

Melchizedek and the Most High God

Introduction

First mention of a personage or term in the Scriptures almost always has key significance. In Genesis 14, we are introduced to two personages: Melchizedek and the Most High God. In the 14th chapter of Genesis is the record of Abram's (Abraham) defeat of the kings. The passage reads:

¹⁷ Then after his return 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). ¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He gave him a tenth of all. ²¹ The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself." ²² Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.' ²⁴ 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."

The goal of this study is to examine these personages and their significance in light of the Scriptures.

Names of God

The Bible reveals many names and titles for God. Some of the more familiar ones include: YHVH, i.e., Jehovah, יהוה: LORD, (Genesis 2.4), Elohim, אלהים: God, (Genesis 1.1), Adonay, אדוני: Lord, (Psalm 110.5), El Shaddai, אלהים שדי: God Almighty, (Genesis 17.1).

One of the most interesting names of God is El Elyon, אלהים עליון or אלהים הגדול, Most High God, translated in the LXX as ὑψιστος “highest,” “most high” (cf. Luke 1.32, 35, 76). Another word for “most high” is אלהים הגדול. It is Aramaic and found only in the book of Daniel. It is synonymous with אלהים הגדול. All its uses refer to God’s supremacy over the nations of the earth. Both the Hebrew and Aramaic versions of אלהים הגדול are spelled the same: אלהים הגדול and אלהים הגדול. Interestingly, both words for “most high” אלהים הגדול and אלהים הגדול are found in Daniel 7.25. It is this name the Antichrist will attack.

The name “Most High” occurs 42 times in the Scriptures. The distribution is the following:

Book Name	Scripture Reference	Frequency
Genesis	Genesis 14.18, 19, 20, 22	4x
Numbers	Numbers 24.16	1x
Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy 32.8	1x
2 Samuel	2 Samuel 22.14	1x
Psalms	Psalms 7.17, 9.2, 18.13, 21.7, 46.4, 47.2, 50.14, 57.2, 73.11, 77.10, 78.17, 35, 56, 82.6, 83.18, 87.5, 89.27, 91.1, 9, 97.9, 107.11	22x
Isaiah	Isaiah 14.14	1x
Lamentations	Lamentations 3.35, 38	2x
Daniel	Daniel 3.26, 4.2, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34, 5.18, 21, 7.25	10x

The primary meaning of “Most High God” is revealed in the

passage in which He is first mentioned, Genesis 14.18-22. The “Most High” is “possessor of heaven and earth” (Genesis 14.19, 22). From the above passages we find that His identity is also associated with the “nations” (Deuteronomy 32.8; Psalm 47.2, 89.27, 97.9), He is the God who “thunders” from heaven (2 Samuel 22.14; Psalm 18.13), and the God of Israel. Of all the titles of God, this is the one to which Satan aspired (Isaiah 14.14). This should not surprise us. Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4.4) and currently rules the kingdoms of the earth (Matthew 4.8-9). His rule will reach its apex during the time of the Tribulation (Revelation 13). After his defeat, the Lord Jesus Christ will receive this rule (Psalm 2.7-9).¹

The Most High is LORD

The Most High is identified also as the LORD, יהוה יהוה. We determine this on the basis of the Psalms, in which LORD and Most High are found in parallel. In Psalms 7.17, 47.2, 97.9 we also find the name combined: LORD Most High, יהוה יהוה יהוה יהוה.

Most High=LORD, YHVH, יהוה יהוה	Text
The LORD thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice.	2 Samuel 22.14
I will give thanks to the Lord according to His righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.	Psalm 7.17
The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered His voice, hailstones and coals of fire.	Psalm 18.13
For the king trusts in the LORD, and through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.	Psalm 21.7
For the LORD Most High is to be feared, a great King over all the earth.	Psalm 47.2

That they may know that You alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.	Psalm 83.18
For you have made the LORD, my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place.	Psalm 91.9
For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods.	Psalm 97.9

Jesus is LORD

We know from the New Testament that Jesus of Nazareth was the LORD, YHVH, of the Old Testament. Jesus poignantly declared this fact in His encounter with the Jews in John 8:

⁵² The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.' ⁵³ Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?" ⁵⁴ Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; ⁵⁵ and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." ⁵⁷ So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

This passage stuns. It shows the intensity of the opposition of the ruling Jews to Jesus and Jesus' pointed responses to them. On this particular day, the Jewish leadership clearly got His blood up. Jesus finally declared to them was that He was YHVH (Jehovah): the LORD (יהוה). He told them He was

the God of Abraham from whom the Jews had their existence. Moses had encountered God as LORD (Exodus 3.2) while he tended sheep in the desert. In this meeting, Moses saw a bush burning that did not burn. He approached it and God instructed Moses that He would deliver Israel out of bondage and that Moses would be His spokesman and instrument. Moses responded:

¹³ Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3.13-14).

God told Moses to tell the Jews that "I am" had sent him. Jesus told the Jews of His day: "before Abraham was I am." They clearly understood Jesus was claiming He was the eternal LORD, the "I am" of Moses. We know they understood because of their action: they picked up stones to kill Him (John 8.59).

The Most High is the Firstborn

Psalm 89.27 provides further insight into the identity of the Most High. Here, we find the parallelism is the "firstborn" [פְּרִי־בְרִית](#). The Jews recognized that the "firstborn" in Psalm 89 was a Messianic title. Paul, in concert with the Old Testament scriptures, declared in his letter to the Romans and to the Colossians that "firstborn" [πρωτότοκος](#) was God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8.29; Colossians 1.15, 18). The writer of Hebrews also made this declaration (Hebrews 12.23).² "Firstborn," is a title of preeminence and the Lord Jesus Christ will inherit the nations and become "possessor of heaven and earth" (cf. Psalm 2.7-8).

Melchizedek

Melchizedek is a mysterious and shadowy figure in Scripture.

The name Melchizedek (מֶלְכִּיצֶדֶק) means “king of righteousness” and is formed by a combination of the Hebrew words מֶלֶךְ (king) and צַדִּיק (righteous). In his meeting with Abraham, Melchizedek was declared to be “king of Salem.” This is the Hebrew word שָׁלוֹם is related to שָׁלוֹם “shalom,” i.e., “peace,” “health,” and in modern times, “hello,” “goodbye” but chiefly, as here, “peace” and is also “Jerusalem” יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, “the place of peace.” Melchizedek was king of Jerusalem before Jerusalem existed. In the Jewish, Aaronic priesthood, priest and king were separate offices. No king was a priest. But Melchizedek was not of the Aaronic priesthood and combined the offices of king and priest. The fact that he brought forth “bread and wine” foreshadowed the elements the Lord used for His body and blood which speak to us of His work on the cross for us.

Hebrews 7.1-3 described him further:

¹ 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 made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

From the description above we may summarize the following about Melchizedek. מֶלְכִּיצֶדֶק is:

King of righteousness	King of peace	
Without father	Without mother	Without genealogy
Without beginning of days	Without end of life	
Like the Son of God	A priest continually	

Such a description is only accommodated by a singular individual: the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son. He is the King of righteousness and peace. These will be the hallmarks of His kingdom described in the Scriptures. He alone has no beginning and no end. No created being fits these criteria. As the God-Man He paid for our sins and His finished work has eternal merit. For this reason, He alone is a perpetual priest (mediator, go-between).

Melchizedek's Timeline

Abraham lived about 2,000 B.C. The next time we encounter Melchizedek in the scriptures is around 1,000 B.C., in Psalm 110.4, written by David. The next time he appears is 1,000 years later in Hebrews (Hebrews 5.6, 10, 6.20, 7.1, 10, 11, 15, 17). Thus, the mysterious Melchizedek appears in Scripture at 1,000-year intervals. The appearances of Melchizedek in the Scriptures have a chiastic structure:

	Timeline	Time Period and Context	Scripture
A	~2,000 B.C.	Abraham	Genesis 14.18
B	~1,000 B.C.	David	Psalm 110.4
C	~0	Book of Hebrews (New time: B.C: A.D.)	Hebrews 5.6, 10, 6.20, 7.1, 10, 11, 15, 17
A'	~2,000 A.D.	Messianic Kingdom (projected beginning) ³	
B'	1,000 (~3,000 A.D.)	Messianic Kingdom (ends after 1,000 years)	
C'	0	Beginning of Eternity (End of Time)	

When Christ returns, He will set up His long-promised kingdom upon the earth. The prophets foretold this kingdom (Zechariah 14.9) in which the Messiah would be the King over Israel as well as King over all the earth. Most Christians pray the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus instructed His disciples to pray,

“thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6.10). The Kingdom of God revealed in the Old Testament scriptures and in the gospels is located on earth, not in heaven. No Jew ever had a hope of heaven as his dwelling or destination. When God establishes this kingdom He will fulfill His covenants to Israel and His promise to the Messiah to rule Israel and the nations (Psalm 2.6-8). He will be Melchizedek, King of Salem and King of righteousness, ruling from Jerusalem.

Conclusion

The Most High and Melchizedek are one person: the Lord Jesus Christ. Melchizedek met Abraham as the priest of the Most High God. Melchizedek was God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Most High of whom Melchizedek was a priest was God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything in the Scriptures points to Him. This was the object lesson God gave to the Jews in the design Tabernacle. Every design and every implement spoke of and pointed to Christ and His redemptive work.

¹ When the Lord returns, He will occupy David’s throne on earth (Luke 1.32-33; Matthew 6.10). At the present time, Jesus is not enthroned on His own throne but seated in heaven at the right of His Father’s throne (Psalm 110.1-2; Matthew 25.31, 26.64). Melchizedek is also mentioned in this Psalm (Psalm 110.4) and demonstrates the Lord Jesus occupies the office of king and priest. Psalm 110 is consonant with Psalm 2 in its revelation of the Lord’s defeat of His enemies.

² Pauline authorship of Hebrews has fallen out of favor among professional theologians. But far greater evidence exists for Paul’s authorship than anyone else. Much external and internal evidence indicates Paul authored the book. See the article [“Who Wrote Hebrews?”](#) for a study of this subject.

³ These figures are rough. We are near the Lord’s return. How near no one can say. But we are close. Hosea the prophet proclaimed, “Come, let us return to the Lord. For He has

torn *us*, but He will heal us; He has wounded *us*, but He will bandage us. 2 “He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him (Hosea 6.1-2). Peter declared that 1,000 years is a day for the Lord (2 Peter 3.8). The Messiah was crucified 2,000 years ago. The Scriptures reveal the Church, the body of Christ, began with the Apostle Paul about 37 A.D. (Acts 9.1-22; 1 Corinthians 3.10-11; 1 Timothy 1.12-17). Israel has been set aside for 2,000 years (Romans 11.25-27). Hosea proclaimed God would revive them after two days (2,000 years). That revival will occur when the nation repents and will trigger the Lord’s return to set up His kingdom on earth (Matthew 23.37-39). After God has revived the nation, He will, according to Hosea, “raise us up on the third day.” The raising up of the Jewish nation is the promise of the kingdom and the fulfillment of God’s promises in Exodus 19.4-6, Deuteronomy 28.1-14, and Jeremiah 31.27-34). The “third day” lasts 1,000 years which John declared in Revelation 20.4-7. See the author’s study, [“When Will the Lord Return?”](#)

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