

THE NATURE OF THE HOPE | HEBREWS 6: 19-20

- The **hope** is the coming Messianic Kingdom.
- It is a hope that is certain, firm, and enters into the veil
  - Enter can best be viewed as “extends into”
  - Thus, this hope (to which the Hebrews have fled to hold onto), takes them into the very presence of God.
  - Jesus is the “forerunner” for the Hebrews – having gone into God’s presence (behind the veil) in advance.

MELCHIZEDEK THE PRIEST AND THE KING | VV. 1-3

- The historical man:
  - The Biblical description:
    - He was both a King and a Priest of the most high God (Genesis 14:18, Hebrews 1:1)
      - This is the first reference to priesthood in the Bible
      - *El Elyon* – God Most High
    - He is a priest unto perpetuity (v. 3)
      - Not that this priestly office goes unto perpetuity, but Melchizedek himself remains a priest perpetually.
    - He has no mother or father or generations (v. 3)
    - He has no beginning of days nor end of life
    - He was made like the Son of God
  - The logical conclusion: Melchizedek is an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament.
    - He brings *bread and wine* (Genesis 14:18)
    - He blesses “God Most High” (thus he is not God Most High).
    - A literal reading of his description in Hebrews 7 goes beyond what qualifies as a description of a mere man.
  - A double king
    - V. 2 is literally, “First indeed King of Righteousness, but then also King of Salem.”
    - It is a strong word of “indeed, but” statement.
    - This describes Jesus perfectly. “First...but then.”
- The historical reference: He met Abram upon his return from smiting the Kings, providing Abram a blessing (Genesis 14:1-19)
- Translation issues:
  - In v. 2, NASB inserts “a tenth of all *the spoils*.” This is an unnecessary insertion, and incorrect. (see note on v. 4).
  - New Living Translation: “Then Abraham took a tenth of all he had captured in battle and gave it to Melchizedek. The name Melchizedek means “king of justice,” and king of Salem means “king of peace.” There is no record of his father or mother or any of his ancestors—no beginning or end to his life. He remains a priest forever, resembling the Son of God.” (Hebrews 7:2–3, NLT)

THE GREATNESS OF MELCHIZEDEK | VV. 4-10

- The writer goes out of his way to point out the greatness of Melchizedek in v. 4: **Now, consider!**
  - **Consider** is an imperative
  - The Greek θεωρέω [theoreo] is the origin of *theater*, and implies a careful observation.

- Melchizedek was given **a tenth of the spoils** (v. 4)
  - **spoils** is not the best translation of ἀκροθίνιον [*akrothinion*], which is literally “the first fruits” or the best of the goods (whatever kind of goods they may be).
    - *Akron* is “uppermost part” (Hebrews 11:21)
    - *Thinion* is “the heap” of anything.
  - Why is spoils a Biblically incorrect translation? Because Genesis 14 specifies that Abraham took no spoils, and verse 2 has already said that he have a tenth **of everything**.
- Verse 6 is the completion of verse 4.
  - The verse again emphasizes the genealogy of Melchizedek.
  - V. 6 literally says, "the one not having genealogy."
    - Both KJV and NASB give him a genealogy, though it is "not counted" or "not traced."
    - The Greek text states that Melchizedek is "not having genealogy." Since he does not have one, it could not be counted nor traced if someone cared to do so.
- Verse 5: the Levites-
  - They have received the priesthood, presumably in a different manner than Melchizedek.
  - They have a command concerning the people, even though they come out the loins of Abraham, and thus the people are their brothers.
  - The command, in the Law, is to take a tenth from the people, that is, from their own brothers.
  - In this arrangement, those who are equal are receiving the tithes. They have no rank of superiority, both having come from Abraham.
  - In verse 6, Abraham himself gave a tithe to another, who was not his equal.
- Verse 7: the definitive word on Abraham
  - Abraham, blessed by Melchizedek, is the lesser of the two.
  - The blessing of Melchizedek was “without a single negative word” or “without dispute”
- Verses 8-10: the comparison completed
  - Here, with the Levites, dying men received tithes
  - There, with Melchizedek, one to whom it has been testified that he is living receives them.
    - Notice: *he lives* is in the present, active, indicative.
    - To say Melchizedek is dead is to deny the Scripture.
  - The Levites, because they are descendants of Abraham, are not greater than Abraham, even though they received tithes. They also, so to speak, paid tithes to Melchizedek.
  - The author is working to build the case that the Levitical priesthood is inferior to the priesthood of Melchizedek.

#### A HERMENEUTICS REMINDER

- Doctrine is not built upon example, but by direct teaching.
- For one to build a doctrine of the tithe from this passage has no more merit than a doctrine of an earthly priesthood that might be built on this passage.
- Historical reality is not enough to build a doctrine. Doctrine must be built upon direct instruction to the church.