

Is The Mosaic Law For Today? - part 1

I have been asked numerous times why we do not follow the Mosaic Law. People want to know why we do not have a tabernacle. Why do we not have priests? Why do we not observe the grain and animal sacrifices? People want to know why we do not observe these commands from the Mosaic law since they are commanded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—that is, in the Pentateuch. They ask good questions. Some have attempted to answer their questions by referring to the temple veil that was split when Jesus died on the cross. If you recall, the veil was split from the top to the bottom - not from the bottom to the top. So they will point to that and say, “You see, that is an indication the Mosaic system is obsolete and was going to disappear.

Yes, John the Baptist declared that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Yes, Jesus was a better sacrifice than all of the temple animal sacrifices. Yes, it is true that Paul also said that no one is to act as our judge with regards to food or drink or observance of the festivals or new moons or Sabbaths. He said that in Colossians 2:16-17. They were all shadows of the real thing to come. It is also true that the early Church worshipped on Sunday and not on the Sabbath or Saturday. These are all hints that the Mosaic Law was no longer in effect after Jesus died and returned to life. But where in the Scriptures are we told in black and white that the Mosaic system is obsolete? Hints are not good enough or adequate. What we need is a black and white statement in Scripture that

tells us that the tabernacle, the priesthood, the tabernacle's order of worship, the feasts, and the animal sacrifices are all history; all of that is gone.

The answer is found in Hebrews 7-10. We are going to answer the question, “Is the Mosaic Law for today?” Our study is part 1 of two messages. The author of Hebrews has been preparing his readers for this question. The book was written to people who were thinking about going back to Judaism and leaving Jesus. The author wants to help them understand that the Mosaic system is no longer in effect. He will do this in two ways. First, he will tell us that Jesus is the ultimate high priest. Then he will show us why the Mosaic laws are no longer in effect.

INTRODUCTION TO MELCHIZEDEK. Our study speaks to the first point: Jesus is our ultimate high priest. Our text is Hebrews 7:1-10. We are going to quickly discover that this is a continuation of chapter 5 and 6. If you recall, Hebrews 5 was a discussion about the Levitical priesthood, Melchizedek, and Jesus. We were told that Jesus was appointed a high priest

after the order of Melchizedek, and that He is our eternal high priest. In chapter 6 the author digressed briefly to give them a warning. When we come to this study, we find in chapter 7, verse 1, that the author has returned to teaching about Melchizedek. So join me if you would in Hebrews 7:1. Here is how the



Lamb Sacrificed On Altar

verse reads:

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, 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. Hebrews 7:1-2 (NASB)

Here we are told that Melchizedek was King of Salem. Salem is another name for Jerusalem. So we could say that Melchizedek was King of Salem, or we could also say He is King of Jerusalem. How do we know that? Flavius Josephus, an early Jewish historian, states in his book *Antiquities of the Jews* that Jerusalem is another name for Salem. The early church father Jerome called Jerusalem, “Salem.” In fact, he says that the ruins of Melchizedek’s palace were located outside of the Jerusalem. That tells us Melchizedek was a person in history. He had a real palace and eventually his body were buried in a tomb. So Melchizedek was the King of Salem, or the King of Jerusalem.

Next, we are told that Melchizedek was priest of the Most High God. He was not a priest of some pagan religion. Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God. That is, he believed in Yahweh, worshipped Him, and followed Him.

Then we are told that he met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings, and he blessed him. We are told in the first part of verse 2 of Hebrews 7, that Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the spoils. The author of Hebrews has just given us a brief introduction to Melchizedek and a summary of the events that occurred in Genesis 14.

The first twelve verses of Genesis 14 describe the skirmish that occurred between the two alliances of kings. The first alliance was led by King Chedorlaomer. The second alliance was led by the King of Sodom. The first alliance had four kings, and the second alliance had five kings. We are told in verse 10 that King Chedorlaomer and his alliance won the conflict. In verse 11 we are told that King Chedorlaomer and his alliance took the spoils from Sodom and Gomorrah. In verse 12 we are told that they also took Lot and all of his possessions.

Let us pick up the story in verse 13. Here we learn,

Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was

living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram. When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people. Genesis 14:13-16 (NASB)

Damascus was significantly north. This means that Abraham and his army had travelled a long distance. They finally caught King Chedorlaomer and his alliance of kings—defeated them and brought back all of the spoils, including Lot, the women and the people along with the animals and everything that had been taken.

In verse 17 we are told,

Then after his return . . . Genesis 14:17a (NASB)

That is, after Abraham came back from the defeat of Chedorlaomer.

. . . from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.

He blessed him and 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.”**

He gave him a tenth of all.

Genesis 14:17b-20 (NASB)

This is an interesting story. Melchizedek is the first priest to appear in the pages of Scripture. He is different than the priests from the tribe of Levi.

MELCHIZEDEK — KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Now let

us go back to Hebrews 7:2. The meaning of Melchizedek's name is king of righteousness. We are told that the title, King of Salem, means king of peace. So Melchizedek is the first priest recorded in the pages of Scripture. He is like Jesus Christ in that Jesus Christ is a king. Jesus Christ is righteous. Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. He is the King of kings, and He is "our righteousness."

There are many similarities between Melchizedek and Jesus. We are going to discover that Melchizedek is a type of Christ. What is a type? A type is like a shadow. A shadow is not the real thing. It is similar. In the pages of Scripture, there are a number of types. You might remember the bronze serpent, which is a type of Christ. It is explained in Numbers 21:9 and in John 3:14. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, we are told that the rock that Moses hit with a rod looked forward to and spoke of Jesus.

The sacrificial lambs that were offered daily in the temple looked forward to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They looked forward to the true lamb. They looked forward to the ultimate sacrifice. So the bronze serpent, the rock, the lambs, and the bulls looked forward to the coming Messiah—the one who would eventually die for us.

MELCHIZEDEK — A TYPE OF CHRIST. So Melchizedek is a type of Jesus Christ according to this passage. In the verses that follow now, the author of Hebrews is going to employ two lines of reasoning. First, he will use an allegorical form of reasoning. The second line of reasoning is a literal reasoning.

Verse 3 is talking about Melchizedek, and we are told,

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. Hebrews 7:3 (NASB)

Here we are told that Melchizedek had no father, mother, genealogy, beginning, or end. It is almost as though he lives forever. At first we think this makes no sense. If he was a real person, and he was, he would have had a father and a mother. He would have had a beginning and an end. But the author's point in verse 3 is that in the pages of Scripture, he has no recorded father, or mother, no date of birth recorded, and no date of death, because he has no recorded genealogy in the

pages of Scripture. We cannot find his genealogy recorded anywhere. We cannot find any discussion about his mother or father, his birth or, when he died. From the pages of Scripture he has no ancestral lineage. There is no way that anyone can understand who his parents were. We do not know if he had children. This is a very important point, because the author wants his readers to understand that Melchizedek is a high priest of God Most High, and he has no connections to the tribe of Levi and the Levitical priests. Melchizedek had no connection to the Levitical priests at all. There is no genealogy that can tie them together. This is a very important statement since no righteous Jew would have considered Melchizedek to be a real priest.

So the first point the author of Hebrews wants his readers to understand is that Melchizedek has no traceable lineage in the pages of Scripture. Then in the last part of verse 3 we are told that he was "made like the Son of Man, he remains a priest perpetually." The word "perpetually" has the idea of "continuous." He continues as a priest. It is different from what we read about Jesus Christ in verse 24 where we are told that Jesus "continues forever." He holds his priesthood permanently. The key phrase there in verse 24 is that he "continues forever." He continues into the ages or into the eons. That is never said about Melchizedek. Melchizedek continues throughout his life, but not forever. But Jesus continues as a priest forever.

Also notice in verse 3 that we are told Melchizedek is made like the Son of Man. I know that some people think that Melchizedek was Jesus Christ pre-incarnate. That is, Jesus took the form of and appeared on earth as Melchizedek. But here in verse 3, we are told that he is made *like* the Son of Man. He is *not* the Son of Man. In verse 3 we are told his priesthood is perpetual. But Jesus is forever. There are strong differences that confirm Melchizedek was not Jesus Christ. Melchizedek was just a man and a type of Christ.

MELCHIZEDEK — SUPERIOR TO THE LEVITICAL PRIESTS. Now in verse 4, the author of Hebrews proceeds with a line of literal reasoning. I have made the comment already that there are two types of reasoning that the author is employing. One is a logical or literal approach, and the other is a typological or allegorical approach. We have already discovered in verse 3 that he has used both. The logical or literal

reasoning was designed to make the point that Melchizedek does not have a traceable lineage. The typological approach made the point that he is like Jesus. He continues perpetually but not forever. So, in verse 4, the author proceeds with a logical or literal line of reasoning. The verse reads as follows:

Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. Hebrews 7:4 (NASB)

The message of verse 4 is very simple. Abraham gave a tenth of the choicest spoils to Melchizedek.

Verse 5:

And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. Hebrews 7:5 (NASB)

The message of verse 5 is that the Levites were told in the Mosaic Law that they are to receive a tithe from the people. That was their income or livelihood. The people were to give a tenth to the Levites. They were descendants of Abraham, who just as Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek, they gave a tenth to the Levites.

When we come to verse 6, a different concept is introduced. The concept is that someone is greater than another person. Verse 6 says,

But the one whose genealogy is not traced . . . Hebrews 6:6a (NASB)

That is, Melchizedek's genealogy could not be traced since it did not exist.

. . . from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. Hebrews 6:ba (NASB)

Yet, it is this one, Melchizedek, who collected tithes from Abraham. Verse 7 now states,

But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. Hebrews 7:7 (NASB)

So the message of verses 6 and 7 is that Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek. Verse 7 tells us that Melchizedek is the greater person because the first part of verse 7 says without any dispute, the lesser is blessed by the greater. When he says, "without any dispute," the Greek word has the idea "without any opposing opinion." There are no disagreements. There is universal agreement that the greater one blesses the lesser one.

So the message of verses 6 and 7 is that Melchizedek was the greater one because he blessed Abraham. Now if we take verses 4, 5, 6, and 7 all together, we learn that the Levites, when they were still in Abraham's loins, tithed to Melchizedek, who was the greater one. This is a very important argument because the Jews thought that the Levitical priests were the best! The author of Hebrews is trying to help the Jews understand that Melchizedek was the first priest, a priest of God most high, and he was greater than the Levitical priests. They needed to understand that Melchizedek was greater than the Levitical priests. Melchizedek was superior.

When we come to verse 8, a second line of reasoning is employed. It is a typological reasoning. It is allegorical. He said in verse 8,

In this case mortal men receive tithes . . . Hebrews 7:8a (NASB)

The author is talking about the Levites.

. . . but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. Hebrews 7:8b (NASB)

Verse 8 says mortal men receive tithes. Melchizedek was the superior one because he lived on. He has no genealogy in the pages of Scripture. The point is that the Levitical priests are inferior to Melchizedek. Verse 9 adds,

And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes. Hebrews 7:9b (NASB)

Now we are told that through Abraham the Levites paid tithes

to Melchizedek. Verse 10 states,

For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. Hebrews 7:10 (NASB)

Now we are told that Levi was in Abraham's loins. Levi was a descendent of Abraham.

CONCLUSION. What is the conclusion? The conclusion is that Melchizedek was superior to the Levitical priests for several reasons. The author of Hebrews has made two very important points. The first point he made was with typological reasoning. He concluded that Melchizedek's priesthood continues since the pages of Scripture never recorded that he died. His genealogy is not recorded.

The second point that was employed was rational or logical reasoning. When I was in my twenties, I had a best friend who knew more about the Bible than I did, and his pastor knew more than he did. Therefore it was very easy to conclude that his pastor knew more about the Bible than I did. In the same way, the author of Hebrews has made the point that Abraham had more honor than the Levitical or the Mosaic priests since Melchizedek had more honor than Abraham. Then he concluded that Melchizedek was superior to the Levitical priests.

Together these two examples make the same point. Melchizedek was greater than the Levitical priests, and he continues to be greater. The Levitical priests were inferior to Melchizedek.

Why did the author of Hebrews make these two points? The Holy Spirit is preparing us for some important truths. He will show us that the Mosaic system was and is obsolete, and has disappeared. He will prove that the old Mosaic laws, the old Mosaic Covenant, the first covenant, is gone, and we are now in the age of grace. Eternal life is not obtained by keeping a long list of rules, but by having faith in Jesus Christ. In our next study we will discover the answer to our question.