

# The Priest

## God's Great Plan

Often we lose sight of God's dealings with those Old Testament peoples who were not part of Israel. There is also the dispensational view that God abandoned all who were not part of the select few descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. But there are some prophets and priests named that cannot be traced to Abraham as an ancestor. One of those was the prophet Balaam who wanted money to curse Israel. He is known as "*Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the River,*" and it is said of him, "*whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed*" (Numbers 22:5-6).

The Old Testament mentions two priests who are worthy of note. One is identified as receiving tribute from Abraham in Genesis 14. In the account of the meeting between him and Abraham, we are told, "*And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High*" (Genesis 14:18). Another priest to consider is the priest of Midian, whom Moses stayed with after escaping Egypt (Exodus 2:15-16). This priest is given two names in Scripture, Jethro (Exodus 3:1) and Reuel (Exodus 3:18). He taught Moses to care for the sheep, became Moses' father-in-law, and provided sound advice to Moses and Israel, as we read in Exodus and Numbers.

There are only nine verses about Melchizedek in the Old Testament. Eight verses are in Genesis 14, and one is (Psalms 110:4) "*The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever According to **the order of Melchizedek.**"* Psalm 110 also refers to this one who is to be a priest and King forever at the right hand of God. Together, these verses point to the messiah as a priest outside the qualifications, rules, and laws applied to priests by Moses. About 550 years after David wrote Psalm 110, Zechariah wrote, "*Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices*" (Zechariah 6:13). This passage also points to a Messiah that is both ruler and priest. No one under the law could be both.

Many argue about the words "the order of" and whether they indicate a particular group of priests. The Jews, and many people today, look for family history or ordination process for a priesthood. The Law of Moses prescribed the Levitical priesthood with necessary accurate family records. Even today, some religions have strict appointment requirements and procedures. For Melchizedek, there are no family records or appointment criteria recorded. God chose and appointed him to the responsibilities, and Abraham recognized him as God's priest. Hebrews chapter seven explains this and applies it to Jesus, the Messiah. The priestly order of Melchizedek did not have a genealogy; he did not receive it from a parent, there is no beginning date or ending specified, nor was it passed on to another. Likewise, the priesthood of Jesus did not come from an earthly genealogy. He served the Father before time began, and He will never die, and His priesthood will never end.

There is another aspect of the meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek that some have observed. "*And Melchizedek king of Salem **brought out bread and wine;** now he was a priest of God Most High*" (Genesis 14:18). In that, God's priest provided a feast of bread and grape juice, fruit of the vine, and some view this as a picture of The Lord's Supper. The difference is, Melchizedek provided a refreshing banquet for Abraham and his servants, and Christ provided a sacrifice for our sins. The comparison sounds good until you examine the reason for each.

There is, however, a significant picture in the exchange between the two patriarchs. "*Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils*" (Hebrews 7:4). The Levitical priesthood descended from Abraham through his great-grandson Levi. Abraham is seen as representing the entire Levitical priesthood, including Aaron, the High Priest. By the higher official, Melchizedek, blessing the lower official, this exchange indicates the position of the Levites as lower than the priesthood of Melchizedek. Also, the fact that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek is a picture

of the Aaronic priesthood acknowledging the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood because the lesser pays tithes to the greater.

The Hebrew writer also points out that all earthly priests die and must be replaced if their function continues. But Jesus, risen from death to live forever, is not to be replaced. *"The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently"* (Hebrews 7:23-24). And because he lives forever, *"He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them"* (Hebrews 7:25). And Jesus is our High Priest who offered Himself once for our sins. (Hebrews 7:26-27).

Is Jesus Christ your High Priest also?