

Daily Reflection by Sarah Adams.

Readings: Hebrews 7:1-3 and 15-17; Psalm 110:1-4; Mark 3:1-6

Over the last couple of days, we have seen mention of Melchizedek. As Martin mentioned on Monday, we meet him in Genesis 14: 17-20. He makes this one and only appearance. We know very little about him. It is as if he appears out of nowhere to bless Abram and then he vanishes again. So what is so important about this man that he features so highly in these readings from Hebrews?

Firstly, we should remember that everything written in the Bible is there for a specific reason. If much is made of a story, then we should pay particular attention, as there is usually an important message for us to grasp.

If we look at this passage from the perspective of the readers at the time, it may help. This letter was written to a young church which was under intense persecution. Many were being martyred for their new found faith. However, a simple way to avoid the persecution would have been to simply return to their traditional laws and practices. Instead the writer is encouraging them to stay firm, by showing them that through Jesus everything has changed and has been made new.

So what has this got to do with this mysterious character, Melchizedek?

The main thing we know about him is his name and occupation. We know that his name means Melek – King And Zedek – Righteousness – so his name or title was king of righteousness. He was also king of salem, which means peace. So he was also the king of peace.

At the time of Melchizedek and Abram, most people were worshipping other gods and idols, so these two stood out as worshippers of the Lord Most High God. Indeed, God told Abram that he would become Abraham, father of many nations and Melchizedek was not only a king, but also a priest of the Lord God. If we look back to the story in Genesis, (Genesis 14:17-20) we will see that Abram came back from battle, rescuing his nephew Lot, fellow townspeople and all their possessions, when he was met by Melchizedek. Abram recognises him as being God's priest/representative and promptly give him a tithe (a tenth) of all his spoils. His descendants would later offer their own tithe to God through the Levite priests.

But this was not all, in recognising Melchizedek as God's priest, Abram also received a blessing: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of Heaven and Earth. And blessed be God Most High who has defeated your enemies for you". This proved to be true for the rest of Abram's life.

So here we have this mysterious king and priest. These two roles were kept totally separate throughout the Bible. Indeed, God later made all the kings of Israel from the line of Judah and all the priests from the line of Levi. So it was impossible for the two to mix. Unusually, we know nothing of Melchizedek's genealogy. This is intentional. This makes him different from most other great characters of the Old Testament. It's almost like that from the writer's perspective, he had no beginning and no end either, as his death is not recorded. The point being made is that Melchizedek stands as a foreshadow or type of Jesus figure.

In essence, Melchizedek stands out as a king and a priest unlike any other king or priest in Jewish history. Without a history he appears to live forever. Abram bows down to him, so he is seen as being greater than Abraham himself, the father of the Jewish nation and in so doing he has power to bless and to receive tribute. He stands between the people and God. In all these respects, he points forward to what Jesus will stand for. However, we know that Jesus

himself is far greater than Melchizedek. Only Jesus is able to truly represent us to God. Only Jesus is worthy of our tribute and only Jesus can bless us and defeat our enemies. As King of Righteousness He paid our debt of sin with His blood, turning God's wrath away from us forever.

As King of Peace He has now made peace between us and God, ushering us by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

As High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them". (Hebrews 7:25)

Tomorrow, we will learn more about what this all means for us. But for today, we can hold on to the fact that if Melchizedek is a type of Christ, to whom Abram paid a tithe, then how much more should we acknowledge Jesus as our Great High Priest, who bought our freedom with the ultimate price?

Prayer:

Father God, thank you that you show us your truth in so many ways. Thank you that you have sent Jesus as our Saviour and our High Priest who can intercede on our behalf. Thank you that you have given us a King who is worthy of the title and to whom we can pledge our allegiance, knowing that he will protect and rule over us with justice and mercy. Amen