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Recommended Citation

Talbot, Louis T., "Studies in Genesis - 16" (2017). *Talbot Publications*. 55.
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Studies in Genesis

(Leaflet 16)

CHRIST—THE KING—PRIEST

“AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK”

Gen. 14:18-20; cf. Psa. 110:4; Heb. 5:1—10:18

We want to study this morning about Melchizedek, whom Abraham met on his return from the war called in the New Testament “the slaughter of the kings,” following his deliverance of Lot. This man, Melchizedek, was a priest-king, the only instance in the Bible of a man who was both a priest and a king, except the Lord Jesus Christ, who combines kingship and priesthood in His matchless Person. Therefore, Melchizedek stands before us as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in that wonderful, twofold office.

In studying about Melchizedek this morning, it is our purpose to learn more about the Lord Jesus. There are some who study the characters of the Bible to learn about the characters themselves. But that is not why a personality is presented in the Bible. God does not let Abraham pass before us, that we might see how God deals with him, and what God did for him. The purpose of our study about Abraham is that we might know Abraham's God. The purpose concerning David is just the same. We study a character like Daniel, and we admire Daniel; but Daniel was a man just as you are a man. He had all the passions of every sinner. God chose him; God gave him faith; God did mighty things through him. And the Holy Spirit has recorded these things, in order that we might know the God of Daniel.

So it is with Melchizedek, a strange character. Very little is said about him; but that little is very important, and that little has very much in it. And let us remember this morning that we must know whom this man prefigures, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise, we shall miss the marvelous truth God has for us concerning the Person and the ministry of our Great High Priest and coming King.

MELCHIZEDEK MET ABRAHAM RETURNING FROM THE SLAUGHTER OF THE KINGS

In our last lesson we read the story that gives the setting for this meeting of Melchizedek with Abraham. (See Gen. 14:1-16.) We saw that Lot had gotten into trouble in wicked Sodom. A confederacy of four kings, under the leadership of Chedorlaomer, had "made war with" another confederacy of five kings. Among the five were the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. For twelve years the five had served the four; then in the thirteenth year the confederacy of five had rebelled against this servitude, only to be subdued in the fourteenth year by Chedorlaomer and his confederates. Poor, selfish, worldly-minded Lot was among the captives. When the messenger took the word to "Abram the Hebrew," Abram went to the rescue of his nephew, and "brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people."

It was following this God-given victory, as he was "returning from the slaughter of the kings" (Heb. 7:1), that Abraham was met by two kings. They were the king of Sodom; and Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. The king of Sodom, grateful to Abram for his deliverance, offered the patriarch the spoils of the battle, which, as we shall see later, Abram magnanimously refused. The king of Sodom represents "the prince of this world." But Melchizedek blessed Abram and received a tithe from Abram in the name of the Most High God. What a difference between these two kings!

ABRAHAM, IN THE PLACE OF SERVICE, MET THIS KING-PRIEST

It was when he was in the place of service that Abram met Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. His had been a difficult task, but he was in a right relationship with God; and God gave him the victory.

As we saw in our last lesson, Lot, too, was justified by faith; but Lot was a justified man in trouble—and how many such there are! How many of the Lord's people are in

difficulty! The Lord would like to send somebody to help that one of His that has gotten into such trouble. Perhaps He would like to send you; perhaps He would like to send me. And He can, if we are at Hebron; for "Hebron" means "fellowship." God found Abraham at Hebron, in fellowship with Him. There God spoke to Abraham, and Abraham went out to deliver a brother. It is wonderful, not only to be saved, but to be a blessing to somebody else also. It was a good thing for Lot that God found a man whom He could use.

And now Abraham was back from "the slaughter of the kings" and from the rescue of Lot. He was in fellowship with God, delivering God's wayward child, being used of the Lord. Then it was that God had perhaps the greatest blessing of Abraham's life ready for him. Where did he get it? Not at Hebron. You do not get your best blessings at Hebron, my Christian friend, not even in fellowship. That is where God fits you for what He has for you to do. But let us look at Gen. 14:18:

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine . . ."

This reminds us of the Lord's Table, does it not?

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God."

I think this was one of the high spots in Abraham's life. As we shall see in this lesson today, the Holy Spirit plainly teaches us that Melchizedek prefigured the One, even Jesus, who is the Great High Priest "after the order of Melchizedek." To whom did God reveal this glorious character, a man who alone of all the characters of the Bible shows Christ in His kingly High Priesthood? To Abraham, as he was in the place of service. There is no other priest-king between the covers of this Book. If a man was a king in Israel, he had to be of the line of Judah. If he was a priest, he had to be of the line of Levi. No man in Israel could be a priest-king; but this man was a priest-king, for he was "king of Salem," and "priest of the most high God." Thus he prefigured Christ, who is King of Judah, and "a priest

for ever after the order of Melchizedek." This marvelous character, who breaks on the scene in the Old Testament and is gone, just flashes across the horizon as a glorious picture of the Lord Jesus Christ in His High Priesthood upon His throne. And to whom did God reveal this man? To Abraham. When? When Abraham was doing what God gave him to do. God fitted him for this in Hebron. My friend, in fellowship with God, upon your knees, alone with Him, He will strengthen you; but the greatest blessings God has for you He will give you some day when you are doing something that He gave you to do. You may have joy on your knees before the Lord, after a long season of prayer, in fellowship with Him; but when He sends you out to lead a soul to Christ, when you are kneeling beside that one, and you see that soul pass from death unto life, then you will know unspeakable joy. When you see the glory of the Lord come into that face and into those eyes, and hear that soul say, "Praise the Lord, I am saved!" then God will give you greater joy than you ever had, even in prayer and fellowship. But it is on your knees, alone with God, that He fits you to help that soul. At Hebron God fitted Abraham to deliver Lot. But as he was bringing Lot back with all the spoils of the battle, then it was that he met Melchizedek; and then it was that God must have taught him about the promised King-Priest, even Jesus, his coming Saviour and Lord.

I think perhaps Abraham stood on higher ground than at any time in his life, except possibly on the mount where he took his son, Isaac, in obedience to God's word, to offer him upon the altar of sacrifice. Three times in this short passage recorded in Gen. 14:18-24 the name, "the most high God," is used—and for the first time in Scripture. To Abraham, faithful in service, the Lord made Himself known in a new way. He revealed Himself to the patriarch as "the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth."

MELCHIZEDEK—"KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND KING OF PEACE"

There are only three places in the Word of God where Melchizedek is mentioned—here in Genesis, in Psalm 110:4, and in the very heart of the book of Hebrews. (See Heb.

5:1—10:18.) We have read the Genesis story. Psalm 110:4 is a prophetic utterance of God, the Father, spoken to His only begotten Son, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." And the Epistle to the Hebrews explains this prophecy, showing that Melchizedek was a type of Christ, the King-Priest.

Indeed, the whole message of Hebrews centers around the High Priestly work of the Lord Jesus. Having proved from chapters one and two that Jesus was eternal God and perfect Man; and therefore *able* to be our Great High Priest; and having shown us in chapters three and four how we may enter into His rest; the Holy Spirit, in Heb. 5:1—10:18 develops the "chief point" of the epistle; that is, the high priestly work of Christ—"a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," not after the order of Aaron or any of the Levitical priests.

The Holy Spirit was addressing Hebrew Christians who were being bitterly persecuted, urging them not to return to Judaism—for the Jewish temple was still standing. (See Heb. 10:11.) He was proving to them that the Lord Jesus Christ was better than the prophets and better than the angels, to whom Israel showed respect (chapters one and two); better than Moses and Joshua (chapters three and four); better than Aaron, Israel's first high priest (5:1—10:18). The remainder of the epistle (10:19—13:25) is largely practical. Thus you see that the message concerning Melchizedek as a type of Israel's King-Priest, far better than Aaron and all the Levitical priests, forms the very heart of this wonderful epistle. Therefore, let us read all of Heb. 5:1—10:18, noting especially chapter seven. And the first thing we see there is that the names of this man beautifully typify the Person of Christ, the King-Priest. Let us read together Heb. 7:1, 2:

"For this Melchisedec (note the Greek spelling, as compared with the Hebrew form in the Old Testament), 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 . . .”

Now will you notice the order of these words? Why could he not be first king of Salem and after that the priest? Or why could he not be king of peace, and after that king of righteousness and priest of the Most High God? Because that would be the wrong order. Let me read this again; I want you to get it:

“. . . first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.”

“By interpretation” his name meant “King of righteousness”; and surely the Lord Jesus Christ is the righteous King of Kings! “And after that also King of Salem.” Now “Salem” means “peace.” The city of Salem, over which Melchizedek was king, was later called “Jerusalem,” meaning “city of peace.” And again, our Lord Jesus is the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). In his very names Melchizedek foreshadowed our blessed Lord!

“FIRST . . . KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”—THEN
“KING OF PEACE”

But let us note further the order of these titles. Righteousness must always precede peace. Before you can have peace for yourself, my unsaved friend, you must find the righteousness that is by faith. Do you remember Romans 5:1? “Therefore being justified (i. e., made righteous) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” But righteousness must come before peace. Let me show you this from the book of Isaiah.

“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isa. 32:17).

You see, that is the order. We read it again in Psalm 85:10:

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

It is well to take time to turn to these passages to see them. This truth may concern some sinner listening in this morning, not saved. It may concern somebody who is studying the times in which we live. This is something that the world does not know. This is a truth that our rulers do not seem to know.

Not only must righteousness precede peace; but these two must also meet. Men today are longing for world peace, but they are not talking about world righteousness. How can we have peace in a world where there is no righteousness? If we could have a world of righteousness, then the League of Nations would work; then our peace conferences might accomplish something. If we could make this a righteous world, then we could make it a peaceful world. But the Lord Jesus alone, the "King of righteousness," can usher in world righteousness and world peace. Thank God! He will one day, perhaps very soon!

There is no righteousness in the desire of Mussolini; there is no righteousness in the desire of Hitler. And in a world of unrighteousness how can we have peace? We must have righteousness first, then peace. Will the Lord Jesus accomplish that? Why, certainly He will! That is what He is coming to do. Before He makes peace in the earth, He is coming to put righteousness in the earth. He is coming to enforce His laws. He is going to be the Governor among the nations. When the nations are quiet, when the nations are right, when sin hides its head, when man is afraid to do wrong because of the great King, then we shall have peace. Men will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and will learn the art of war no more.

But while the whole world is studying war, what can we expect? England claims to have an explosive by which a bomb can be dropped in any city and kill everybody within

a radius of one mile. Germany claims that she has chemical explosives that will not only kill all the people within a great area, but will also destroy all productiveness of the ground for some ten years to come. It is said that when that chemical strikes, every atom of life will be killed. Nothing will grow; the land will be barren, and will not give its fruit.

According to the book of Revelation, something like this will come to pass during the tribulation period; for famine will stalk through the world. One of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse will bring famine. There can not be peace. Then why should we not pray for the Lord Jesus to come? He alone can make peace. But He will bring peace, my friends, because He is going to bring righteousness.

And, my friend, you must be saved that same way. If you are listening in this morning and you are troubled because of your sins, you can not have peace unless you find a way to get rid of your sins. There is no use in turning over a new leaf, trying to be a Christian. You must stop all your trying to be better than you are. You must get rid of your sins; you must get rid of all your sins and be righteous. And when you are righteous, the peace of God will fill your heart. That is salvation, praise God. "There is a fountain filled with blood" for the washing away of sin. If you are listening in this morning, unsaved, you can now be washed in the blood of Christ, and know that sin is gone, that God counts you righteous by faith in Christ. Then the peace of God will fill your heart. But there can be no peace before you have righteousness. You must have Christ as your Saviour from sin before you can have the peace of God.

MELCHIZEDEK—"PRIEST OF THE MOST HIGH GOD"

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God"
(Gen. 14:18).

Now this is the first reference to priesthood in the Bible. Later, in the days of Moses and Aaron, God gave Israel the

Levitical priests. But not until we get to the Epistle to the Hebrews do we read God's full explanation of the significance of the priesthood. Let us turn to Hebrews 5:1-10 to see how the Holy Spirit explains the qualifications and the duties of a priest, and to see how Christ fulfils both.

The priest in Israel had to be "taken from among men" (verse 1), and "called of God" (verse 4). He had to be a man, called of God to the sacred office of the priesthood. He had to be from the tribe of Levi, of the family of Aaron; and any other man who presumed to intrude into the priest's office was "cut off," as were the sons of Korah. (See Num. 16:1—17:13.)

Now our Lord Jesus met both of these qualifications for His priesthood; for He was "taken from among men," perfect in His humanity; and He was "called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:10). Because He "suffered being tempted," "made like unto his brethren"; therefore, He is "able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:17, 18). He knew what it was to be hungry and weary, despised and rejected. He was the "man of sorrows." Therefore, He is our sympathetic Priest.

"For we have not an high priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are apart from sin" (Heb. 4:15, R. V.).

Not only did Christ meet the qualifications of a priest, but He also fulfilled, and is yet fulfilling, the duties of a priest. These duties of a priest in Israel were threefold: (1) To "offer gifts and sacrifices for sins"; (2) to "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way" (Heb. 5:1, 2); and (3) to pray for the people. Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice "once for all." Surely He is dealing gently with His blood-bought children, in boundless compassion and love. And He "ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

Seated on the right hand of the throne of God, He prays for His own, guards and keeps them by His love and power.

As we continue in this study, we shall see how Christ is "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"—a far higher order than that of Aaron and all the Levitical priests. Yet, as a Man, He also fulfilled all the Levitical law. Now Melchizedek, as priest of the Most High God, was a type of Christ, the perfect Great High Priest, greater than Aaron and all his sons.

Surely it does not seem too far-fetched to compare also the "bread and wine," which Melchizedek brought to Abraham, with these symbols of the broken body and shed blood of our eternal Priest. He pleads His own blood as efficacious for all our sins, as He makes intercession for us at the right hand of the Father!

And let us remember that Melchizedek was a priest long before Aaron, Israel's first high priest, was born. Our Lord pleads for Gentiles, as well as Jews, at God's right hand—for all who "come unto" the Father by Him who "loved us and gave himself for us."

MELCHIZEDEK—A TYPE OF CHRIST IN HIS ETERNITY

Of Melchizedek it is written, in Heb. 7:3, that he was

"... without father, without mother, without descent (i. e., 'genealogy'), having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."

This passage has been the subject of much discussion. Some hold that Melchizedek was a supernatural being, even the Lord Himself in angelic form, actually "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life."

But the interpretation held by many careful Bible students, and the one which seems to me to be correct, is that Melchizedek was without *recorded* genealogy, in order that he might be a type of the eternal Son of God in His priestly and kingly work. The story of his meeting with Abraham is found in Genesis, a book of many genealogies. But nothing is said of Melchizedek's lineage. Thus, by this very omission, the purpose of the Holy Spirit seems clear—a mark of divine inspiration of the record. In a book of genealogies this type of Christ, the eternal King-Priest, appears on the scene and is gone. Therefore, he prefigures the One who actually has "neither beginning of days, nor end of life," even the eternal Lord Jesus. As a Man He had no earthly father, but was born of the virgin; as God, He had no mother, but was "in the beginning" the eternal Word of God.

CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD IS BETTER THAN THAT OF AARON

We have already seen that the "chief point" (Heb. 8:1, R. V.) of the main portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that Christ is better than Aaron. Therefore, the Hebrew Christians were exhorted not to return to Judaism, with its Levitical or Aaronic priesthood; but to "go on" with Christ into the deeper, richer Christian experience. After all, the Levitical priesthood and all the Law of Moses set forth but "a shadow of good things to come" in Christ (Heb. 10:1). And now that Christ has come, the shadows and the types have been done away, fulfilled, in Him.

The argument of Heb. 7:4—22 is not easy reading; we must think clearly if we get the meaning. And yet the Holy Spirit makes it very plain. He is saying to us in verses 4-10 that Christ is better than Aaron, even as Melchizedek, a type of Christ, was better than Aaron's forefather, Abraham.

For two reasons Melchizedek was better than Abraham: (1) Because he blessed Abraham, "and without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better" (Heb. 7:7); and (2) because Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham; "and as I may say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes (according to

the Law of Moses), payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him" (Heb. 7:9, 10).

So you see, my friend, on the authority of the Word of God, we declare that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham and all the Levitical priesthood, including Aaron, who descended from Abraham. Therefore, since Christ is "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," He is a greater priest than any Judaism had to offer.

Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, however little is said about him. There are about thirteen or fourteen chapters in the Bible about Abraham, and three hundred occurrences of Abraham's name. About Melchizedek we do not have more than a few words, certainly not twenty-five verses. And yet this man, we are told, is greater than Abraham. Therefore, if we can learn so much about God from Abraham how much we should learn from this man!

I am concerned this morning that from this study we shall get a full, complete view of the meaning of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest. He is presented to us, as we shall see, as our Intercessor, our Mediator, our "Advocate with the Father"; but He is God's Great High Priest. And the reason you are now saved, the reason you were saved ten years ago or twenty or thirty years ago, the reason you continue until the present day with the knowledge that you are saved—all this is because you have had Somebody who has stood for you every moment of that time. You have made many failures; perhaps you have been afraid that you have fallen away from God. But you had Somebody interceding in your behalf; you had Somebody standing for you; you had Somebody pleading for you. That is the reason you did not fall away; that is the reason you *will* not fall away. For if you are the Lord's, He is there in intercession. He takes up your case; He knows your failures; He knows what your temptations have been and will be. He knows all about these things from the beginning, but He is there in intercession. He is your Great High Priest,

pleading for you. He stands between you and God; and as you go on from day to day, you do not have to worry. All you have to do is praise the Lord. You just go on in the simple consciousness of His perfect ministry of intercession.

But, my friends, I think that we ought to have the consciousness of it. It would be something more in our Christian life, for which to praise God. We see Christ on the cross dying for us; and—praise the Lord! we see Christ somewhere just before us in the future coming for us. But just as clearly we ought to see Christ now pleading for us, as our Representative in the court of heaven before God, mentioning our names, holding us up, that we may go through this terrible world, and in the end meet Him and with Him go into the Father's house.

MELCHIZEDEK MET ABRAHAM AFTER THE BATTLE

It was when Abraham was "returning from the slaughter of the kings" that Melchizedek met him, blessed him, and received tithes of him. Even so, it will be at the close of "the great tribulation" period that Christ, the King-Priest, will reveal Himself to His people, Israel. This man met Abraham when the war was over. Abram had gone to rescue Lot, who stands for the remnant. When the remnant in Israel is delivered (a picture of the tribulation period); after the slaughter of the kings (after the overthrow of the Antichrist); Israel will be met by their Priest-King, as Melchizedek met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings. In that yet future time Christ, the great Priest-King, will appear unto His people, Israel.

GOD—NOT THE KING OF SODOM—REWARDED ABRAHAM

There is yet another lesson for us in the story of Abraham's return from "the slaughter of the kings." You will remember that, before Melchizedek met him, the king of Sodom "went out to meet him" (Gen. 14:17). He was grateful for deliverance at the hand of the patriarch, and

he wanted to reward his benefactor with material gifts. But evidently Abraham had promised God not to accept anything from the king of this wicked city; for the king of Sodom represented the godless world. Let us read the story, to see Abraham's temptation in the midst of all his blessing at the hand of God through his meeting with Melchizedek:

"And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich: save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eschol, and Mamre; let them take their portion" (Gen. 14:21-24).

Abraham knew that God had called him out of the godless world, unto a separated life; and for the sake of his testimony he was not willing to receive a reward; except from the hand of God.

Thus it will always be with the man or woman of faith. After snatching "a brand from the burning," as Abraham had done in the case of Lot, the child of God is not going to let the world pay him. He gets his reward somewhere else. Woe to the man who follows the Lord and goes out to do the work of God, in order to make money! To such a temptation Abraham said, "No." Abraham did all at his own expense, and returned a poorer man. He gathered his servants and led them out. How long the battle took, how long the journey was, we do not know. He took all his servants and the men of his own household, all that he had, and went out at his own expense. Then he returned and said, "I will take nothing. Nothing from the world for me. I belong to the Lord."

I read just the other day of a man who went to visit a woman, whose son he had seen at his place of business in

another city. Upon the mother's inquiry concerning her son's welfare, the visitor said, "Why, he is getting along nicely." And he told her all about her boy's success. When he got through he said, "You see, your son is doing well in the world," to which she replied, "Which world?" Which world? Well, in which world are we getting along? This world will soon be gone; and there is another. Abraham had seen "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Returning home from battle, he had met that glorious personage Melchizedek. God had dealt with him and Abraham was in a place where he could say, "No."

And how wonderfully God Himself rewarded His trusting child! Listen to the very next words of the inspired record:

After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1).

Was Abraham rewarded? Yes. Did he get more than he refused? Certainly he got more than he refused; God meant more to him than ever before. And he has gone down in sacred history as the "friend of God." Listen to what God has said about him:

"But thou, Israel, are my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (Isa. 41:8; cf. II Chron. 20:7).

"Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23).

You say the Lord is your Friend, but Abraham was God's friend. We need a friend. Does God need a friend? He does in some places. Maybe in the office where you work you are the only friend God has; that is often the case. Are you a friend to God? Am I a friend to God? When God needs somebody to stand for Him, do we do it? Do we say, "Praise

the Lord, He's a Friend of mine!" God didn't say, "I am Abraham's Friend." He was; He proved it; and God will prove it to you. But God said, and it is repeated in the New Testament, "Abraham my friend." God had nobody else that would stand with Him. Abraham stood with him.

"WE HAVE SUCH AN HIGH PRIEST"

This concludes the story of Melchizedek's meeting with Abraham, and of all that was connected with the patriarch's return from "the slaughter of the kings." But, as we have already seen, the Word of God has very much more to say about Jesus, our Great High Priest, of whom Melchizedek was but a type. I am so eager for you to get the message, my friend, that I want you to turn with me again to Heb. 8:1, where we read, in the Revised Version, a marvelous summary of this eternal truth:

"Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

In other words, the "chief point" of the book of Hebrews is this: "We have such an high priest." His name is Jesus. And He "ever liveth" to minister unto His own, blood-bought children. Therefore, the book of Hebrews was given to show the security of the Lord's people. Just let me add a further word about that. You know that at the end of the earthly life of Christ a great company of people flocked to hear Him; and when He had gone into the glory, on the Day of Pentecost, thousands flocked to hear the disciples preach. Many became disciples; we are told that in one day three thousand were added unto the church; a few days later, five thousand. Now these were all *Jewish*. Let us remember that Pentecost was a Jewish event, with which the Gentiles had nothing to do. In all the other Epistles of Paul he never mentions Pentecost, because it was a Jewish day of worship, and he was primarily the apostle to the Gentiles. Moreover, following Pentecost, for some time they preached

only to Jews. It was not until about 40 A. D. that Peter first preached to Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. Meanwhile, thousands and thousands of Jews came out and said they believed the apostles were right. But when the nation turned, when the Sanhedrin began to kill the apostles, when many were cast into prison, for their faith in Christ, many of those Jews went back again to Judaism. As in the great revivals of our own age, thousands come, but perhaps only scores remain. Many come under a false impression, and are swept in on the tide of an interest. So it was in that day. The Jews who remained and who were true lost all that they had; their goods were taken from them; they were cast into prison; they began to wonder themselves about the truth of what the apostles preached. And the book of Hebrews was written to show them that, because they were true believers, Christ was their Great High Priest; and although they should lose everything here, they had everything yet to come. Hebrews, therefore, is the book of assurance, the book that teaches confidence for those who have once trusted the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this was the "chief point" of its teaching: They had a Great High Priest. What man can be lost who has entrusted himself to Christ, and for whom Christ is pleading at God's right hand? Will He lose a case? Certainly not. Will He lose a single soul? Certainly not. If you keep yourself, you will be lost; but if He is keeping you, you can not be lost. The teaching of Hebrews, therefore, is summed up in this:

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum (or 'chief point,' R. V.): We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:1, 2).

CHRIST—OUR INTERCESSOR

You will remember that, as already stated in this lesson, one of the duties of the priest in Israel was to pray for his

people. That is intercession—prayer for others. In Rom. 8:34 we find yet another reassuring statement concerning Christ's intercession for us:

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Now it is remarkable that, except in the book of Hebrews, Paul never uses the term "high priest." Of course, we can not say dogmatically that Paul wrote Hebrews, though we believe he did. But that epistle was written to Jews—Hebrews—who understood the meaning of the priesthood in Israel. But in the thirteen other epistles written by Paul, he never uses the word "high priest." Our High Priest, Christ, is presented to us here in Romans as our Intercessor. He has taken His place as the Great High Priest before God the Father in heaven. But we are not Jews; we are not Israel; and the high priesthood belongs to that nation. Yet since the work of Christ's High Priesthood is now for us who are Gentiles also, He is presented to us as Intercessor. That is the only difference. Christ is your High Priest; He is your Representative; but He is given to you, Gentiles, under the name of Intercessor.

CHRIST—OUR MEDIATOR

As if to make the meaning of our Lord's ministry for His own yet more clear, the Holy Spirit explains it even further by using another word—"Mediator." Turn to I Tim. 2:5, 6, where we read:

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all . . ."

Now that is another word that Paul uses for Christ, who is the Great High Priest. He is our Intercessor and our Mediator. I do not mean to say that it is wrong to call Christ our Great High Priest; but, strictly speaking, that is a Jewish title; and Paul uses different words for the Gentiles.

Now a mediator is one who goes between, or interposes between, two or more people, as a friend of both sides, seek-

ing to bring about reconciliation. Sin had separated man from a holy God. And no one but God's holy Son and man's compassionate Friend could go between sinful man and a righteous God. He pleads our cause, takes our part, before the throne of grace. And thus the Holy Spirit seeks yet again to make us understand the ministry of Christ—our Mediator.

CHRIST—OUR DAYSMAN

In Job 9:33 we have yet another word to explain this ministry of Christ. By putting all of these terms together, dear friends, we can perhaps get a very clear idea of this wondrous ministry of the Lord Jesus at God's right hand. This was Job's lament:

"Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that
might lay his hand upon us both."

Now in Job's day he knew nothing about an intercessor, mediator, or high priest. As far as Job himself knew, he was dealing personally with God the Father, and he was having a hard time. He could not tell whether his prayer was answered; for he was sorely afflicted, and his enemies were making sport of him, telling him that he was a hypocrite, that he had sinned, and that his affliction was his punishment. Job did not understand that he was becoming an object lesson in faith and patience to succeeding generations. He did not know of Satan's accusation, and of his conversation with God, recorded in Chapter one. Therefore, he cried out in his wretchedness words that might be paraphrased like this: "Oh, that there were a daysman betwixt us, one who could lay his hand on us both." He longed for an intercessor; or, as the Revised Version renders it, "an umpire." Whoever the intercessor should be, he had to be great enough to lay his hand on the throne of God, and he had to be human enough to lay his hand on us. We can not bear, in our sinful state, the touch of God; it must be the touch of a man. But no man can touch the throne of God, so God Himself must be our daysman. Well, praise God! There is One who is both God and Man, who can lay His hand on God, because He is divine; and who can lay His hand on us, because He is hu-

man. Job had not such an one. Do you not see how we, in the New Testament, with all the light that we have since Calvary, should be deeper spiritually, should know more spiritually, should understand God better, than even these mighty saints of the Old Testament?

ISRAEL'S PRIESTS FAILED—CHRIST NEVER FAILETH

Having seen that our Lord's priestly work is for Gentiles, as well as for Jews, let us go back to the book of Hebrews, to see some further details to encourage our hearts. The contrast between Christ's priestly work, "after the order of Melchizedek," and that of Aaron and all the Levitical priests is set forth in much detail. And the first thing we would note is that Israel's priests failed God; Christ never faileth! Even Aaron, who had witnessed God's mighty power in delivering his people from Egypt, led the nation into gross idolatry, as they danced naked around a golden calf! Therefore, Israel's priests had to offer sacrifices "first for their own sins, and then for the people's" (cf. Heb. 7:27); whereas Christ had no sin, and needed not to offer sacrifice for Himself!

"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26).

Yes, the trouble with Israel was with her high priests. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world and appeared to Israel, they had two high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. The position was so lucrative; there was so much money in it, that they had divided it up. They had lost all semblance of what God meant the priesthood to be.

The time came when Aaron died, and Aaron was a real high priest. In spite of his sins, he knew God. But when Aaron died, his successors were sinful, and Israel had trouble. Eli was a godly high priest, but his sons were sinful and brought Israel into more shame and sorrow. The trouble was with the priesthood all down through the ages. What could they do without a representative? They were sinners. The high priest carried the names of the twelve tribes on his shoulders, and upon his heart. He should have loved the people; he should have carried them before God as he had them

on his heart and his shoulders. Praise God! We have a High Priest who does both! He loves us; our names are written on His heart; and He carries us; we are on His shoulders. He can carry His people; for He is eternal God! And He loves us with an everlasting love!

ISRAEL'S PRIESTS DIED—CHRIST EVER LIVETH!

But Israel's high priests failed, and the nation was destined to failure until she got a High Priest who knew no sin, One who could not die! Now Israel has a High Priest, though she does not know it. The Nation is being preserved by Him; and when Israel comes back into her own, she will find a Great High Priest ready for her, One who shall not die, One who shall carry her down through eternal ages; for He abideth a priest forever! You say, "What does this mean?" Look at Heb. 7:23, 24:

"And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."

This was the difference, and we need to mark it: Every Jewish priest entered on his priesthood and was a priest until he died. Jesus became a Priest in His death as the perfect Sacrifice, and after He died as our Intercessor. When He died and rose again, His death was behind Him. Then He could enter on an eternal, unchanging priesthood, for there was no death facing Him. Every priest was a priest till He died. Jesus is a Great High Priest from the time of His death down through the eternal ages. And that brings us to the next verse, which is the very heart—and summary—of the Epistle to the Hebrews, one of the most wonderful verses in all the Word of God:

"Wherefore (for that reason) he is able also to save them to the uttermost . . ." (Heb. 7:25).

Why can He save to the uttermost? Because He is the same forever. He was Paul's Intercessor. He is my Intercessor. Moses' high priest was Aaron. David's high priest was Abiather. Do you see? Different men and different priests ministered from Aaron to Christ, but not so now. Was Paul sure of eternal life? Why? Because Christ was His Interces-

sor and Mediator. And Paul's High Priest is mine. Paul's High Priest is yours. Why? Because this High Priest ever liveth. My friends, you are just as secure now, if you are in the body of Christ, as you will be ten million years after you get to the glory. Why? Because your High Priest will still be living down through the endless ages; and He can save "to the uttermost." He does not save for six months, as some preach. He does not save for six years. He saves for all eternity, because "he ever liveth." Let me read this great verse in its entirety:

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

So this morning, my friends, you have travelled through another week on your way to glory; and this morning Christ is *for* you at God's right hand. If He tarries another week, He will still be there at God's right hand; and you will still be saved. If He tarries ten years, you will still be saved, because He will still be there—until He comes. And then He comes to exercise His Kingship, as well as His Priesthood for Israel.

ISRAEL'S PRIESTS OFFERED ANIMAL SACRIFICES—CHRIST OFFERED HIMSELF

"Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer" (Heb. 8:3).

Now the Lord Jesus, as a Great High Priest, must have a sacrifice. And where will He get a sacrifice? In the Old Testament, let me remind you, there was no *great* high priest. The word "great" is not attached to anybody but the Lord Jesus; He is a Great High Priest. But there were high priests; and when they went to the Lord for the people, they had to take a sacrifice. So they took a lamb or a bullock or a goat, whatever the sacrifice happened to be. The poor could offer a turtle-dove or a young pigeon on certain occasions. It was necessary that in their hands they had shed blood. So it is necessary that Jesus have a sacrifice. Where will He get a sacrifice? Well, in order to be a Priest, He Himself became the Sacrifice.

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come . . . neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place (even heaven itself), having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11, 12; cf. Heb. 9:11-22).

"Now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26, R. V.).

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10; cf. Heb. 10:10-18).

In Old Testament times a man entered upon his priesthood, and then he found a sacrifice. Jesus provided the Sacrifice, and in so doing became a Priest. If He had not died, Jesus could not be our Priest. He had nothing to offer. He could not take a little lamb into heaven and offer it for us. He could not take the blood of a bullock, offered on earth, and present it in heaven for us. Where did He get an offering, one sacrifice, that can save the countless millions? He gave Himself. When He became Priest, He Himself was the Sacrifice; and therefore He offers His own blood.

Just as a little lamb was offered, the body of Christ was offered on the altar which was Calvary's Cross. (See Heb. 13:10.) And "this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12).

So, my friend, Jesus has a Sacrifice to offer. As your High Priest, He is interceding; He is your Mediator; He offers His Sacrifice; and in that Sacrifice you are perfected, just by faith in Him who died for you. Could any truth be more re-assuring? More comforting? When Satan accuses you or me to God, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). And here is another name to describe His intercessory work for us. How inexhaustible is the Word of God!

THE PRAYER OF OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Would you like to know what your Great High Priest is praying before the throne of grace? Turn to the seventeenth chapter of John. Read there His sacred words, spoken

just before He went to the cross—for His disciples then living and for you and me; for in verse 20 we read:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”

That includes us—and every Christian!

And for what did our Lord pray? We can not study this wonderful chapter in detail just here; but the Holy Spirit will teach us as we read it, noting that our Intercessor was—and is—asking the Father that we may be kept from sin by His Word received into our hearts; that we may have His joy, even in the midst of trials; that we may be one in Him, loving one another; that the Christ-less world, through our testimony, may believe on Him; and that throughout all eternity we may behold and share His glory! What a prayer! And what an Intercessor! Can we, dare we, disappoint Him by selfish, worldly, indifferent lives? We can not, surely as we think of His matchless love and grace, freely offered to us! Shall we not, rather, in the words of Charles Wesley, offer unto Him a song of thanksgiving and praise?

“Arise, my soul, arise;
Shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding Sacrifice
In thy behalf appears.
Before the throne my Surety stands;
My name is written on His hands.

“He ever lives above
For me to intercede,
His all-redeeming love,
His precious blood to plead.
His blood atones for all our race,
And sprinkles now the throne of
grace.

“Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers;
They strongly plead for me:
‘Forgive him, O forgive,’ they cry,
‘Nor let that ransomed sinner
die!’

“My God is reconciled;
His pard’ning voice I hear;
He owns me for His child;
I can no longer fear.
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And, ‘Father, Abba, Father,’
cry.”