

Hebrews

Hebrews 7:1-10 – Righteousness, Peace, Giving - Part I

March 15, 2009

I. Introduction

- A. **Hebrews 6:19-20** . . . This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, [20] where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.
- B. **Hebrews 7:1-10** . . . 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, [2] 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**. [3] Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but (*that is, Melchizedek*) made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually. [4] Now observe how great this man was to whom **Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils**. [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. [6] But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. [7] But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. [8] In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. [9] And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, [10] for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

C. Prayer

II. History

- A. Melchizedek is referred to eight times in the book of Hebrews. Five of those times are in direct reference to Jesus being a priest according to the "Order of Melchizedek."
 - 1. Let's compare the Order of Melchizedek with the Levitical priesthood.
 - a. According to God's law as given through Moses, the Levites were to serve as Israel's priests, and those Levites who were direct descendants of Aaron were to be High Priests, that is,

the priests who could enter the presence of God in the Holy of Holies.

- b. Melchizedek – being alive before Levi was even born – was not a descendant of Abraham. This means he could not have been a descendant of Levi, or more specifically, a descendant of Aaron. Yet the scripture speaks of Melchizedek as a Priest of the Most High God – equal to a High Priest. So what we see here is that Melchizedek was part of an order of priests separate from the Levitical order of priests. And this second order of priests – the Melchizedek Order – is made up of just two priests, Melchizedek and Jesus.
 - c. Now to take this point a little further, Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi, but from the tribe of Judah. What this means is that under the Law of Moses, Jesus had no right to act as a priest – and especially a High Priest who could enter the presence of God – unless of course, God said Jesus could be a priest. And that is exactly what God did.
2. One final point here: we understand that many things in the OT refer to Jesus or are pictures of Jesus or what we call “types” of Jesus. And so it is with Melchizedek – he is a type of Christ.
- a. When we say someone or something is a type of Christ, we mean that the type illustrates or reveals something of what the real thing is. And my point here is that even though Melchizedek came first, he is not the real thing. Christ is.
 - b. As a type of Christ, Melchizedek reveals Christ’s timelessness, that it was God who appointed Christ to be a High Priest forever, that Christ is greater than Abraham and all the Levites who ever lived, that people of faith are blessed by Christ, and that Christ is to receive submission and homage (honor and tribute) from people of faith.

- B. The Historical Setting for **Hebrews 7:1-10** is found in **Genesis 14:1-24** . . . Four kings, the king of Shinar, the king of Ellasar, the king of Elam, and the king of Goiim were allies. They went out to war against Bera king of Sodom and Birsha king of Gomorrah along with three other kings who were allies of Bera and Birsha. The four kings defeated the five kings and forced them into subjection and heavy taxation. After being under the rule of the king of Elam for 12 years, the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and their three allies rebelled. So the four conquering kings went out, and to show their

strength, defeated several other kings before coming to the valley of Siddim to reconquer the five kings of that valley. Of course, the four conquering kings defeated the five rebellious kings and plundered all the goods and people of Sodom and Gomorrah – including all their food supply. Then they departed – taking Lot, Abraham's nephew, and Lot's possessions with them, because Lot was living in Sodom.

1. Then someone came and told Abraham what had happened. When Abraham heard that his nephew had been taken captive, he led gathered his trained servants, three hundred and eighteen men, and went in pursuit of the four kings. Catching up to them near Dan, Abraham divided his forces against the four kings and attacked them during the night. He defeated them – pursuing them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. Then Abraham brought back all the people and goods taken captive by the four kings, along with his nephew Lot and all Lot's possessions.
2. Hearing of Abraham's victory over the four kings, the king of Sodom went out to meet Abraham in the valley of Shaveh (*which is also called the King's Valley*).
3. Melchizedek, king of Salem, also went out to meet Abraham, bringing with him bread and wine. Now Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High. And Melchizedek blessed Abraham 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.*" Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the choicest spoils.
4. Then the king of Sodom said to Abraham, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself." Abraham said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abraham rich.' "I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share."

- C. The primary point God is making here in **Hebrews 7:1-10** is that Jesus, as our **King** and **High Priest**, is superior to Abraham, and superior to the Levitical priests, and superior to those Levitical priests who were direct descendants of Aaron – and therefore we are to look to Jesus and not Abraham or any Levites to represent us before God and make it possible for us to come into the presence of God.

III. Practical Application – Righteousness, Peace, Giving

- A. Jesus is the **King of Righteousness**. Our tendency is to see Christ's title as referring to what he has done for us in relation to our positional status before God. There is no doubt that Christ has, by his death and resurrection made us positionally righteous before God. The problem of limiting our understanding of Jesus as the King of Righteousness to our positional standing before God is that he did this for us as our Savior, not as our King.
- B. Jesus is the **King of Righteousness** – which makes him the ruler of all who are righteous.
 - 1. How righteous? The word itself defines the “how much” that it includes.
 - a. What about those who are mostly righteous or partially righteous? Well, what does it mean to be mostly or partially righteousness? Doesn't that mean that I am partially unrighteous?
 - b. And if any part of my partial unrighteousness is due to knowingly and repeatedly participating in some sinful thought pattern or behavior pattern, am I not then willfully and partially rebellious against my King? And if I am willfully, though just partially rebellious, can I be considered as one who is submitted to the rulership of the King of Righteousness?
 - c. If we are to take seriously Christ's title as King of Righteousness, we must submit to his rule and live according to his commands. To count ourselves good citizens of his kingdom while accepting as if normal a life of partial righteousness is to condone – as if normal – a life of willful, even though only partial, rebellion against the King of Righteousness.
 - d. And so I ask you, how can he rule over someone who is knowingly, willingly, and repeatedly rebellious – even though it may be only partial rebellion against his rule?
 - 2. So as the King of Righteousness, who does he rule over? Since Jesus only reigns in the hearts of those who believe in him, and since he only rules over those who willingly submit to him, we can rightfully conclude he only rules over those who willingly do his will.
- C. To this, you may want to say, no one is perfect. No one is completely righteous. No one perfectly does the will of the King. I agree.

1. Where I disagree with most of those who cling to this truth that “no one is perfect” is that they cling to it with dishonest and self-serving motives – and their motives are revealed by the other things they cling to. Consider:
 - a. Some who call themselves servants of the King or born again Christians cling to the idea that they simply cannot help themselves when it comes to that one area or those several areas where they continue to repeat their sinning ways.
 - b. Some who see themselves as Christians in good standing with their King cling to the idea that at certain moments or in certain situations – that old and often repeated temptation is too strong to resist – as if they are overwhelmed by anger or lust or greed or envy or bitterness or pride or some other felt-need based on the pressures or challenges of the moment.
 - c. Some cling to the idea that their repeated sinfulness, in some area or another, is the fault of their humanity. Or they cling to the idea that their personality is such that they just can’t do any different.
 - d. And I am confident we’re all aware of those who blame their repeated sinfulness on the way they were raised, or the way those around them behave?
 2. But think with me for a moment. What do all these excuses imply? **That we know better but aren’t at the place where we want to do better.** These kinds of excuses show that we know that what we have been doing and are continuing to do is wrong.
 - a. These excuses are not the valid reasoning of imperfect Christians who are submitting to the King according to the will of the King, and who are pursuing righteousness according to the expectations of the King.
 - b. These excuses are the self-justifying reasonings of those who have known for some time that what they are doing is sin – and yet they willingly continue to commit those sins because they are still unwilling to put forth the kind of effort needed to end them.
- D. So yes, no one is perfect. But no Christian has to continue in the practice of any known sin. Why? Because we are subjects of the **King of Righteousness** and he has made a way – he has made it possible – he has done what is necessary for each and every one of us to be upstanding citizens of the **Kingdom of Righteousness** – citizens who

are living according to the King's will and pursuing righteousness according to the King's expectations and ways.

1. But for us to experience what the King has made possible in relation to living righteously, **we must do our part** in dying to self, resisting the devil when tempted, remaining vigilant against returning to our old sinful ways, and continuing to head down that path of being conformed to the image of Jesus.
2. It is my experience that when I treat the King of Righteousness as my part-time King – giving Him partial obedience instead of whole-hearted submission, my wrestling with temptation is exhausting.
3. But what is more, because I am still partially rebellious, the seeds of love or desire for my sin still reside in my heart – and though I might be victorious for awhile, I will eventually give in and commit that same sin once again.

E. However, when I take seriously my King's call to love Him supremely and live for Him, to put to death a particular sinful desire and fleshly habit, to die to self, and resist the devil when tempted, I experience an amazing freedom from that sinful practice and a significantly greater strength in resisting temptation. I find that not only can I live without returning to the practice of that sin, but I can be happy living without that sin in my life. Now let me be clear here, I am not saying I cannot fall back into any particular sin or even take it up again as a habit. The reality is, I can fall back and sin only too easily. But that does not change what I can do, it only points to the fact that I have not yet died and gone to heaven.

IV. Conclusion

- A. Jesus is the **King of Righteousness** – is he your king today, or are you a double-minded resident of his kingdom – partially submitted to his rule and partially in rebellion?
1. **I John 2:28-29** . . . Abide in Christ, so that when He appears, you may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. [29] If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.
 2. **I John 3:2-3** . . . Beloved, we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. [3] And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.