

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 172

Melchizedek Q&A

August 19, 2017

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**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

Dr. Heiser answers your questions about Melchizedek:

- Melchizedek's connection to Shem (Time stamp: 2:57)
- Melchizedek's connection to Job (4:20)
- Melchizedek connection to the Apkallu (8:27)
- Melchizedek's connection to Metatron (11:04)
- Melchizedek's connection to Ham's son, Canaan (16:04)
- Melchizedek as a prototype of Jesus, related to the bread and wine (20:04)
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- If Aaron was Plan B, what was Plan A? (35:37)
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### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 172: Melchizedek Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing?

**MH:** Pretty good. Getting close to Fantasy time, Trey. This time I brought it up.

**TS:** Yes, you did! I don't know why. I guess you love...

**MH:** It's my growing confidence. (laughter)

**TS:** I'm gettin' ready for draft day... it's coming up, yes sir!

**MH:** I'm going to do all I can to avoid having you be insufferable for the rest of the year. Let's put it that way.

**TS:** Well, I don't want to hurt your feelings or get your hopes up, but it's going to be a tall order. I'm the people's champion, Mike, and I've got the people behind me. I can hear 'em cheering right now!

**MH:** (laughing) Yeah, right. You're doing it for the children, right?

**TS:** That's right! From all over the world, I am the people's champion. That is correct. Yes, sir.

Well, Mike, we've got another Q&A and more Melchizedek, and we're not even done with Melchizedek after this because we've still got the winner...

**MH:** Maybe we'll just skip... (laughs)

**TS:** We'll skip 7 and just go right to 8? Yeah, there you go. It'll be like one of those elevators where they don't have certain floors. What is it—North Korea—where they don't have floor 7? Is that what they skip?

**MH:** I don't know.

**TS:** It's something like that. There's some floor that they don't have. They skip it. I think it's 7, I don't know. But we have a winner. I guess we need to announce that it's official. Hebrews won the voting poll.

**MH:** By a considerable margin, as well.

**TS:** Yep—52, 53%—something like that. Overwhelmingly, Hebrews it is. And next week we're going to be doing the introduction to Hebrews.

**MH:** Yep—all the preliminary stuff. That's what we do. When we get into a new book study, the first episode of each one is just introducing what the book is about and who wrote it—all that kind of thing.

**TS:** Good deal. Mike, we've got some unanswered questions from the people here.

**MH:** I'm shocked and amazed! (laughs) After three weeks... go ahead, though. I'm sure you've got something.

**TS:** I hope you've got some answers ready, 'cuz we've got lots of questions all about Melchizedek himself. Mike, the number one question from everybody all over the internet and all over the world:

2:57

**Could Melchizedek have been Shem, son of Noah?**

**MH:** Come on... how many people really asked that? (laughs) More than one?

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**TS:** Yes, absolutely! I've seen videos all over YouTube claiming that.

**MH:** Why would anybody think that Melchizedek is Shem? My answer to that is no—there's no reason to think they're the same person. There's nothing in the Old Testament that connects them in any way, so why would the equation even pop into somebody's head? Their lives could have overlapped chronologically a little bit, but there's just not a shred of evidence to say they're the same person. So I'm pretty shocked. I don't know why that would be something in the forefront of anybody's mind.

**TS:** I don't know... A lot of people are talking about if he was still alive. A lot of people think he was still alive during that time.

**MH:** Ah, great. Well, me and you are alive at the same time but we're not the same person.

**TS:** I know, one's a champion and one is not. Very true!

**MH:** (laughing) Yeah, yeah, yeah. I hope you've got something better than that! (laughs)

**TS:** Okay, so you're done, just like that?

**MH:** I'm done, just like that.

**TS:** Okay, wow!

**MH:** There is no trail to pursue there. There isn't an iota of evidence for that.

**TS:** Okay, okay. Our second question is from Darrel in Sherwood, Alberta, Canada. And, believe it or not, several other people have tracked on this, too. They want to know:

4:20 **Is it possible that the physical person of Melchizedek is Job?**

**MH:** Wait. Is this like... It's almost like "What's My Line" here!

5:00 There's a little bit more to this because the book of Job is just kind of strange and, frankly, people just assume certain things about Job that they shouldn't assume. But again, there's no textual basis for the Melchizedek figure who meets Abraham being Job. There's no reason to suspect that Melchizedek is Job. It sounds like that is the point of the question. I know some people will say, "Hey, Melchizedek did priestly things before there was a priesthood and so did Job. Job offered sacrifices." Well, great. Guess what? Before there was a Levitical priesthood (which, of course, covered hundreds and hundred of years, even in

relationship to the history of the Israelites), lots of people were offering sacrifices. There's no reason to suspect that their identities overlap just because they perform a certain duty. So I would say, again, with complete confidence that there's no textual basis for the idea. Again, lots of people performed priestly duties in the patriarchal era. Why? Because there was no priesthood.

I think we should add that Job was geographically removed from Canaan. So again, there's no reason to suspect that he's Melchizedek. To be fair, though, there were probably two places called Uz in the Bible. If you concord it in software like I have or in Strong's or something, one Uz was the homeland of the daughter of Edom (Lamentations 4:21). So there's an association that Uz was in Edom. Edom is in the Transjordan. It's nowhere near Canaan proper, where Abraham was running around chasing Lot all the way up to Damascus. It's a considerable distance away. And where he would have met Melchizedek... on the one side of the Jordan, while Edom is on the other side of the Jordan and south. That's Lamentations 4:21. You get the same sort of context in Genesis 36, specifically in verse 4 where Eliphaz is a descendant of Esau (or Edom). Eliphaz is showing up in the book. If you go to Genesis 36:1, Edom and Esau are tied together there, so there is an association of a place called Uz and certain other factors in the book of Job with Edom. That alone would sort of disqualify the whole Melchizedek thing.

One little oddity, if you do concord Uz... In Jeremiah 25:20, there's an Uz linked with the land of the Philistines. That's nowhere near Edom, as well. That's on the coast. It's still not where Abraham is. You have a totally different location. It's just kind of bizarre. You're on the coast and you go a little bit northward and you start running into Syria. You've got the Syria thing with Aram. (*Aram* is the biblical word for Syria.) That's kind of interesting because if you go to Genesis 10:23, for instance, you have the sons of Aram—Uz. A person now is listed as the son of Aram, and that's in the area of Syria. So you've got at least two places that are called Uz in different locations than where Abraham is. You also have a person associated with being in the area of Syria. So you've got more than one Uz and none of them can be specifically tied to where Abraham is. So I don't see really any hope of a coherent connection between the events of the book of Job or Job himself with Abraham—and then, of course, with Melchizedek.

**TS:** Elizabeth from New Mexico:

8:27

**In Dr. Heiser's book, *The Unseen Realm*, on page 102, it states many of the Apkallu were considered evil. If only many, but not all, of the Apkallu... Could it be that Melchizedek could still be of that origin and intentionally set aside by God to set the record—the way—straight again?**

**MH:** Well, again, there's no reference to Melchizedek being a divine being or even partially a divine being. We talked about that a lot in the first installment. Melchizedek is a guy. He's not a divine being. He's never called an Apkallu

10:00 (that's not even a biblical word). What I'm talking about in *Unseen Realm* regarding some of the Apkallu (or even many of them) being considered evil, that's a comment about Mesopotamian thought. In Mesopotamian texts (the cuneiform material), you have the Apkallu being good guys (because the Mesopotamians loved the thought that their knowledge comes from the gods), but then they also show up in witchcraft texts. They're in the Maqlû series of Akkadian texts. So they can also be sinister figures, as well. So that comment was really aimed at Mesopotamian material, nothing really that has anything to do with the Bible. You're going to have ancient traditions in other parts of the world that associate knowledge with the gods—that's nothing unusual. You can't take such an idea and say "these are the Apkallu." You can't really do that. You need some sort of textual association with that wisdom tradition, maybe connecting it to a flood story. Well then you might have some reason to suspect that one culture's text is talking about this same incident or this same era, and thus the same idea with another culture—if they're both talking about the flood (in other words, if the contexts are the same). But as far as Melchizedek being connected to any of this, he's never referred to in the Old Testament as being divine or partially divine. Of course, he's not going to be referred to as an Apkallu because it's not a biblical term, anyway. And Melchizedek, to be kind of honest about it... his name has to do with righteousness if you take it adjectivally or descriptively. Why do we think Melchizedek was so wise? He's never really referred to as a super-wise person. He's the priest of the Most High God—"my name is Tsedeq" and all that kind of stuff. But there's actually nothing in the biblical tradition to connect him specifically with any of that. So my answer would be no—I don't see anything there.

**TS:** James wants to know:

11:04 **Is there a connection between Metatron and Melchizedek in the Second Temple period?**

**MH:** Oh, yeah. There is. I would recommend to people who are really interested in this... If you're interested enough just to read a few paragraphs, then look at Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Volume 1. That's where the book of Enoch is in that two-volume set. He's going to have some material on Melchizedek and Metatron. If you're *really* interested in it, Andre Orlov (who is now David Burnett's advisor at Marquette) has a whole book on Enoch and the Metatron tradition. So if you're really, really into it, that would be the thing to read.

Let me pull something up from Charlesworth here. Like I said, this is from his first volume of *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. He writes in his discussion of 3 Enoch:

A number of clear parallels between the heavenly Melchizedek of Qumran and the Metatron of 3 Enoch at once suggest themselves: both figures hold exalted, if not pre-eminent, positions among the angels; both are heavenly judges (for Metatron's court see 3 En 16:1), and both, apparently, had earthly lives prior to their exalted, heavenly states.

When you start talking about Metatron and you start talking about 3 Enoch, you're also going to get a relationship between Metatron and Enoch. The question was specifically about Melchizedek and Metatron. Again, just that little section from Charlesworth gives you a few of the indications about how the two are related. The bigger relationship, though, is between Enoch and Metatron. We don't really need to dive into that because Enoch and Melchizedek were not the same figure, so it might be confusing to go into the Enoch/Metatron connections. Let's just restrict our comments here to Melchizedek. And there are a few of them.

I should also say that 3 Enoch is a late text. It is grouped in the Second Temple literature, obviously. It's in Charlesworth's first volume here of *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. But the date of 3 Enoch is going to be after the era of the New Testament, certainly. It's written entirely in Hebrew. It gets the name 3 Enoch because a lot of its content is like 1 Enoch and, of course, like 2 Enoch, as well. But there's going to be new stuff in here. The Metatron material is chiefly tied to the third book of Enoch and not the others, but you're obviously going to get some things in there.

But as far as the specific question about whether there's a relationship between Melchizedek and Metatron—yeah, they're exalted mediator figures. They're sort of "Second Power in Heaven" candidates. If you remember some of the discussions that we've had here on the podcast... I know this is taking a lot for granted because I can't assume everybody has listened to all the episodes, but you may also recall this maybe from something in *Unseen Realm* or something from my Two Powers in Heaven website. There was a lot of speculation in the Second Temple period among Jewish writers as to who the Second Yahweh figure was. Some opted for an exalted angel, others opted for a deified or a glorified human. Right there, you have the foundation of the connection. Melchizedek was one of those figures in Second Temple literature that could either be conceived of... to get the full feel for this, you have to listen to the second installment of our Melchizedek series. But Melchizedek could sort of fit in either category—either he was considered a human being that was then exalted and he becomes this Second Yahweh figure in some Jewish texts. Others would say there's something going on here with Melchizedek and he might have been a divine being. So then he falls into the second category of having an angel occupy the Second Yahweh figure's slot.

15:00

So Melchizedek sort of gets discussed for the same reason, but in terms of both of those categories. And Metatron, of course, is an exalted angel. But he's also this deified human figure. He's Enoch transformed into an angel. In that respect, yeah—there's a relationship between Melchizedek and Metatron. And in that respect—being Second Power in Heaven candidates—there's a relationship also between Melchizedek, Metatron, and Enoch (if you want to look at it that way).

I think that's sufficient for where we're at in the Q&A. The figure of Metatron and the figure of Melchizedek do overlap in that respect. They are sort of exalted figures in Second Temple literature—specifically 3 Enoch, which is a later text.

**TS:** Vidal asks a question:

16:04

**Canaan was cursed because of Ham's sin. Is this one of those cases where a curse became a blessing? He was ordered by the patriarch to not be raised by his loser of a father's house but be raised in the homes of his godlier uncles. Could this have resulted in a healthy respect and love for Yahweh? Could this have been passed down to a son and grandson that may have been called Melchizedek? Could Melchizedek have been one of many descendants of Canaan that were living in the land and still worshipped Tsedeq and still lived in peace with a fellow follower of Yahweh—Abraham? I realize that this is conjecture, but is there any scripture or extrabiblical sources that could refute this possibility?**

**MH:** That's really oddly worded. Correct, it's totally conjecture, and there's absolutely no substance to it at all. So to ask if there are texts that refute it... well, of course not because no one was thinking it. That's like, "are there texts that refute that pigs can fly?" Of course not. The question is kind of worded a little bit oddly. I'm not sure that's what the questioner wanted.

We did an episode on the curse of Canaan—the whole Genesis 9 thing. I would even add that the characterization of the curse in the question is a bit misguided. Canaan is not cursed so that he wouldn't be raised by losers. (laughs) And the "godlier uncles" thing is a little questionable, especially because Ham... Ham was the father of Canaan. We get that. The "godlier uncles"—well, maybe, maybe not. But that wasn't the point of the curse. The Bible never tells us in direct language. It never defines or unlocks—explicitly describes—what the curse of Canaan was directly, although as we discussed in the episode, the implications of the curse are pretty clear. Canaan is cursed because Ham committed maternal incest with his mother—Noah's wife. So Canaan was the product of that. That's why the text in Genesis 9 stresses that Canaan was the son of Ham, or Ham was Canaan's father. I would refer the questioner back to that episode.

If that's the case (and I think it's certainly the most exegetically defensible view) that we have a case of maternal incest and then Canaan is the product of that, then the curse of Canaan meant that his status was illegitimate. He was the

illegitimate son of Ham by virtue of his mother, so he would not inherit the leadership of the tribe when Noah passed on. The curse wasn't about not having him raised by losers and having him get raised by better people. That just isn't even in view. It's just not in the picture. So I don't really know what else to do with the question. None of this has anything to do with Melchizedek. I guess that's a good way to sort of wrap this up. There's no textual support for Melchizedek being from the line of Canaan because there's no lineage for Melchizedek ever given. That was the point of part of his description in later Second Temple texts and later in the New Testament (the whole "without father, without mother" sort of thing). That was about his priesthood not deriving from a specific lineage, a specific line, a specific tribe. So you couldn't say that if he had a specified lineage in the Old Testament. And he doesn't, so there's no way to trace Melchizedek back to Canaan. It would be, as the questioner said, entirely speculative.

**TS:** Tim from Wisconsin, Shannon from Great Bend, Kansas, and Henry (an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian from Northamptonshire, England, UK) are all tracking on the same thing here. They want to know:

20:04

**Is there a connection to the bread and wine offering from Melchizedek to Abraham in Genesis 14 and Melchizedek being a prototype of Jesus?**

**MH:** Yeah, I think there is. I think it's part of the typology. We didn't get into the specific elements of the typology in the third installment in the Melchizedek series. We're going to do that in the book of Hebrews, so we cut some of that out. But I would say the short answer is "sure." He serves bread and wine, he becomes a typological figure for certainly Jesus for New Testament writers. He also has something of a mediatorial role in Second Temple texts. But specific to the New Testament, I do think if you're looking at Melchizedek and you're thinking of Jesus, this is going to be part of it. So I would say, yeah—that's a good trajectory. It's something we're going to get into a little bit more when we hit that point in the book of Hebrews. But yeah—that's a good observation.

**TS:** The next one is from "P" (I have no idea other than that)...

**MH:** It's like the P source... JEDP. (laughs)

**TS:** He wants to know:

21:25

**Did the other nations conceptualize the God of the Israelites with their own gods, like El, Anu, or maybe Zedek? In Abraham's encounter with God in Haran, would he have thought of God as an Anu-like figure from his time in the third dynasty of Ur? How do we view this Anu/El figure in relation to God?**

**MH:** It's hard for me to hear sentences like that and know how to parse them. In the Hebrew Bible, there's no direct connection between the term El and Anu. Anu



is just the god of heaven. And, of course, Old Testament thinking would assume that the God of Israel is the God of heaven. So I don't know if the questioner is looking for some sort of linguistic link. There's not, but there's certainly a conceptual link.

Every civilization is going to imagine that the gods live in the skies or on mountains or in the seas—these places that humans *don't* live—that are inaccessible and, frankly, lethal to human life. So sure—any given ancient person... You could have run into an Akkadian or a Sumerian and he would have been talking about An, the god of heaven. Somebody could have run into that and thought, "Yahweh is the God of heaven! You're in Canaan now and we worship Yahweh here." Sure, there's going to be some sort of conceptual connection.

Every pantheon has the gods, and most of the gods—the high gods—are going to be in heaven. You could have gods on earth and under the earth and all that sort of thing. So every pantheon is going to have that. Every pantheon is going to have at least one or a pair... let's just say an oligarchy (a small group) of gods that are sort of above the other ones. Even in polytheistic systems—even within the oligarchy—you're going to have one that sort of has primacy of place. Maybe that one's the creator or something like that. But it's actually really difficult because, like in Mesopotamia, you have "olden gods" that are like the physical elements of the earth. One was earth, one was water, one was wind... you know. You have the primeval stuff out of which reality was made. Well, they're all gods and they all preexist from when all of that stuff takes form—when the gods decide to become active in the place where humans live. Of course, they have to create that place first. So it's a little hard to isolate a sky god to some level of primacy because all of these things are absorbed into Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible. We're not talking about an original pair. We're not talking about Yahweh being isolated to heaven or Yahweh being associated *only* with that place, whereas An might be the high god and the god of heaven, but is he the god of earth? No, that's somebody else. There are these disconnects that are just inherent within the systems. So to draw equivalences is really, really tenuous. Frankly, I would say it's inadvisable.

25:00

I would say it's pure speculation to say "X, Y, Z deity was Yahweh in X, Y, Z religion. In other words, if you ran into somebody in the ancient world and you could sort of lay out all the deities (you had them on trading cards or something)... It's pure speculation on our part that your ancient person would see a deity name and say, "Oh, that one is this one! So your deity here is this one over here in my land." Again, there might be conceptual connections, but there's going to be disconnections that are significant, as well. It's really tenuous. It's a really hard game to play. Frankly, you can really only strike analogies. Even the creator deity is a difficult analogy because of the original pairs and olden gods.

Let's take Egypt. Even within Egypt you have different gods that are perceived as creators, and then later on they get merged to sort of fix that confusion. It's just really hard (other than speaking in very general analogical terms) to say that this deity in this ancient Near Eastern religion corresponds directly to Yahweh because Yahweh subsumes all of them—all of their attributes, all of the places that they're associated with. Is that a correlation? Well, kind of, sort of. Is it a disconnection? Yeah, kinda sorta that, too. I just wouldn't go beyond that. There's no evidence for Yahweh by name in any other ancient Near Eastern text in terms of that text's religion or that religion's pantheon.

I'll just open up DDD here. In the entry on Yahweh, DDD actually goes through and summarizes this issue, this problem. I'll read a little bit from Van Der Toorn here. He says there's no evidence for Yahweh in other ancient Near Eastern texts.

The abbreviated (or hypocoristic) forms of the name betray regional predilections: thus Yw ('Yau' in Neo-Assyrian sources) is especially found in a North-Israelite context;

In other words, when you find Yw in an Assyrian text, they get it because they've run into Israelites in the north, and then they talk about that deity. It's not because Yw is a member of the Assyrian pantheon and that's where the Israelites get it. It's actually the other way around. The Assyrians run into this and then they write about it in their texts. But you don't have a text that would list a Yahweh equivalent in the Assyrian pantheon. You do see the name show up in places—Yw, Yh in these kinds of texts—because they run into each other. The Assyrians will be writing about something they did and they'll mention the God of the Israelites and they'll use that name. That's why anything that looks like a Yahweh name shows up in ancient Near Eastern texts. He does not show up as though he's a member of their pantheon. So there's no mention of him in a pantheon and there's no text that actually lists out deities and then does a comparison for us so that we would actually know. The best you can do is just talk about analogies, and you have to acknowledge the really significant disconnects, as well.

Van Der Toorn has a nice little comment about Ebla. This is something you're going to see on the internet that is just bluster. He says:

Before 1200 bce, the name Yahweh is not found in any Semitic text. The stir caused by Pettinato (e.g. Ebla and the Bible, BA 43 [1980] 203–216, esp. 203–205) who claimed to have found the shortened form of the name Yahweh ('Ya') as a divine element in theophoric names from Ebla (ca. 2400–2250 bce) is unfounded.

Listeners to this podcast should know what a theophoric name is because we've been talking about Melchizedek. It's a name that includes the name of a deity in it. So Van Der Toorn is referencing Pettinato's work (like in the 80's when he was

working in Ebla texts). He says, "I found the name *Yahweh* as a theophoric name in Ebla texts!" Later on scholars who looked at Pettinato's work and were doing their own work in the Ebla texts discovered that really wasn't the case.

As the final element of personal names, -ya is often a hypocoristic ending, not a theonym.

30:00

In other words, it's not a divine name, it's a hypocoristic ending. What's a hypocorism? It's a diminutive form of a name. It's like a pet name. We have good examples in English that actually use a -y at the end, kind of like Ebla did, using a -ya at the end. Like if we have the name "Bill" and we put a -y on it to form "Billy." We take "Bill" which feels more adult and masculine and then we have "Billy," and that makes it sound like a kid. It's a pet name. That's what a hypocorism is. And a hypocoristic ending there would be the letter y. "Melissa" gets changed to "Missy." There's another example—a little bit more of a change going on there, but you get the -y at the end. That's what's going on here with the Ya element in names at Ebla. It is not a deity name. It just doesn't occur.

Scrolling down in Van Der Toorn, we should mention Mesha here because that is the one exception to the chronology.

The earliest West Semitic text mentioning Yahweh—excepting the biblical evidence—is the Victory Stela written by Mesha, the Moabite king from the 9th century bce...

**So that's the Moabite stela—also known as the Mesha stela.**

There are two Egyptian texts that mention Yahweh. In these texts from the 14th and 13th centuries bce, Yahweh is neither connected with the Israelites, nor is his cult located in Palestine. The texts speak about "Yahu in the land of the Shosu-beduins" The one text is from the reign of Amenophis III (first part of the 14th cent. bce; cf. Hermann 1967) and the other from the reign of Ramses II (13th cent. bce). In the Ramses II list, the name occurs in a context which also mentions Seir (assuming that s'rr stands for Seir). It may be tentatively concluded that this "Yahu in the land of the Shosu-beduins" is to be situated in the area of Edom and Midian.

**Lo and behold, isn't that where we find the divine name revealed according to scripture to Moses? Moses is there with Jethro shepherding this flock in Midian. That makes a lot of sense.**

In these Egyptian texts Yhw is used as a toponym [MH: in other words, it's part of a place name] (Knauf 1988:46–47). Yet a relationship with the deity by the same name is a reasonable assumption.

That's all I'll read from Van Der Toorn. There's just not much evidence of the name Yahweh as a deity anywhere in the ancient Near East. You get it as toponyms. You get it because the Akkadians and the Assyrians ran into Israelites and then they write about the Israelite God. You don't get Yahweh in a list of deities in any other ancient Near Eastern religion. You just don't. Therefore, to try to say "this deity from the Akkadian or Sumerian pantheon is Yahweh" is just pure speculation. It's guesswork. The only thing you can do is try to create some sort of conceptual analogies, like I tried to illustrate early on in the question. That's about the best you can do, but you've got to be honest with the methodological and conceptual problems with doing that because in a strictly monotheistic system where Yahweh is unique (let's put it that way)... In a system like in the Old Testament in the Hebrew Bible where Yahweh is species-unique, he is one among *elohim*, certainly, but he is unique. He transcends everything. He is not limited to parts of the world or geographical regions like other deities are. It's really hard to compare that to anything else and make a really coherent connection. The best you can do, again, is a sort of analogous thinking.

**TS:** Our next question is from Dennis in Birmingham, Alabama:

34:07 **Realizing now that the name Zedek plays such a pivotal role in understanding the various issues involved in resolving the mysteries and questions surrounding how to understand the relevance and theological messaging of the person of Melchizedek, I can't help but wonder if the fact that the last king of Judah, who was named Zedekiah, also has theological significance.**

35:00 **MH:** I think the fairest way to answer this is that it might. There's really no way to know for sure why the child was named this. You'd have to know if the parents were thinking something like on one hand, "We believe Yahweh is Tsedek, and vice versa, so we're naming our child in honor of Tsedek" or whatever. They could have been thinking that. They could also have been thinking this: "We want to praise Yahweh's righteous character, so we're choosing this name." The second option wouldn't have anything to do with Tsedek as a deity name, but "Tsedek as righteousness." It's just hard to know what was going through the mind of the parents or a particular person when they chose the name, unless we're actually told in scripture. Sometimes we are and sometimes we're not so we just have to guess. I think this is one of those. So yeah—it could have been some sort of statement like that, but ultimately we don't know. We're still left with a couple of options.

**TS:** Merrill has a question:

35:37 **You stated several times that the Levitical priesthood was Plan B, in response to Moses' unbelief. You referred to the incident in Exodus 4:10-**

**16, where Aaron was commissioned as the "mouthpiece of Moses," yet this text does not explicitly state anything about (or presuppose) a future priesthood of Moses. Can you explain your reasoning behind this statement? If the Levitical priesthood via Aaron was Plan B, what then, in your estimation, was Plan A? Are you assuming that Moses and his progeny were to be the priestly tribe over the nation? I'm trying to understand your train of thought on this.**

**MH:** I think you're getting sidetracked on thinking of Moses as a priest. That really isn't the point. There's not going to be any talk about Moses being a priest or priesthood or anything like that. You need to go back further than that to understand the trajectory.

The point was that beginning in Eden, the pattern is God working with a human being in his relationship to other human beings (really at the beginning, *all* human beings)... the point is that from Eden on, the pattern was to have a human be both a ruler and king—a ruler over God's creation (we're talking about Adam now)—and also have that same person be a mediator to all other humans. This was Adam's role within the patriarchal culture. Even though male and female are created equally and relatively at the same time and all that sort of stuff, within this culture (being what it was), Adam would have been zeroed in on as the lead ruler and the lead mediator to his children. He would have been the patriarchal thinker.

Think in the patriarchal mode because in the patriarchy you had the rulership of the tribe, as it were, and also he would do the priestly duties. He offers sacrifice and what-not. This is a template that emerges all the way back from Genesis—all the way back to Eden. Adam played both roles. He was the ruler and the mediator to all of the humans. The patriarchs picked that up later. The patriarch is the ruler of his people. Abraham is the progenitor of Israel. When he is alive, he is leading the clan (the "nation," so to speak), and he's also doing priestly things. That's going to get picked up by whoever inherits the leadership of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and so on. Jacob, of course, is renamed "Israel," so you have one person over Israel who rules the nation/tribe. It's a much smaller scale at that point. He is also in charge of being the mediator between his people (the nation, as it were) and God. He occupies both roles. So that is consistently the pattern. It actually takes us up to Egypt.

Then we've got the years of slavery in Egypt—the years of isolation there. It's reasonable to assume that coming out of Egypt, Moses was to occupy this same role/status. Moses was certainly the intended mouthpiece, he's the intended leader, he's the one that gets charged with bringing them up out of Egypt. By definition, that's a priestly role and a rulership role. He goes and meets with the elders of Israel in Egypt. They're not descending into anarchy because Moses leaves Egypt or something like that. They still have leadership, obviously, among the people, and there's a whole lot more now than there were before. But Moses is called by God to play the same sort of role. He's the one from whom the

40:00

people are going to get all their direction. Why? Because he is the mediator between them and God. It's very obvious there. It picks up where it left off through the figure of Moses, but then Moses hems and haws about playing the mediatorial role. He's the one who's supposed to represent the nation not only before God, but also to present God's demand to Pharaoh. He's the mediating... "I don't want to do that... I'm this... I got this problem, I got that problem..." So God says, "Okay, I'll let Aaron do that. We'll bring Aaron into the picture." That's what we're talking about here.

We're not talking about whether there's a verse that says Moses was supposed to be a priest. No, there's not, but he's doing priestly things all up to that point. He is being a mediator between God and his people. That's what priests do. So he is a priest in that sense, but there's nothing spelled out about Moses someday fathering a line of priests and high priests and all that stuff. That isn't the point, so we shouldn't get distracted by looking for that or sort of wanting to see that or expecting that. It's this template of rulership... "authority" might be a better way to put it—the person in whom is the ultimate authority over the group. Then that same person is playing the role of mediator between God and those people. The template was consistently to have that in one person.

Up until the time of Moses, where we get the famous scene... and it's not just Exodus 4, it's Exodus 4-6. You have the same kind of... "cowardice" might be too strong of a word, but you have the same kind of reticence or hesitation on Moses' part—same kind of unbelief on Moses' part when they get to Egypt as we witnessed in Exodus 4 when they're on Sinai. Out of that, the argument is that the priesthood of Aaron comes into play to make up for Moses' weaknesses. That's why a number of scholars view it as Plan B or derivative or a concession.

If you think about it in those terms, there's really something to be said for that. It makes good sense as to why we now have two figures in the era of Moses when all the way up this time we didn't have two—we only had one. It's mercy extended toward Moses. But God's ideal plan, going all the way back to Abraham who is blessed by Melchizedek and Melchizedek is the priest of the Most High God, he's king of Salem, he foreshadows Jerusalem, he foreshadows the priestly role there in Jerusalem, he's the king of Jerusalem... all that stuff we talked about with Melchizedek. He's a type of what is to come—and not only what is to come, but what God had preferred up to that point—one ruler of his earthly family, his people. And one mediator. Incidentally, this is why it's important for Jesus to be not only a son of David, but a son of Abraham—tracing it back through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all the way back to Adam. This is what you get—the king/priest messiah. It's a return to the idea. His lineage runs back to—and through—the patriarchs and Adam. It doesn't, incidentally, run through the Mosaic line. Moses is not part of the lineage of Jesus, obviously, because Moses is not of the tribe of Judah. We get that. But again, there's this undercurrent going on, too, about what God's ideal was or how he would relate to his people and how he wanted his

people governed that goes all the way back to Eden, where both roles are fused into one.

**TS:** Seth has our next question:

43:27

**In 1 Peter 2:9-10, where it refers to us as a "holy nation, royal priesthood," can this be seen more in the light of the priesthood of Melchizedek? It seems this passage is popularly understood in light of the Levitical priesthood, but when you stated the priesthood of Melchizedek is one of God's appointing and not one of lineage, it would make more sense to view it in light of the priesthood of Melchizedek, which is also Christ's priesthood. Can you unpack that a bit and perhaps expound?**

**MH:** That's a really good observation. I would agree, again, that there's something to that. I wouldn't go as far as to say that the priesthood of believers has nothing to do with the Levitical priesthood. You do have Old Testament passages that get quoted that are very obviously contextually rooted in the Levitical system. But I also don't think that fact cancels out this Melchizedek angle. Let's just think about it: on the one hand, there is secure reason to link the priesthood of believers to the Old Testament priesthood by virtue of the Old Testament concept that Israel was to be a kingdom of priests. Those kinds of statements are rooted in Torah; they're rooted in the Mosaic context. But there's even more to that, as we've talked about on this podcast a lot. As the Church is the temple, so the Church is also Israel, in some sense. Again, we've talked a lot about that in earlier podcasts. For people who may be new to the podcast, no, we don't articulate a rabid [00:45:00] dyed-in-the-wool supersessionism here. I frustrate supersessionists because I do think there's a future for national Israel and all that kind of stuff. Yet we have this talk in the New Testament. If you're interested in that, go back to earlier episodes. But you have the Church as Israel in some sense and, therefore, the Church is the new kingdom of priests. It is tied to Israel conceptually. You have this kingdom of priests idea, which is rooted in Torah (Exodus 19:6). We can't cut off the idea from the Levitical system, of which these sorts of statements are a part. We have the Church being the new kingdom of priests. It has to be because the Church is the Kingdom already. It's appropriate to talk about those of us in the Church as a kingdom of priests because the Church is, in some sense, the Kingdom, as well. Colossians 1:13 says:

**<sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.**

It's a perfect tense (something that occurred already but the implications are still ongoing). We get the already-but-not-yet thing. Interestingly enough, though, for people who might be new to the podcast who might be thinking, "We can only talk about the Kingdom in the future (the book of Revelation)! Mike, don't you

understand dispensations?" and all that kind of stuff. Yeah, I understand it all. Have you looked at Revelation 1:6? You actually have instances in the book of Revelation that say things like:

**<sup>6</sup>[Christ] made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

That's Revelation 1:6, which has believers being a kingdom of priests. This is before the so-called Millennium passage of Revelation 20. Same thing in Revelation 1:9:

**<sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation [MH: which apparently was already present] and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus...**

You get this language even in the book of Revelation. So the already-but-not-yet is real. It's a phenomenon of scripture. Ultimately, we can't divorce that from the Levitical system.

All that said, on the other hand, it makes sense to say that as extensions and constituent members of the body of Christ, we are members of Christ's priesthood and he is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. So there is something to this idea. 1 Peter 2:9... let's just look that up.

**<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**

1 Peter 2:9 is coherently linked to Exodus 19:6, which had the Israelites in view, but there are other passages that suggest Gentiles are going to be made priests of God. *Gentiles*. Which, by definition, can have no relationship to the tribe of Levi and its priesthood. The only way to "legitimize" Gentiles being priests is if you have a *different* priesthood that isn't dependent on a specific tribe. That would be, ergo, the priesthood of Melchizedek. You have Isaiah 66:18-23, which I'll read:

**<sup>18</sup>“For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, <sup>19</sup>and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. <sup>20</sup>And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in**



**chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.<sup>21</sup> And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.**

50:00 That's just one passage. There are others, but you have this sense of the nations being incorporated into the family of God. When God does that, it's okay that the Old Testament would use this language of some of those people from the nations being made priests and Levites. That's okay! Why? Because in New Testament theology, this regathering is a reference to the building up and creation of the Body of Christ. Jews and Gentiles are all members of the Body of Christ, and that means that, by definition, you have Gentiles being members of the Body of Christ. And Christ is the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, so it makes sense to say that we are extensions of that. So I think there is something to this idea, but I wouldn't say that it sort of excludes or does away with the other connection. Let's put it this way (this is a theme we're going to get in the book of Hebrews once we jump into it, beginning very soon)... It supersedes what was in the Old Testament. It doesn't say to us that we shouldn't look at this any more, where we should seek to erase connections back to the Old Testament. It supersedes it. It's better. It's more comprehensive. It's better in some way. It's superior. And that's a big theme in the book of Hebrews. This whole notion about being the high priest after the order of Melchizedek... if we're members of that Body, we're extensions of that and so we can't help but be connected to that priesthood because Christ is connected to that priesthood.

**TS:** Sebastian from Amsterdam, Netherlands, wants to know:

51:00 **Dr. Heiser said that Melchizedek's name for the Most High God could be "Zedek" and that Abraham's name for the Most High God is El/Elohim/El Shaddai, implying that Zedek and El are both names for the same deity (Yahweh). If God disinherited the nations at Babylon and started his own family with Abraham, how could Yahweh still be Melchizedek's Most High God?**

**MH:** I would say it's because anybody could choose to worship the true God. It would depend on them learning of the true God—the Most High God. Remember after Babel, Abram was an outsider. There was no Israel. Abram was just as much on the periphery as everybody else. So if we're asking how Melchizedek could worship the Most High God, we could also ask how Abraham could worship the Most High God, because they're both on the outs. There is no "people of God" after Babel until God starts one. He goes to Abram and reveals himself to Abram, whose family were polytheists. This is a post-Babel situation. You have a lot of time elapsed between Babel and when we get to the time period of Abraham (or Abram). In scripture, it's chapter 11 and the next chapter is 12, but if you look at the chronology of the situation, you've got a good amount of

time. We know from Genesis 11:31-32 that Abraham's father is Terah. You go to Joshua 24:2 and Terah is a polytheist. This is the context out of which Abraham comes, like everybody else. If we're going to ask how this could be with Melchizedek, we also have to ask how this could be with Abram. And the answer is that God revealed himself to Abram and Abram had to believe. Abram had to choose—he had to believe—in the Most High God. So we have to assume... We don't have a verse for Melchizedek's conversion out of polytheism (we don't have anything like that), but he's in the same context as Abram. So we have to assume that it would have worked the same way. Somehow, Melchizedek learns of the Most High God and chooses to believe in him and becomes a priest in his service. He's a priest of the Most High God. We just don't have specific information like we do with Abraham. (At least we have a little bit with Abram.) We don't have specific information for Melchizedek. We don't have his story. We don't have his testimony. We just know that he worshipped Yahweh. He worshipped the Most High.

**TS:** Keith from upstate New York has a question:

53:31

**Assuming the name Melchizedek is theophorical and we are to understand that this title, "king of righteousness," is similar to the word "Christ," meaning "anointed one," Jesus is a first name. Is there any evidence that Melchizedek may have had a first name?**

**MH:** The connection is kingship. "Anointed one" in the messianic sense would be anointed to be king. So there is a connection here; there is something to discuss here. But "Christ" (*Christos*) was not a last name. Nevertheless, I follow the thought. In the first century, Jesus' full name would have been something like "Jesus, son of Joseph." It wasn't "Jesus Christ." That "Christ" is a title. If you want to call it an epithet, I guess you could call it that, too. But Jesus Christ means "Jesus, the one who is the Christ" or "Jesus, the one who is the anointed one." It's not a last name. It's a title.

55:00

Melchizedek isn't really... One of the options is that the whole thing is a title. So if Melchizedek, as we talked about in the first installment, was nothing more than a title, then the guy who bore that title, his name would have been "X, Y, Z, Whose King is Righteous" or something like that. "X, Y, Z, Melchizedek, being translated 'My King is Righteous.'" So it's not quite the same thing when it comes to an equivalence between Melchizedek and Jesus, but it's not totally different, either. You have "Christ" being descriptive of Jesus of Nazareth, and if you take "Melchizedek" as a title, it's not really descriptive since Melchizedek isn't described as the one being righteous, whereas Jesus is described as the one who is the Christ. So there's a bit of a disconnect there. But I follow the thought that if we take Melchizedek as a title and we have Christ as a title, maybe there's something going on there. That's the way I would end it. I would say it's not quite the same thing because in Jesus' sake, the title is also self-referential. In Melchizedek's case, that's not the case. "X, Y, Z Guy, Whose King is Righteous"

is talking about somebody else. It's not talking about the guy who bears the title. So there's a bit of a disconnect there. But they could both be titles. It's just that the thought trajectory would operate in a slightly different direction. One is self-referential and the other is referring to somebody else who the bearer of that title serves.

**TS:** Our last question is from Daryl:

56:18

**Did God lead Abraham to Melchizedek's altar in Salem to sacrifice Isaac?**

**MH:** There's no direct textual reason to make the association specifically. I hope it's obvious to a lot of listeners where the question comes from. You can make a circumstantial case for... how do I say this? The question suggests or requires too much specificity—too much precision. Here's what I mean. Abraham goes to offer Isaac. According to Genesis 22:2... let's just read it. God tells Abraham:

**<sup>2</sup> He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."**

Here, Moriah is a land. It's not a mountain, it's a land. So right away we have a bit of a disconnect because Solomon, according to 2 Chronicles 3:1, is going to build the temple on Moriah. It's on a mountain because it's on Mount Zion, but back in Genesis 22, Moriah is a land. If you're looking at the circumstances of Abraham's life, following where he's going, it's about three-days' travel from where he's at. So he travels to Moriah—this land—and he's instructed to go to this land and sacrifice Isaac on one of the mountains there. The mountain is not specified. Moriah is not a mountain in Genesis 22. And Moriah has more than one mountain. So which one did Abraham pick? I don't know. We're not told. So the question sort of assumes (with no textual basis—let's be honest) that the very same mountain that Abraham wound up at with Isaac is the same mountain that Solomon built the temple on. There's really no way to prove that. There's really no way to establish that. The names are the same—Moriah. But again, the Moriah of Abraham had several mountains. Jerusalem itself, where the temple is, is one mountain. Now, there are mountains around Jerusalem in the surrounding area. We learn that from verses like Psalm 125:3. How can I say this without messing you up too much? Again, there's mountains surrounding Jerusalem. Jerusalem itself is associated with a mountain—Zion. There's no way to know that that particular mountain—even though 2 Chronicles 3:1 says the temple is built on Moriah—is the mountain that Abraham went to when he went to the *land* of Moriah and wound up on one of the mountains there. You can see the obvious association because of the terms, but we just don't have the kind of precision that the question sort of assumes and requires, so we can't really be much more precise than that. That's why I said that I can't just say yes to this question. I

could say, "maybe, possibly, could be," but beyond that, we just don't have any sort of biblical textual material to be any more precise.

**TS:** Okay, Mike, we appreciate it! No more questions about Melchizedek until Hebrews 7, probably.

**MH:** (laughs) Unless we skip it...

1:00:00

**TS:** Did we miss anything that we need to add? Can you think of anything else that needs to be said?

**MH:** Are you kidding? (laughing)

**TS:** A lot of people are going to be disappointed about your answer about Shem, whatever.

**MH:** I'm just kind of flabbergasted as to why that's even an item, but anyway... Lives can overlap without biblical characters being the same person. It feels kind of obvious to me, but maybe there's some other reason why people gravitate toward that. I don't know.

**TS:** I don't either, Mike. I'm not the scholar, I'm just the layman. (laughter)

**MH:** Well, the scholar, like I said, is kind of flummoxed by that question, anyway. I'm not sure why it's even an issue, but there you go.

**TS:** All right, Mike. As always, we appreciate you answering our questions, and I just want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.