

(A Spiritual Leader) 14. the Priesthood of Melchizedek

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of serving others without seeking recognition and focusing on God, not self or accomplishments, as exemplified by the priesthood of Melchizedek.

Scripture: Genesis 14:18, Leviticus 6:10, 1 Kings 19:5, Psalm 23:6, Matthew 9:20, Acts 10:38, Hebrews 6:20

Topics: "Melchizedek Priesthood", "Spiritual Ministry"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the priesthood of Melchizedek, emphasizing its stark contrast to the Levitical priesthood that focused on rituals and external matters. Melchizedek's encounter with Abraham showcases how he met both his physical and spiritual needs without preaching directly, guiding him away from pride and covetousness by turning his attention to God. The ministry of priests in the order of Melchizedek is highlighted as a call to bless people physically and spiritually, following the example of disappearing after blessing, akin to how Jesus ministered humbly and selflessly during His earthly days.

Transcript

A spiritual leader will be a priest according the order of Melchizedek, as his Master was, before him (Heb.6:20-7:7).

The priesthood of Melchizedek is very different from the priesthood of Levi (See Hebrews 7). The Levitical priesthood consisted of many rituals and external matters. The sons of Aaron were even told what type of underclothes to wear when they ministered before God (Lev.6:10; 16:4)! But the priesthood of Melchizedek has nothing to do with clothes or rituals!

Melchizedek appears in only three verses in the entire Bible and yet our Lord is called a High Priest after his name (Genesis 14:18-20)! What did Melchizedek do that was so wonderful?

Abraham was returning from a battle where he had just defeated 14 kings and their armies and rescued his nephew Lot and his family, whom those kings had captured. Abraham was undoubtedly exhausted and certainly proud of his victory - because he had won the battle with just his 318 servants, none of whom were soldiers! He had also acquired a large amount of booty, which it was customary in those days for the victors in battle to share among themselves. No doubt, his 318 servants were looking forward to becoming rich thereby!

So Abraham stood there that day, physically exhausted and facing the twin dangers of pride and covetousness. But he didn't have anyone to warn him about these dangers. He had only his 318 servants. Abraham was no doubt a great man of God but he was a lonely man too. He was as lonely as a lot of Christian leaders are today, who sit on top of organisational pyramids, with only "Yes-men" under them, and no-one to correct them or challenge them! Such men are easy targets for Satan, who picks them off one by one.

But God cared for Abraham and spoke to another servant of His, to help him. Melchizedek met all three of Abraham's needs, without knowing anything about those needs, because He did what God told him to do.

First of all, he took some food for Abraham. Melchizedek was a sensible man! He wasn't one of those super-spiritual types who feel that spiritual people must be ascetics! He didn't tell Abraham to fast and pray but gave him a good meal!

Many years later, God did the same thing for Elijah, when he was exhausted and depressed. God sent an angel to him, not with "an exhortation", but with some nourishing food (1 Kings 19:5-8)!

That's a good example for us to follow - to take a meal for some tired, exhausted brother or sister. When a believer is depressed or discouraged, what he needs may be just some good food and not an exhortation - for he is not only spirit and soul, but body too. We mustn't forget that!

After giving him the food, Melchizedek helped Abraham spiritually too - not by preaching to him, but by praising God for Abraham's victory - in two brief sentences.

He said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." (Gen.14:19,20).

Melchizedek probably spent two hours feeding Abraham and his servants and then spent 15 seconds praising God. But in Melchizedek's brief expression of praise, Abraham realised two things.

First of all, Abraham realised that he belonged to a God Who owned the heavens and the earth. That delivered him from coveting the goods of the king of Sodom that he had just recovered. Even though Sodom's riches must have been considerable, since Sodom was a very wealthy place, Abraham now saw that all that booty was like worthless garbage compared to the heaven and earth that his God owned. Melchizedek helped Abraham to see clearly Whom he belonged to.

Notice Melchizedek's wisdom here. He didn't preach to Abraham saying, "The Lord has told me that you're getting covetous and I've come with a word from Him to warn you"! No. Beware of self-appointed "prophets" who always claim to have "a word from the Lord" for you! Such "prophets" are false prophets. Melchizedek just turned Abraham's attention away from the booty to God. And "the things of earth grew strangely dim" in Abraham's eyes. That is the way to help people. We can learn a lot from Melchizedek's gracious, indirect approach that delivered Abraham from a serious spiritual danger that he was facing.

Secondly, Abraham saw clearly that it was not he and his 318 servants who had defeated those kings, but God! That was another revelation - and that saved Abraham from pride. Again Melchizedek succeeded in turning Abraham's attention away from his victory to God!

The best preacher is the one who can turn our attention away from ourselves and our accomplishments to the Lord Himself.

Melchizedek stands in stark contrast to Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar - the three self-righteous preachers who preached to Job! Those three were the "ancestors" of the Pharisees! Today, we have many "descendants" of the Pharisees in Christendom. What we need however are more Melchizedeks.

And now we come to the best part of this story. Melchizedek disappeared after blessing Abraham. We never read of him again in the Bible. His name appears only as a type of Christ.

Melchizedek must have been praying in his tent that morning, when God spoke to him and told him what to do. He didn't know Abraham, but he knew God. And that was enough. God told him what to do and made him a blessing to many.

What a ministry we priests of Melchizedek's order are called to! We are to bless people, physically and spiritually - and then disappear before we are even thanked!

Do you want people to think you are a great man of God or do you want them to know that you have a great God. Therein lies the difference between a religious ministry and a spiritual one. Therein lies the difference between the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of Melchizedek. Aaron constantly appeared before people and got honour from them. Melchizedek served people and disappeared!

This is how Jesus Himself ministered during His earthly days. He went around meeting the spiritual and physical needs of people who were beaten in life's battles. And He never wanted anyone to advertise His healings. He never wanted to be known as a Healer. He never wanted to be a king. He came to serve others and to lay down His life for them. He didn't want to be famous. He didn't even want to prove to Herod, or Pilate, or Annas, or Caiaphas, that He was the Son of God, by appearing to any of them after His resurrection. He never appeared to a single one of the Pharisees or Sadducees after His resurrection, because He didn't want to justify Himself before men. He knew that the opinions of men were fit only for the garbage bin!

Alas, where shall we find such preachers and leaders in Christendom today?

Just think what would happen if we began to live like Melchizedek, listening to God and seeking to know from Him what we should do, each day. It would be the most useful way any of us could live on this earth.

The psalmist says, "Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life" (Psa.23:6). That is the way to live. Wherever we go, we must leave behind us some act or word of forgiveness and goodness.

When Peter described the life and ministry of Jesus to Cornelius, he summed it up in one sentence in Acts 10:38 : "Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and He went about doing good and delivering those who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him". This is the result of being genuinely anointed with the Holy Spirit : God will be with us and we will go around blessing people and setting them free.

You couldn't come in contact with Jesus in His earthly days, without some good emanating from Him to you that would bless you - both spiritually and physically. The woman who had a haemorrhage for 12 years discovered that, when she touched the hem of His garment.

Aren't we too called to live such a life where those who come in touch with us are blessed - physically and spiritually?

We are all called to be priests according to the order of Melchizedek.

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