

Melchisedec

N. Anderson.

Melchisedec appears in Genesis 14 unheralded and unannounced. yet there is no suggestion of mysticism neither any circumstance to suggest he was a celestial (resident of heaven) personage of high rank.

There are clear indications in Genesis 18 that the visitation to Abraham was of supernatural character —

"And the Lord (Jehovah) appeared unto him . . ."

"Lo three men stood by him"

"My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight . . ."

"they said unto him . . ."

"And he said, I will certainly . . ."

"And the Lord said . . ." (verses 1-6, 9, 10, 13).

So this most interesting chapter uses language which arrests enquiring faith with the fact that God had visited His servant. The passage in Genesis 14 carries no such intimation.

The first recorded war in Scripture — suggestive of the last (Rev. 19) — ended with victory for God's servant and deliverance of the captives. Melchisedec, King of Salem (King of righteousness, King of peace) appears with that which speaks of the sustenance of life — bread, and also that which speaks of joy — wine (Psalm 104: 15). He came on the scene as "the priest of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth." No angel will act in priestly grace to bring man to God. Melchisedec brought blessing from God to Abraham, and he presented blessing to God. "Blessed be Abraham . . . and he blessed the Most High God." Abraham acknowledged the greatness of this man, Melchisedec, for he gave him tithes of all.

The next reference to Melchisedec is in Psalm 110. Messiah is there addressed by Jehovah thus: "The Lord hath sworn . . . Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." There is another reference to a priest-king in Zechariah 6: 13, " . . . he shall be a priest upon his throne;" an obvious prophecy going beyond the immediate subject of it, to Messiah. Melchisedec is not mentioned again until we come to Hebrews 5, 6 and 7.

So far, then we have learned from Genesis 14 that Melchisedec came on the scene after Abraham's victorious battle with the kings. His name means, "my king is righteous." He was also king of Salem (Shalom) — peace. We know from Psalm 85 that God's "Salvation is nigh them that fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land," and when that is realised then it shall be said, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Melchisedec was priest of the Most High God, and he brought forth bread and wine (Gen. 14: 18-20), he blessed Abraham and then he blessed the Most High God. We have also seen that Abraham recognised the greatness of this priest by giving him tithes of all. So there is no relating of his personal history, all we are told is his name and character, and that he brought something, and that he did something — in other words, what he was and what he did, blessing down and blessing up! He simply appeared on the page of Scripture history, a living priest, marked by righteousness, peace and blessing!

We learn from Psalm 110 that our Lord was sworn to be a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, that is to say, a living priest, a blessing priest, a great priest. Hebrews 5 teaches that our Lord did not take this honour of priesthood upon Himself, but received it by the calling of God (verses 5-7, 10). The writer had many things to say concerning Christ — "called of God an High Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec." These were hard to be uttered, not that there was anything mystical about them, but that the state of those to whom he wrote was such that they were described as being, "dull of hearing."

Hebrews 7, gives us the application of "the order of Melchisedec."

While our Lord shall function properly as King-Priest in the world to come, we need to remember that He is now, and has been, since he was exalted to God's right hand, "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

We get the present gain of His ministry as such, for our Priest now lives in the power of an endless life! This chapter also says that Melchisedec was "made like unto the Son of God." He adumbrated in his outstanding features the abiding Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Melchisedec was without father or mother and he had no priestly genealogy. He merely served the will of God in the manner of his appearing. A priestly pedigree was essential for priests after the order of Aaron (Numbers 3: 5-8; Ezra 2: 62). We are not told of any prescribed limits to the service of Melchisedec such as were later assigned to the sons of Levi — 30 years old to 50 years. But we are told the priests of Aaron's order were "Men that die" (Hebrews 7: 8, 23) and, "they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death," but our Priest has been brought before us as being of an order to which death did not apply — "there he received them (tithes), of whom it is witnessed that he liveth."

Our Priest, "abideth a priest continually." He is greater even than Abraham (verse 4); than the sons of Levi (vv. 9 and 10). How fitting then is Melchisedec to afford an illustration of the Priesthood of our Lord. Personally, Christ is the Son of God; positionally, He is "set at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens."

Even now, He is "Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," but He is acting towards His own today in a ministry which is after the pattern of Aaron (Hebrews 2, 4, 7 and 8).