of the culmination of our history, of God's plan for all times in the future. And he holds that book, and the one who comes and takes it from his hand, not in a struggle but by right, is a lamb as it had been slain.

That is, the one who was rejected by the world comes into the presence of God. All heaven bows in worship, and he takes the book, the one who has been rejected, and he will bring to fulfillment God's purposes for man and for history and for the world. When you go over to chapter seven, as we mentioned on Sunday, the Lord Jesus, in his greatness, his exaltation, he does not forget his people.

He feeds them, he shepherds them, and the lamb who is in the midst of the throne has the heart of the shepherd. He follows every detail of those that belong to him. When you come to chapter 14, he stands on Mount Zion, not the ancient Mount Zion of the Holy Land.

This is the heavenly Mount Zion, the city of the living God. Again, the thought is he sits and he stands in that place of unequal glory. When you come into chapter 9, he bursts out of heaven on a white horse.

His name is the Faithful One, the Word of God, King of kings and Lord of lords. And though you see him as the lamb in the midst of the throne shepherding those that belong to him, also in his exaltation the moment comes when he comes forth from heaven on that white horse to do battle with the evil powers of our world and cosmos. It is not done in the form of the battles that we know of in history.

Rather, out of his mouth there comes a sharp sword. The battle is fought not in a struggle with tanks and airplanes and guns. It is the battle that is won by the authoritative proclamation of the Word of God, and the nations are smitten as he speaks the Word of God.

And then the Lord Jesus takes the dragon, that old serpent, that is, the devil and Satan, and he is put away for a thousand years in which there will be peace and prosperity amongst men. In his exaltation he deals with the problem of the evil in the world in which we live today. Finally, in the last two chapters, don't miss that beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus.

It is the throne of God and of the Lamb. The whole new creation moves around the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. Don't take the phrase, the throne of God and of the Lamb, as a distinct separation between God and the Lamb.

Take it in the sense of John 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. That second phrase, and the Word was with God. In the reality of God we perceive the plurality of persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Thus the Word was with God, that eternal theme. There is the throne of God and of the Lamb, that is, his brilliance as God is seen, his glory as man is seen, and he is the very center of the new eternal age. No wonder, then, that the writer of this particular book says he is able also to save to the uttermost.

There is no one that comes anywhere near the greatness of the Lord Jesus. Abraham was a great man. Melchizedek was a greater man.

The Lord Jesus is in a unique class, alone in his greatness, and he is able to save. I don't know what fears you have, what doubts you have, what problems you may have, but if you really know the Lord Jesus, you are being kept by someone so great that no other power can touch you in time, in death, or in eternity, for he is unequalled in his greatness. Now, take your hymn book, and we'll sing tonight in closing.

Hymn number 102. Hymn number 102, and it reads as follows, O may my Savior glorified, now the heavens open wide, show to faith exultant eyes, run in beauteous majesty. Hymn number 102, and we will sing verses 1, 2, 3, and the last verse.

Now let's stand and sing 102. Here we stand. Oh my

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