

FAITH IS ACTION



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**JESUS
OUR ABLE
HIGH PRIEST**

THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the Most High God, which has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him tithes of all” (Genesis 14:18-20).

There was a huge war in the area around the Dead Sea, when five kings made a Confederacy to go against four kings. Two of the four kings were over the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The four kings lost the war to the five kings, and when the winning kings spoiled the city of Sodom, they took Abraham’s nephew Lot, his wife, and two daughters and carried them away, all the way to Damascus, Syria. This was a long distance.

When word got back to Abraham that Lot and his family were taken captive, he went after them with his 318 household servants, pursuing

them all the way to Damascus. Abraham and his 300 men defeated those five kings, something that four them mighty kings could not do. When they arrived back to Sodom, the kings came out to reward them, but Abraham refused to take anything from them. Then Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, came with bread and wine for Abraham. He blessed Abraham, and Abraham paid him tithes of all.

We do not hear anything more about Melchizedek in the Book of Genesis or in any of the historical books. The next time he is mentioned is by David in Psalm 110:4: *“The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”*

This is a Messianic psalm. Verse one is the most quoted passage of scripture in the New Testament. Jesus quoted it to the Pharisees who were peppering Him with what they thought were difficult questions that would snare Him in His words. Then Jesus turned the tables on them, asking them, “Who is David’s

JESUS **Our Able High Priest**

Sharon Hardy Knotts



son?’ They replied, “Messiah.” Then Jesus asked: “If Messiah is David’s son, how could David call him Adonai?” This shut them down real quick.

Our focus is on verse four, where David prophesied that the Messiah would be a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. We know that the priesthood belonged to what tribe? The tribe of Levi. And the high priests were only from Aaron’s sons. There is no mention whatsoever of Melchizedek. In fact, there is no record at all of his lineage or history or the order of his priesthood. I find this curious since the Messiah was going to be a high priest of his order.

High priests were never allowed to be kings. And kings were never allowed to be high priests. All priests came from the tribe of Levi, and the high priests came specifically from the line of Aaron. Kings came from the line of Judah. Yet Melchizedek was called the King of righteousness and the King of Salem. His name is King of Righteousness in Hebrew. And Salem was an ancient name for Jerusalem. How could he be a high priest of the Most High if he was a king?

BOTH KING AND PRIEST

There is only one other person who is both king (in fact, he is the King of Kings) and is also a high priest, the final High Priest. For sake of space, I chose these verses that confirm Jesus’ priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek:

Hebrews 5:1: “*For every high*

priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:”

Verses 4-6: “*And no man take this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, You are my Son, today have I begotten you. As he says also in another place, You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”*

Vs. 10: “*Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.”*

Hebrew 6:20, speaking of the veil in the heavenly Holy place: “*Where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”*

Hebrews 7:1-6: “*For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually.*

“*Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren,*

though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better."

Vs.11: "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?"

Verses 14-17: "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there arises another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifies, You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Like Melchizedek, Jesus is both King and Priest, and He is now King of Kings and High Priest forever.

WHO IS THIS MYSTERIOUS MELCHIZEDEK?

He has no record of birth, birthplace, parents, or lineage, and yet he was called a High Priest of the Most High God. He was great, because Abraham paid tithes to him, and he blessed Abraham. The greater always blesses the lesser.

Four hundred years later, God raised up Moses, and through him gave the Hebrews His law, His Com-

mandments, and the priesthood. No one could study to be a priest. Only the tribe of Levi. God chose the tribe of Levi for His very own. He delivered the firstborn of the Jews when the angel of death went through the land of Egypt, killing all the first-born. But in Goshen where the Hebrews lived, they took the blood of a lamb and painted their door posts, and the Death Angel passed over their houses. God then chose the tribe of Levi, from which Moses came, to be the priesthood. He chose Aaron and his sons to be the high priests.

Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, but of the tribe of Judah, as was prophesied of Him, that He was *the Son of David*. So how could He become high priest? Because He was not of the Levitical priesthood, but of the order of Melchizedek. Many Bible scholars believe that Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. He had no parents, no lin-

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eage, and is a priest forever.

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9:11-12).

Almost every message that I have preached in the last several months, has focused on *the cross*: On the covenants of salvation, deliverance from the curse, divine healing, and even the ordinance of communion that flows from Jesus’ sacrifice at the whipping post and on the cross.

In this message, we will look at how all of these benefits and Covenants were confirmed. While Jesus’ last words on the cross were, *“It is finished!”*, we know that He had to do something to confirm these benefits and Covenants. All covenants were sealed with blood. He shed His blood at the whipping post for our healing. He shed His blood on the cross to deliver us from the curse. He shed His blood on the cross for our eternal salvation. But he had to deliver that blood in person and sprinkle it on The Mercy Seat in heaven.

THE MERCY SEAT

The Mercy Seat that God instructed Moses to build in the wilderness Tabernacle was patterned after the one in heaven. The one in heaven existed first. God showed Moses the pattern for the earthly Mercy Seat based on the heavenly. Jesus had to

ascend into heaven and sprinkle His holy, redeeming blood on the Mercy Seat there.

Paul continues in the next verse saying that if the blood of earthly bulls and calves could cover sin and sanctify the flesh, how much greater is the blood of Messiah?

Verse 14: *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

Animal blood could not do this! Jesus entered into the holy place in heaven and sprinkled His blood on The Mercy Seat. This was not a temporary solution like what took place in the earthly Tabernacle, which had to be repeated every single year. Not only this, but it did not purge their consciences. It only covered their sins so God would have mercy on them. But they were held in bondage by the wicked works of their mind, which caused them to bring forth the actions of sin. Paul wrote in Colossians 1:21, that *we were alienated from God by the wicked works of our mind*. Thoughts lead to actions.

Hebrews 10:2-4: *“For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”*

The Jews knew that on the day of Yom Kippur, when the high priest

sprinkled the blood upon the mercy seat, that God would forgive them of their sins and not punish them. But they still had the remembrance of their sins. They still had the thoughts of their sins, and try as hard as they would not to, they continued to break God's Commandments again and again. Because of this, they would have to bring their own sacrifices throughout the year when they knew that they had sinned. They had to bring a trespass offering until the next day of atonement rolled around.

Thousands of animal sacrifices and rivers of blood. The priests who offered the sacrifices throughout the year worked continually, and they worked hard. In fact, their work was never done because there were always sins to be covered. In fact, there were no chairs in the Holy place. The priests had no place to sit down if they were tired.

Verse 12: *"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God;" HE SAT DOWN. He sat down at the right hand of God. He had offered his own blood once, for all time, and for all."*

But that doesn't mean that His job was done. Yes, His work was done as Savior and Redeemer. But He was given another office to fulfill. And if we go back to our opening verse in Hebrews 9:11, we see what his new job description: *High Priest*. *"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come..."*

In order to be our High Priest, He had to meet certain qualifications.

HIS QUALIFICATIONS:

Hebrews 2:14-18: *"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took he took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."*

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

You cannot have a sympathetic High Priest without a suffering Savior!

In these five somewhat lengthy verses, I want to draw your attention to one word in verse 18: **able**. All of the descriptions in these verses and others that we will read are the reason why Jesus is our *able high priest*. If He had never suffered as a man, as a human being, He would not be able. If He was not merciful, He would not be able. If He was not faithful, He would not be able.

The Greek word for *succor* means to help, to come to the aid of someone in need. It is used in the story of the Syrophenician woman

who came to Jesus, pleading for Him to deliver her daughter from demon possession. In a tone that only a mother in distress could speak, she said: “*Lord, help me.*”

It is used in the story of the desperate father who came to Jesus’ disciples with his demon possessed son, but they could not cast the demon out. When Jesus came down from the mountain of transfiguration and saw the chaotic scene, He asked what was going on. The father, in a pleading tone, explained, saying, “*If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.*”

CUP OF SUFFERINGS

Jesus is able to have compassion on us and help us when we are being tempted and tried because He has also experienced the trials and temptations we all face in this life. His trial in Gethsemane was so intense that Luke 22:43 says that an angel came unto him and strengthened him. Most people don’t catch this detail. Luke is the only gospel writer who mentions this, and this is significant because he was a physician.

Then, in the very next verse, Luke says that Jesus then *prayed more intensely*, until His sweat was tinged with great drops of blood falling to the ground. This is an extreme condition of mental, emotional, and physical distress called *hematidrosis*. It occurs when the capillaries in the sweat glands break, and blood seeps out and mixes with the sweat. And this occurred after the angel had strengthened Him! Imagine, if the

angel had not strengthened Him, and this occurred! I believe He would have died. But He could not die in Gethsemane. He had to die on the cursed cross.

In verses 7 and 9 we are told that He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death because angels are immortal. In order to deliver us from death, Jesus had to die as a man, a holy, sinless man.

The word *behoved* in Heb 2:17 is an old English word that has a curious meaning: It means that something is a duty, an obligation that you must meet, something you ought to do, and this word *ought* is used a lot in the New Testament. So what it is saying in reference to Jesus is: It was His duty to be made like unto His brethren in all things, that is, to take on flesh and blood.

Why was this His obligation, His duty, something He ought to do? Because it’s the only way that He could be an *able high priest* to us.

In order for Him to understand our human plight, He had to live our human life!

This also meant that He had to experience the ultimate human tragedy: *death*. He knew that He had to die. He knew how He had to die, on the cruel cross. And He knew that on the third day He would be raised up. But even knowing this, the human part of Him still experienced the trauma of facing suffering and death. This is why He pleaded for the cup of suffering to pass from Him as He prayed in Gethsemane.

Hebrews 5:7-8: *“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;”*

In my opinion, I imagine that it was the voice of the enemy who kept snarling in His ear: “How can you be sure that God is going to raise you up? What if He doesn’t raise you up?” Jesus experienced all these human scenarios, and this is why He is able to minister to us when we face them.

Hebrews 7:25: *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.”* **He is able!**

ABLE TO BE TOUCHED

Hebrews 4:14-15: *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”*

By saying that we *don’t* have a high priest who can’t be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, Paul is actually saying that we *do* have a high priest who *can* be touched with the feelings of our infirmities.

Let me put it this way: We have a high priest who is able to be touched

with the feelings of our infirmities.

He is able, because He has been *tempted*, He has been *tried*, He has *suffered* in His human body, His mind and His soul, by human experience, the very things that we suffer. Why? Because He was *tempted in all things*.

In Greek, this word *tempted* means *to be tried, both in body and soul*. The Greek word for *infirmities* means *weakness of body, frailty, and sickness*. It also means *weakness of soul, to bear troubles and trials*.

In Gethsemane, Jesus told His disciples: *“My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.”* This describes extreme emotional distress and mental anguish. And it is why His drops of sweat were tinged with blood as it fell to the ground. At this point, His physical body, His emotional soul, and His mental thoughts were all under intense pressure.

The Greek word for *touched* is SOOMPAHTHEO: From this we get our English *sympathy*, meaning *to feel for, to have compassion on*.

This is my understanding of why Paul said that we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses: As far as being flesh and blood and human, there was no difference between Jesus and the high priest and priests in the temple. But Paul is making a point that He is not like them in this manner:

They were not touched with the feelings of the infirmities of the people. They did not sympathize with the suffering of the people. They were irate when Jesus healed a cripple on the Sabbath day, when

He healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day, when He healed a blind person on the Sabbath day. He healed a woman bowed down and over by an infirm spirit for 18 years on the Sabbath day, and they had a fit!

Jesus called them hypocrites. He told them, "If your ox or your sheep was to fall in a ditch on the Sabbath day, wouldn't you go and get that animal out? Well, what about these people, the sons and daughters of Abraham? Should they not be healed and delivered on the Sabbath day?"

When they brought the woman caught in adultery to Jesus, they demanded that she be stoned to death according to the law of Moses. They did not bring the guilty man, and they had no sympathy for her.

No, those earthly priests did not have an ounce of sympathy for the lost and the suffering of their Jewish people. They could not be touched. But Jesus could. He was touched when He walked the shores of Galilee, and the hillsides of Samaria and Judea, and the streets of Jerusalem.

He was touched then, and He is able to be touched now as He sits on the right hand of God, as our merciful and gracious High Priest! You cannot have a sympathetic High Priest without a suffering Savior!

1Peter 5:7: "*Casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you.*" These are two different words in the Greek. The first means *anxieties, the things that trouble you*. The second means *to care about*. Jesus cares about us! Because He is our

able High Priest, who is able to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities.

And He is the One and only mediator between God and men, Paul wrote in 1Timothy 2:5. Not Mary. Or dead saints. Or even living priests. We do not pray to them. We have our great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us. He is the One seated on the right hand of God. And if He cannot make intercession to God for us, then nobody can!

Jesus is not only the *Son of God*, but he is *the Son of Man*. "Son of Man" is a Mesanic term. It was used by the Prophet Daniel in referring to the coming Messiah. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly referred to Himself as *the Son of Man*, 88 times, and they knew what He meant—that He was the Messiah! When He was asked if He was the Son of God, He replied in the affirmative. He continually spoke of God as being His Father.

In fact, this, along with healing on the Sabbath, were the two reasons why the religious leaders wanted to kill him. They said: "You being a man, make yourself God by saying that you are the Son of God." And they were right.

He is the Son of God, but He is also the Son of Man. We are not talking about Joseph, the carpenter. We are talking about His taking on the human form and becoming a man and a servant so that He could be one of us and could understand our human plight in this evil world.

THE ULTIMATE HUMILITY

Phil. 2:7-8: *“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”*

(I love these verses, but I am not going to teach them in depth, because it would take time to do it right. For this message, I will focus on two words in these verses: *servant* and *humble*.)

LOOKING FOR A KING

Jesus came as a human, a servant, and served with humility. This is why the Jewish people did not recognize Him as their Messiah. They were looking for a king—Another David. Messiah was prophesied to be *the son of David*, which, in their thinking, was a warrior king who overcame all of Israel’s enemies. This allowed his son Solomon to reign 40 years without a single war. It was the Golden Age of peace and prosperity. This is who they were looking for Messiah to be.

And at His second coming, this is exactly what He will do.

But 2,000 years ago, He came as an infant to a little town, Bethlehem, surrounded by peasants and shepherds. It was the birthplace and hometown of King David, but Jesus was not born into a royal family in a palace as a king, insulated from human troubles. No, He was born and raised among the poor and needy, the sick and oppressed.

Had he come as a king, the sick would not have been healed. The blind would have never received their sight.

Blind Bartimaeus would have never heard of Jesus the healer as he sat by the Jericho wayside begging. Many lepers, who lived hopeless lives of debilitation and despair, would have lived in bitter isolation until their untimely deaths.

The crippled beggars who sat by the wayside and at the temple gates begging would have never been healed to leap like a deer. A paralyzed man who lay at the pool of Bethesda for 38 years, vainly waiting for an angel to stir the waters of the pool so he could fall in and receive a miracle, would have laid there another 38 years, if his heart did not give out before.

He came to the poor, the needy, and demon oppressed. If He were sitting up in a palace in Jerusalem surrounded by pomp and comfort, He would have never got into a fishing boat to cross the Galilee to the shores of Gadara by a *cemetery* and *pig farm* (both forbidden to rabbis) to set a hopelessly demon-possessed man named Legion free.

A woman suffering with a continual issue of blood for 12 years, would have lost all hope, lost all strength, and died way too young. A 12-year-old girl who died would have never been raised up from the dead, leaving her parents with broken hearts.

A woman bowed down and over by an infirm spirit, unable to stand up straight for 18 years, would have

lived in chronic pain for the rest of her days.

Mary of Magdala, possessed with seven demons, would have lived her life in endless torment only to go to hell to greater unimaginable torments for eternity.

THE THRONE OF GRACE

Hebrews 4:16: *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”*

Ancient Jewish Rabbis taught that God had two thrones, one of mercy and one of judgment. They said this because they knew that God was both merciful and just, but they could not reconcile these two attributes of God. They thought that perhaps God had two thrones to display the two aspects of His character. On one throne He showed judgment and on the other throne mercy.

But here, in light of the finished work of Jesus on the cross, we see mercy and judgment reconciled into one throne of grace. Remember that grace does not ignore God’s justice; it is the fulfillment of God’s justice,

because Jesus went to the cross.

The Greek word here for *help* is different than other places in the New Testament. It is a nautical word, and in English, refers to *frapping*. It is only found in one other place and that is Acts 27:17. Paul was a prisoner on a ship with 276 men on board bound for Rome when a huge storm called Euroclydon came upon them for two weeks. They were in grave danger of sinking. At one point, they came up on an island and were able to undergird the ship with helps. This referred to frapping, that is, tightening the ship by putting cables or chains around it to support it to keep it from falling apart during the stress of the storm.

So it is noteworthy that the only other place this word is found is here in Hebrews 4:16: When we come confidently to the throne of grace of our merciful High Priest. He will help us. He will tighten His cables of grace around us. He will support us with His frappings of grace and mercy, so we won’t fall apart in the midst of the storm.

Our High Priest is the Sea-Walker, and **He is able!**

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