

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 170

Melchizedek, Part 3

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Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

In the previous episodes on Melchizedek we covered the Old Testament data (Parts 1A, 1B) and Second Temple Jewish interpretation (Part 2) of the enigmatic Melchizedek. This episode focuses on Hebrews 7, the New Testament passage that focuses on Melchizedek as a type or analogy to Jesus.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 170: Melchizedek, Part 3. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing?

MH: Pretty good. We're finally going to wrap up Melchizedek, short of the Q&A, anyway.

TS: Yeah, and we've got one more week of voting left. It looks like Hebrews is going to win, if nothing drastic happens.

MH: Yeah, it's kind of what I'm expecting, and that's going to affect what we're going to do today. It looks like a clear winner, but who knows?

TS: Absolutely. Well, I'm ready for Part 3 if you are.

MH: Sure.

Let's just start with a summary. We've been through three previous episodes. We had Part 1a, Part 1b, and then Part 2. Parts 1 a and b were Old Testament—the Old Testament material about Melchizedek—and Part 2 was the Second Temple literature that was relevant to Melchizedek. Just by way of summarizing a few points that we hit along the way, we talked about how Melchizedek's name and his title (the king of Salem) and the location (Salem was associated with Jerusalem) sort of associate Melchizedek with kingship (obviously), Jerusalem (again, obvious), righteousness, peace, and of course, priesthood. Those are all sort of ingredients for how the messiah gets talked about. So they're factors for

what we're going to talk about today with respect to what the New Testament does with Melchizedek in Hebrews 7. There's congruence there.

We also talked about how the Aaronic priesthood is cast in scripture as a concession by God. In other words, it was sort of a Plan B because of Moses' unbelief. Again, we've trodden over this territory before so I'm not going to make too much of it here, but the priesthood of Melchizedek is a legitimate priesthood. We will talk a little bit more about that specific idea (which is consistent with what we've already seen)—that even though we have the priesthood of Aaron, the tribe of Levi, and all that sort of stuff, this other priesthood (the priesthood of Melchizedek) was legit. This isn't what the Plan B was. It was the Aaronic line that was the Plan B. Melchizedek combines kingship and priesthood all into one, and that (as we talked about earlier) was sort of the ideal. We're going to get that in the messiah—the messianic profile. We're going to get both elements.

We also talked about the content matrix. This is a term I've used for sort of all the things thatglom onto Melchizedek, in terms of theological content. We've got Melchizedek who, of course, is associated with Abraham and Abraham's seed (the Israelites and one particular seed is going to be Messiah). Melchizedek is associated with Elyon—the Most High—which is a term that's also associated with Deuteronomy 32. That term shows up in Deuteronomy 32—the divorce of the nations—and the flip side of that is the reclaiming of the nations, which is something that the messiah would accomplish. So we have that set of data points in relation to Melchizedek.

Melchizedek also, because of his association with Abraham and if we bring Psalm 110 to the picture, we have an association with David—the messianic dynasty. So he's associated with both of those major figures. David himself would do some priestly things even though he wasn't from a priestly line. What God does is associate the Davidic dynasty with the priesthood/line of Melchizedek, so that's why the messiah gets associated with him. We've got all these mutual associations. We've got this thing that I refer to as a "content matrix"—all of these subjects converging when it comes to Melchizedek, so that we have this priest-king figure associated with Jerusalem. It is kind of an obvious profile. We have this combination of things that we said earlier was consistent with the Edenic ideal, as well. Think of Adam. We have the original Edenic king in Adam, and we call him "king" because he was the one who was supposed to subdue the earth and rule the earth on God's behalf. This is what the covenantal language associated with Adam says. His status also made him sort of a mediator on earth between God and the rest of humanity—his own descendants. That was the original profile. That idea of combining rulership and mediation in one person continues through the patriarchs all the way up to Moses. Melchizedek becomes part of that profile because of the incident with Abraham, but when you get to Moses it splits. Again, the Aaronic priesthood is a concession. It's Plan B; it's something that has to operate in the background or alongside because of Moses'

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unbelief. So all of those things are important when we come to how to think about Melchizedek.

The last element that I should mention, though, is that at no point in the Old Testament material do we get any impression that Melchizedek was a divine being. He's a human being. He's a priest. He's a king. I made the comment in a previous episode that he was the chief royal and priestly representative of the Most High God. That idea is actually going to become important for what we talk about today—in explaining how in the world certain Jews during the Second Temple period began to view Melchizedek as a divine being. The point at this juncture right here is that the Old Testament itself doesn't really say that. It doesn't call Melchizedek a divine being, but the fact that he is this chiefly, royal, and priestly representative of the Most High God (in theory between Most High God and not just Abraham, but just generally)—that is a significant idea. But it gets misapplied or thought about incorrectly by some in the Second Temple period.

We know in the New Testament (which is what we're going to get into today) that Jesus and Melchizedek are going to be compared. By I'm going to argue that the point of the comparison is to compare Melchizedek to Jesus, not Jesus to Melchizedek. This is going to be why we get some of this "divine being" sort of language, and really how to parse it so that it's consistent with the Old Testament because, again, the Old Testament does not have Melchizedek as a divine being.

In order to straighten this out and both talk about why this error was made (at least by certain Jewish writers as a way to deal with that) and then segue into what the New Testament actually does say, we need to camp for a few minutes, at least, on how Second Temple Jewish writers sort of made this association—how they came to see Melchizedek as a divine being. How did this happen? How did that trajectory occur?

There are really two things we need to be thinking about in tandem. One is the fact that Melchizedek, by virtue of his role as priest and king and his relationship to this scene with Abraham... Because of that stuff, Melchizedek is sort of thought about as being the chief representative of Israel before God. We can see how that would happen. This chief priest, chief king, the main priestly figure, the main dynastic ruler figure... Naturally, if he is that in God's eyes, then he would be thought of as the chief representative of Israel to God and before God. Once that association is entrenched in your head (that Melchizedek represents Israel before God as its king and priest figure), then another association gets factored into it. Here's where the problem happens: it's in the "prince" language of the Old Testament. This association of priest-king with "prince of Israel" language is how Melchizedek becomes a divine being in the minds of certain Second Temple Jews.

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We need to unpack that, and here's how it's done. There are certain passages that use "prince of Israel" language. Who is Israel's prince in Daniel 10:21? It's the archangel Michael. Michael, of course, is not called an "archangel" in the Old Testament; he gets that title in the New Testament and also in the Second Temple period. But Israel's prince is Michael in Daniel 10:21. You get the same idea in Daniel 12:1, where Michael is the "great prince who has charge of your people." (The angel is speaking to Daniel.) So there you have Michael as the great prince of the people of Israel. Mentally, there were certain Jews that said, "Okay, Michael is the prince of Israel and Melchizedek is the chief priestly representative and the chief royal, ruling representative. These must be three different ways of talking about the same person." And so Michael becomes Melchizedek.

There's another verse that gets factored into this, and this is Joshua 5:14, where we have the prince of Yahweh's host. Some translations will have in English, "the captain of the Lord's host" or "the commander of the Lord's host" or "the commander of the Lord's armies," or something like that. In Joshua 5 this is clearly a divine being because when Joshua asks, "Who are you?" he says, "I'm the prince (*sar*—the same word as in Daniel 10 and 12) of Yahweh's host. Take off your shoes from on your feet because this is holy ground." This takes you mentally back to the burning bush in Exodus 3, where we have the angel of the Lord. This is how this concatenation of ideas happens. You have this notion that because Melchizedek is the chief prince and priestly figure—the chief representative to God—not just to Abraham but to the people of Israel... that chief representation idea gets merged or glommed onto or conflated with the language of the prince of Israel that occurs a couple times (Daniel 10 and 12). That's how Melchizedek and Michael sort of get fused or united in the minds of some interpreters in antiquity and, to be fair, some interpreters nowadays.

Do you see the problematic assumption, though? Do you see what the problem is if you think that way? The figure in Joshua 5 is the prince of the Lord's host—he's the prince of the heavenly host—whereas Michael in Daniel 10 and 12 is the prince of Israel, which is earthly. They're actually talking about two different things, but nevertheless they get conflated as though it was the same thing. That's the problem; that's the mistake. You cannot presume the figure of Joshua 5 and Michael are the same just because they're both called "prince," but some ancient Jewish interpreters did and some modern interpreters do, as well, now.

The identification of the figure of Joshua 5 and Michael is also marred or messed up by the description of Michael in Daniel 10:13. Here's why it's wrong. Here's why this association cannot be the case. On one hand, they are princes of different things—there's a disconnect. In Joshua 5, that is the prince of Yahweh's heavenly host and in Daniel 10 and 12, Michael is the prince of Israel, which is an earthly people. So you have that disconnect, but there's another problem. That's Daniel 10:13 and the way Michael is described there. Michael is described as "one of the chief princes" in Daniel 10:13. If Michael is the prince (the

commander) of Yahweh's host in Joshua 5—if he's that guy—then that commander is but *one* of the commanders of Yahweh's host, because Michael is just one of the chief princes. So any of those other chief princes that are not named could have been the captain/commander of Yahweh's host back in Joshua 5. It just doesn't work. You don't have Michael elevated to unique position—he's just one of a small group, for sure. But if he's one of the chief princes, then the guy back in Joshua 5 (and by extension, the one in the burning bush) is just one of several that hold that position and have that high status. And if that figure is just one of several princes, then you could have more than one divine being occupying space with Yahweh in the burning bush, and that is just not the way that the angel of Yahweh is portrayed in the Old Testament. So that's actually significant problem—having Daniel 10:13 telling us that Michael is just one of the chief princes and he's not of this unique status by himself. To put it another way, Michael is clearly not the highest authority in the heavenly sphere. He assists the "divine man" who speaks to Daniel in Daniel 10:13, 21. Again, he's just one of the chief princes.

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That divine man (just a little bit of a rabbit trail here) back in Daniel who is speaking to Daniel, I think is the prince of the host from Daniel 8:11, and also the "prince of princes" in Daniel 8:25, and that guy is not Michael. He ain't Michael. That figure outranks Michael, who is just one of the chief princes and is not the prince of the whole heavenly host, but the prince of Israel. The prince of the whole heavenly host of Daniel 8:11 is not Michael. And, frankly, that prince—the prince of the host, the prince of princes (Daniel 8:11, 25)—sounds an awful lot like the guy back in Joshua 5, who is *the* prince of Yahweh's heavenly host/army.

To sum that up, Michael is not the highest authority in heaven under God. He is not the Second Yahweh. The Second Yahweh figure outranks him, and if that's the case, then Jesus (who is aligned with the angel of Yahweh, who is the second embodied Yahweh) cannot be Michael. I know traditions like Seventh Day Adventists want to fuse Jesus and Michael, but there are significant problems with that—especially Daniel 10:13, where Michael is just one of the chief princes. I'm sorry, but Jesus is unique. The Second Yahweh is unique because he *is* Yahweh.

I realize I'm using *Unseen Realm* lingo here. If you're new to the podcast, you need to go back and read the chapters in *Unseen Realm* on the angel and the word and the name and all that stuff. This is where the idea of two Yahweh figures comes in. This is the Old Testament basis for the later Jewish teaching of Two Powers in heaven—two good guys—one of which was the "lesser" Yahweh. You have that figure and that is not Michael. So you have some significant disconnects.

To marry/merge Melchizedek to Michael kind of compounds the problem. You don't need Melchizedek to be Michael or any other divine being to make sense of

what the New Testament says about Jesus and Melchizedek. You just don't need it. But a lot of people sort of go down this road because they're thinking, based on what they read in Hebrews 7, that we need to have Melchizedek be a divine being or else Hebrews 7 is wrong. "There's something going on there... who could Melchizedek be that's a divine being?" And some people will land on Michael, like they did in the ancient world. And then you've got significant problems because then you've got the captain of the Lord's host back in Joshua 5 being just one of several equal guys in heaven. And then you've got real problems when you have to import that back into the burning bush with the angel of the Lord because the same language ("take your shoes from off your feet because you're standing on holy ground") is used in both places. When you try to unite these things on the basis of the word "prince," you've got problems. Where I'm at here is that Michael is *different* than Melchizedek. Michael is *different* than the prince of the host and the prince of princes. Michael is just what the scripture says he is: he's the prince of Israel. He is never called the prince of Yahweh's host—the whole thing. He is not the prince over the whole host. He is the prince of Israel. That's what he's called.

Let's not conflate these figures and we can avoid some serious theological problems. And then going back to Melchizedek (to repeat what I just said), you don't need Melchizedek to be a divine being in the Old Testament to have Hebrews 7 make sense. And that's where we're going to go now. This is an episode that we need to orient to the New Testament, and the two passages are at the end of Hebrews 6 and on into Hebrews 7. So let's read those. I'm going to read Hebrews 6:13-20, which says this:

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵ And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Now on into Hebrews 7, starting with verse 1:

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For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³ He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

⁴ See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils!

I'm going to stop there, in part because it looks like we're going to be going through the whole book of Hebrews on the podcast. I want to focus on the language here used about Jesus and Melchizedek for this particular episode. Frankly, this is really what the episode is about. There are two interpretive options in scholarship for what I just read. We can either take what I just read literally or we can look at it allegorically (or "analogically" might be a better way to say it).

I'm going to just read a few excerpts from some commentaries here so that you can see the difference between those two options. The first one here is from Peter O'Brien from his *Pillar New Testament Commentary* series. He writes:

These remarkable words have been understood in two significantly different ways. The first approach interprets *without father or mother* as divine predicates which were well known in Hellenistic sources. *Without genealogy* signifies unbegotten or uncreated and therefore 'of divine generation', while the crucial statement *without beginning of days or end of life* means that he was truly God and not merely a divinized mortal. On this view, Melchizedek is a divine figure, a heavenly being who is not part of this world.

Again, that's one way you can read this material in Hebrews 7. Of course, the problem is there's no hint of any of that in the Old Testament. In Second Temple stuff you run into it here and there (like *11QMelchizedek*), but if you remember the episode we did on the Second Temple period, there were other Second Temple writers that didn't think Melchizedek was divine at all—they just cast him as a normal guy. So there was a difference of opinion there. But again, you can read Hebrews 7 that way. Now, picking up with O'Brien again, here's the second way you can read it.

The second approach... takes the author's statements as an example of an argument from silence in a typological setting.

So now we're talking about typology here. For those who don't recall or who don't know, a "type" is a non-verbal prophecy. It is something in the Old Testament (a person, an event, an institution) that foreshadows or prefigures something yet to come. It's an analogy for something yet to come.

The second approach... takes the author's statements as an example of an argument from silence in a typological setting. If the first clause, *without father or mother, without genealogy*, is understood in purely human terms within a Graeco-Roman context, then this would discredit Melchizedek: *without father* meant being considered illegitimate, someone *without mother* was the child of a woman of low social status, and *without genealogy* meant that one was disqualified from becoming a Levitical priest (Num. 3:10, 15–16).

What do we do with this? Neither alternative seems really that great. The keys to unraveling this passage (the end of Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 7) without disrespecting Melchizedek—without making him an illegitimate kid or something like that—but yet also honoring the fact that the Old Testament does not cast him as a divine being... There are really two keys to navigating this. Let's just start with the first one, in my view. Those are the words "without genealogy." That's an important qualifier because the point would be priestly qualification. Not having a genealogy does not refer to a supernatural nature of Melchizedek—that he had no parentage or something like that. (We'll get to the other phrasing.) But "without genealogy" refers to the lack of a priestly qualification. Back to O'Brien:

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Although Melchizedek could not have qualified for the Levitical priesthood [MH: **There was no priesthood because this was Abraham's time**], he was a priest of God Most High, and Abraham recognized this. Moreover, since Genesis says nothing about his birth or death, his priesthood [is cast as having] no beginning or end — it was divinely appointed.

You see the point here. You can take the language and say, "Oh, this refers to Melchizedek's origin as a human being. Well, he's not really human because he didn't have parents. He's a divine being." You can take it that way, but what O'Brien was saying (and where I'm landing) is that no, this description refers to a priesthood God created that has no beginning other than when God had Abraham encounter this meeting. It had no genealogical beginning. It isn't *rooted* in parentage. It isn't rooted in tribal affiliation. It is a priesthood because God says it is. It has nothing to do with human origin or human lineage or human tribal affiliation. That is the point. When we get to this description about having no father or mother, the point is not to claim that Melchizedek is a supernatural being. The point is to claim that he doesn't have a genealogy that fits the priesthood, and it doesn't matter. He is a priest of the Most High God because God said so. God approved of him. It had nothing to do with his birth

circumstances at all. And not only that, by not giving us the father and the mother (by casting it this way, this is O'Brien's point) it creates the implication—it suggests—that this priesthood has no end to it. If it's not linked to human lineage, then by definition it's not going to be terminated when that tribal lineage dies or that tribal lineage can't be determined by historical circumstances. It's independent of that. If you read it that way, you avoid some of the other problems and it makes sense in its context.

If I would summarize this in my own way (this is me talking here, just by way of summary), the implication is that Melchizedek was still the priest of the Most High regardless of ancestry. That's the fundamental point. There's no need to worry about Jesus, therefore, not being of the tribe of Levi and still being called a priest. This is a different priesthood, approved by God, one that is cast the way it is because it didn't originate with a tribe. And it's never described as having ended. The Old Testament is silent on Melchizedek's lineage and parentage for that reason. This is the argument. It's silent on his mother and father because his priesthood does not depend on human lineage or tribal affiliation. It is not silent so that we can claim or think that Melchizedek was a divine being. As such, the physical succession to Jesus of Nazareth is not an issue. We don't even have to have Melchizedek related to Jesus to make the connection with Melchizedek legitimate. It doesn't matter because God has chosen this priesthood.

That's why in Psalm 110 when God says to the dynasty of David, "You're going to be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," God just decided that. That's God's decision. "I'm going to make *you*, son of David (David's dynastic offspring), a king, but I'm also going to make you a priest. I'm going to select the analogy for the legitimacy of your priesthood this guy, Melchizedek, because his priesthood was something I decided. It had nothing to do with physical lineage. So don't worry about it. You're a king and a priest." These are God's decisions.

In my mind, it really does speak again to the issue that the Aaronic priesthood was an afterthought, a Plan B, or a concession because of Moses' unbelief. God doesn't let that defeat his template—his ideal—going back to Adam, where you have king and priest in one person. That is still what God wants, regardless of the fact that we had a concession to Moses because Moses just couldn't believe, and he said, "Okay, we'll make Aaron your spokesperson." And Aaron becomes the High Priest. God was merciful to Moses, and that's where we get the Aaronic priesthood. God doesn't need to stick with Plan B to get what God wants. God goes back to the order of Melchizedek to merge the office of king and priest into one. Again, God is allowed to do that because he's God. He endorses what he endorses.

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So we don't need to worry about questions of physical succession for Jesus to Melchizedek or anything like that. This whole thing was dictated by God alone. The silence of the Old Testament creates the impression—deliberately—that Melchizedek did not inherit his priestly service from a predecessor and he

remained a priest without a successor. His priestly line, in God's mind, is still in place and legitimate. It doesn't depend on a predecessor or a successor. That's why the Old Testament is silent on Melchizedek's lineage. That's why the writer of Hebrews 7 says, "without father or mother, having no genealogy." That is the point. The point is not to paint him as a supernatural being. Back to O'Brien, just another little snippet from him:

Consequently, Melchizedek foreshadows the priesthood of Christ at that point where it is most fundamentally different from the Levitical priesthood'. —i.e., not dependent on tribal lineage.

I think that is the first thing that really helps understand or unravel what's going on in Hebrews 7, without making Melchizedek into something he's not. He's not a divine being and he's not an illegitimate child, either. This is how we need to approach it and read it. It makes good sense.

The second item in Hebrews 7 is a phrase in verse 3, where we read about Melchizedek:

...but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

Note the wording. It is Melchizedek who resembles the son of God. The point is not that Jesus resembles Melchizedek. Because Melchizedek resembles Jesus, Melchizedek's priesthood is to be understood as being independent of lineage again. It's just another way of arguing the same thing. His priesthood is one begun by God and never terminated. So while Second Temple texts thought about Melchizedek in divine terms (and the reason for doing so was misguided), the notion is still valid if one sees how the messiah was a priest according to Melchizedek's priesthood and that messiah, not Melchizedek, was the one who was divine. In other words, the idea that Melchizedek has something to do with a divine messiah... if there's some relationship between Melchizedek and a divine messiah, that's on target—but not because Melchizedek himself was more than a man. It's on target because Jesus, the son of David, was more than a man. That's sort of flipping it on its head, but I'm hoping that you see the coherence of approaching it this way.

A different commentary here... Lane in his *Word Biblical Commentary on Hebrews* talks a little bit about some of the finer grammatical points in Hebrews 7. For those of you who have a little bit of knowledge of Greek, I think you'll appreciate this. Lane notes:

The events in Genesis have been read from the perspective of the eschatological reality they prefigured; Melchizedek has been assimilated to the Son of God.

Again, it's not that Jesus gets assimilated to Melchizedek. It's that Melchizedek gets assimilated to Jesus.

This implies that the predicates applied to Melchizedek have been colored by the writer's conception of the eternal Son [Jesus]... That explains why the description of Melchizedek in v 3 appears singularly stylized. The perfect passive participle ἀφωμοιωμένος, a divine passive [MH: **that's a grammatical term that some commentators use**] ("having resembled" ... "having been made [by God] to resemble"). The term presupposes God's appointment of Melchizedek as an illustration [MH: I like the word "foreshadowing" or "type"] of the higher priesthood that the writer finds in the OT record... The Gen 14 narrative thus implies the kind of priesthood that was intended by God to displace the Levitical priesthood, namely the service of an eternal priest who exercises his priesthood continuously. It anticipates the appearance of a high priest who does not have any successor because he does not require one.

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This is what the writer of Hebrews sees. He's looking at Jesus first, and then he's thinking about Melchizedek. He's not looking at Melchizedek and then thinking about Jesus. We need to be careful how we articulate this—how we read it and articulate it. The point is that Melchizedek was made by God to resemble the son of God who would come down the road. Melchizedek is a type, a prefiguration, of the son of God who would come. This doesn't require Melchizedek be divine any more than we have to see Adam as a divine being because he functions as a type/prefiguration of Jesus in Romans 5. Remember Romans 5? Jesus and the first and second Adam and all that talk. Adam wasn't a divine being, he was a human. But Adam is a type of Christ. He doesn't need to be divine to function as a type of Christ. Neither does Melchizedek. Melchizedek was not a divine being in the Old Testament and he doesn't need to be to do the job of prefiguring the son of God who would be an eternal priest—an eternal mediator—between God and men. The writer of Hebrews is thinking about Jesus in those terms and his mind is taken back to Melchizedek, not the other way around.

So the part about Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedek, I think, validates the point. Melchizedek was a legitimate priest of the Most High who deserved the tithe just like Levi would later. He preceded Levi, and his priesthood didn't extend from tribal lineage and never met an end. It coexisted once the Levitical priesthood appeared. It never went away. And the fact that it did so suggests again that the Aaronic priesthood was a concession.

Lastly, had any reader of Hebrews in antiquity known the chronology of Jesus' birth (and we've talked about this a lot on the podcast), I think this point about his priesthood being transcendent to Levi would have been driven home even more. That Jesus was the one to bring atonement and set the captives free by means of the connection of those ideas to the Jubilee cycle would have been highlighted by God's eternal foresight and use of Melchizedek to foreshadow someone who

would be both the son of David and a priestly mediator considered by God to be superior to the line of Aaron. How does that work? What about the birth?

For this, you need to be familiar with my position (not just my position, but that of others) that Jesus was born on September 11 in 3 B.C. We devoted a whole podcast episode to that (#138), as to why that's the case. We provided newsletter subscribers (please subscribe to the newsletter and you'll get access to this) with scholarly literature that validates that this position is not a contradiction—it's not irreconcilable—with Herod's death. There's a way to do the chronology there so that it works, based on Herodian coins and a few other things that are problems in Josephus that other scholars have tackled in the peer-reviewed literature. So if you want that stuff, subscribe to the newsletter and you'll get it. Go back and listen to Episode 138.

Given that little bit of context, after the second Ezekiel 40-48 podcast that we did... That was me arguing that the temple vision there should be viewed non-literally to get our heads inside the Jubilee idea because there are sixty references to Jubilee stuff in Ezekiel 40-48. *Sixty* of them (actually a little over sixty). That's not an accident, folks. When you do it that many times, there's something going on there. There are over sixty links between the idealized temple and the Jubilee cycle idea. After we did that episode, I got a question from Matthew in California that asked whether 3 B.C. (the birth year of Jesus) was a Jubilee year. The idea he was angling for was that the birth of Jesus would have marked the Jubilee cycle. What I did was I asked my astronomer friend. For those of you who read my fiction, this is my "Mantello" character. I asked him about it and got back a really, really interesting answer. Here's part of his answer. He wrote:

The year from 2BC to 1BC would have been a Sabbatical Year. The year 27-28 CE was also a Sabbatical Year/Jubilee Year . . . which means the birth year could not be a jubilee year. The 27-28 CE period (jubilee) coincides with the beginning of Jesus' ministry — which was inaugurated at the event in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:14-16ff), where Jesus quotes Isaiah 61 about the jubilee language being fulfilled "today" (Luke 4:21).

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There is some variability here. Some scholars (Trocme and Yoder) have the jubilee year at 27/26 (Jesus' inaugural sermon being in 26 AD). At any rate, any of these dates align with a 3 BC birth and Luke 3:23. Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age.

So it aligns, actually pretty nicely. Now think about the implications. Jesus walks into the synagogue in Nazareth to launch his ministry in a Jubilee year. He knows it's a Jubilee year. And he quotes Isaiah 61, stopping at Isaiah 61:2 (the first part of the verse). This is one of the passages that was central to *11QMelchizedek*. We talked about this in our last Melchizedek episode. The writer of

11QMelchizedek viewed the coming of the messiah as the coming of the elohim of Psalm 82, which was about "set the captives free" in fulfillment of the Jubilee idea. They read all of that. They read Psalm 82... If you remember the *11QMelchizedek* stuff, it gets into the war of gods and men and the allotment of the lot of Belial and the lot of Melchizedek—the good guys and the bad guys having this great conflict, again, because the messiah is supposed to set the captives free, set the nation free. That requires conquest and overthrow of their overlords. So they're processing the whole thing militarily. They process Psalm 82, Isaiah 61, all that, through the vengeance of God. But that's actually where Jesus stopped. Let me just go to Isaiah 61 to get our memories refreshed. Here's Isaiah 61 (the passage Jesus reads as he begins his ministry):

**The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor...**

And that's where he stops. The very next line is:

...and the day of vengeance of our God;

That's what Jews of the period had in their heads. But Jesus actually stops. He doesn't quote that part of Isaiah 61. Why? Because what he's there for—his liberation of the captives—is wider (and, frankly, more significant) than military conquest. Humanity was to be liberated from spiritual darkness and estrangement from God because of what he was going to do. He quotes this passage but excludes "the day of vengeance of our God" because what he's thinking about is much bigger than that.

So think about all of that and what we said earlier about the content matrix with Melchizedek. Melchizedek blesses Abraham, he blesses Abraham's seed, he is priest of Elyon (the Most High), and the Most High God was the one who disinherited the nations in Deuteronomy 32. This particular seed of Abraham—Jesus, son of Abraham and also son of David—was the one who would reclaim those nations. Because he was also the son of David and the son of Abraham... Remember the passages we read in the Old Testament sections about how these references to the scepter, by virtue of Psalm 110, and the scepter not departing from the king. He is the son of Abraham, he's the son of David, he's a king and a priest, he gets associated with Melchizedek (who was also a king and a priest), and Melchizedek was the king/priest of Jerusalem. So you get the Zion

association there. All that together... This is what the messiah—the messianic dynasty—was supposed to be. Jesus was a high priest, a mediator, and a king. He's the mediator according to Melchizedek's priesthood, the king according to the dynasty of David. He is the mediator between humanity and the Most High. He was the specific seed of Abraham who would reclaim the nations for the Most High. He was the son of David whom Psalm 89:27 said would be made the most high son of David over the nations. All of that is who he is. And it all began—the enactment of who he was and what it meant—all began in Nazareth in a Jubilee year with Jesus quoting Isaiah 61.

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That sort of planning, that sort of having all those threads converge and come together in this person—Jesus of Nazareth—if people were aware of that (or even part of it), they're going to be looking at Jesus just like the writer of Hebrews did: "This guy is superior in every way to the line of Aaron and the tribe of Levi." He was promised an eternal dynasty that would never end. In other words, it's not going to be terminated. And his priesthood is also never ending because he is a priest after the order of Melchizedek—by God's own decision. And that priesthood had no predecessor and no successor. Again, you look at all of these circumstances and all of these threads converging. If we had these things in our heads, we would look at Jesus just the way the writer of Hebrews did, like I just said. That this is something far greater—both in terms of who he was and God's unbelievably magnificent planning to bring all of this together... This one is greater and represents a greater truth than Aaron and the law and the ritual and the priesthood of Levi. There's just no comparison, and that's really the fundamental point in Hebrews 7 about Jesus and his relationship to Melchizedek.

TS: All right, Mike. That's a lot of Melchizedek! I'm sure we'll be covering more as we get into Hebrews, if everything holds steady on the voting.

MH: Yeah, there's more in Hebrews 7 to talk about, but since that's pretty much the way it looks like (unless we have a flurry of interest in another book) we'll return to Hebrews 7 and pick up the other stuff.

TS: That sounds good. And also, don't forget (please!) if you have a question over the three parts of Melchizedek that we've covered, send me a question: treysticklin@gmail.com. We've got about a week. I guess next week, Mike, we've got a regular Q&A coming up, and then the week after that we'll have the Melchizedek Q&A, so that gives people at least a week to get me questions if they have any questions on the New Testament part of Melchizedek. I've already got some questions. We can't answer everybody's questions, so know that. We will pick a handful out and hopefully that will add more to conversation.

MH: Somebody's gonna turn over a rock on something. (laughing)

TS: We shall find out. Sounds good, Mike. We'll be looking forward to that Q&A. I guess with that, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.