Praise the Lord, for He is good. His mercy endures forever.

*Therefore [Jesus] is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

 Hebrews 7:25

Because Jesus was the perfect sacrifice and because He lives forever, we need not fear that at some point our salvation will come to an end. The salvation He provides lasts forever; no one can take it away from us.

It is important to see that one must draw near to God the Father through Jesus. Jesus made it very clear that no one can come to the Father except through Him. There is no other way to God, there is no other way to purify ourselves. Jesus is the one and only door, but He is a door open to anyone who will use it.

It is all by faith; it is all by trusting in Him. Jesus did all the work of keeping the Law perfectly so we just rest in Him. He is not only Lord of the Sabbath; He is our Sabbath. And we will rest in Him forever.

In Christ’s love

John

 9-25-22

Genesis 14:13-24

For the first time in the Bible, we see the name “Hebrew”. Abram became the father of many nations, or people groups. But only the nation of promise, through the line of Isaac and Jacob, did the name “Hebrew” describe the people. God was very specific about the people He chose to be His own. They were a people who came about only by divine intervention; through the seed of the barren woman, Sarai.

Last week we considered how Abram lost no time and quickly went to the rescue of his nephew, Lot. Lot deserved no such help. He was in his current situation due to his own willfulness and being seduced by the shiny things of the world rather than following the true light of God. Regardless, at great personal cost and danger, Abram went after him and rescued him. This is a picture of Christ, who came to rescue us, even though we deserve no such favor. Praise be to God.

Abram had a sizable force of over 300 men. He also had some allies in the people among whom he lived; people who were Canaanites. This situation gives us something to think about. The Bible is very clear that the Christian ought not let themselves be unevenly yoked. In other words, they should not let themselves get into a situation where they are somehow bound to a non-Christian.

The prime example of this is marriage. If a Christian marries a non-Christian, they are in for heartache and troubles. For a believer to enter a business partnership with a non-believer will also lead to problems. The reason for this is because each person is operating from a fundamentally different point of view. A Christian will make moral decisions based on the absolute truth of God. Morality for a non-Christian has no such firm foundation and can change with circumstances. This will lead to conflict.

What we see in Abram’s case is that he was clearly in charge; his allies followed his lead and commands. Abram was not yoked to them. That is the difference we must keep in mind as we live in this world. We can and should work with the people of this world; we must just be careful to avoid a union where they have inordinate control over us. Ultimately, our goal in working with the people of the world is to lead them to Christ. Who knows what influence Abram had on his allies with respect to the God of heaven.

Upon Abram’s return, he was met by two kings in the King’s Valley. The exact location of this area isn’t known, but apparently it was close to Jerusalem. Here he was met by two very different kings and also with very subtle temptation. Keep in mind how things worked during this period of history. To the victor went the spoils of war.

Chedorlaomer had conquered Sodom and the other cities of the valley. He took all the possessions and all the people; they were his. Now, Abram had defeated Chedorlaomer and the other kings of the east and he took everything that they had. Abram had rightful claim to the spoils. Abram now faced two temptations.

He already had all the people and possessions of the five cities of the valley under his control. The cities themselves were defenseless. Abram could have easily laid claim to this area and taken it. God had already promised it to him, it would be simple for him to have occupied a chunk of the best of what was already his by promise. The issue lay in that God had promised to give the land to Abram, whereas here he would be taking the land on his own. Abram resisted the temptation by choosing to wait for God.

There is a similar occurrence in the life of Jesus when He was tempted by satan in the desert. Satan offered to give all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus if He would just worship him. Satan was simply offering to Jesus what had already been promised to Him by God, but without the waiting and the hardship of the cross. Jesus, too, saw through the temptation and resisted.

It can be hard for us sometimes to know if we should wait for an outcome or accept an occurrence that is seemingly handed to us. That is why we need to ask God for discernment and wisdom. The Bible clearly tells us that God will grant that request; He will guide us in these decisions. Our task is to make sure that we are truly seeking God’s will rather than trying to justify or rationalize our own will.

The second temptation Abram faced was the offer from the king of Sodom. This king had no gratitude for what Abram had done and he certainly gave no glory to God. Even though he didn’t really have a leg to stand on, he offered to let Abram keep all the goods if he could have the people. Obviously, power was the most important thing to him.

But Abram avoided this pitfall also. To allow this evil man to have claim over him would have come back to haunt Abram. And once again, Abram chose to wait for God. Abram was actually willing to die waiting for God to fulfill His promises. As it turns out, he did die before everything was fulfilled. The thing is that God is always faithful; Abram lives now in heaven and he will receive the promise of land in the new earth.

Abram showed wisdom and faith in how he dealt with the goods he brought back from the rescue mission. He refused to let the lure of wealth come between him and God. While the goods were under his control, he gave a tenth to Melchizedek which was a thank offering to the LORD. He laid claim to the small amount already eaten by his men on the return trip. And, importantly, he saw to it that his allies were given the portion due to them. They had earned a share for putting themselves at risk in rescuing the people of the valley and Abram saw to it that they got it.

Although Abram was entitled to everything else, he turned it down. He had a greater purpose in mind; he simply wanted to help his kinsman and give glory to God. This reminds me of the apostle Paul. Although he insisted that it was good and right for a minister to make his living from the Gospel, Paul himself never took money from a town he was evangelizing. His purpose was to save souls and give glory to God; and he never wanted anyone to be able to make the accusation that he was in it for the money. He wanted nothing to detract from the message of the Gospel.

Now we need to go back and consider the man Melchizedek. The king of Sodom, the kings of the east, Lot and Abram all have lots of verses talking about them. Melchizedek, here, gets only three.

*And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.*

*He blessed him and said,*

*“Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”*

*He gave him a tenth of all.*

With everything going on in this account, it’s easy to pass this character by. He just seems to show up and then disappear. But there are a couple things that should catch our attention, especially since we are in the New Testament age. The first thing is that Melchizedek served a meal of bread and wine. For us, that sounds just like the Lord’s Supper. Also, he was a priest of God Most High; of the God of the Bible. This was long before God established the priesthood through Aaron. Finally, Abram gave him a tithe of the best of the spoil.

We are kind of left hanging there, but he shows up again in Psalm 110. Psalm 110 was written by David but it is obvious that it does not apply to David; the Psalm applies to the Messiah. In this Psalm, God the Father is telling the Messiah what He will do for Him. In verse 4 it reads: *The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.”* “*According to the order of*” means “the same kind of” or “in the likeness of”. The priesthood of Messiah will be in some way like the priesthood of Melchizedek.

By the time this Psalm had been written, the priesthood of the descendants of Aaron had long been established. This would have been difficult for the readers of this Psalm. God was saying that the Messiah would somehow have a priesthood different from the one God Himself had established.

These things remained a mystery until Jesus came and the Holy Spirit inspired the writer of the book of Hebrews to explain what was happening and why Melchizedek was so important. After this Psalm, Melchizedek doesn’t show up again until the New Testament book of Hebrews. He is mentioned a couple times in an introductory way until chapter 7. Hebrews chapter 7 lets us know the depth of the character Melchizedek.

The author of Hebrews begins by looking at the account in Genesis that we are studying. His purpose is to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of what Melchizedek foreshadowed. Melchizedek means “king of righteousness” and in Genesis we are told the he is the king of Salem. Now, Salem means peace, so he is the king of peace. Also, Salem is the ancient name of the city of Jerusalem. See how these all fit together with Christ? Additionally, Melchizedek is both priest and king, something which never happened with the line of Aaron. Jesus is the first and only of Israel to be both priest and king.

In verse 3 here in Hebrews, it says: *Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.* To be a priest in the system of Moses, you had to be a descendant of Aaron in the line of Levi; your genealogy was critical. But here was an example of a priest who had no such genealogy. Likewise, Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, He was not a descendent of Aaron; He was of the tribe of Judah.

Since the Bible doesn’t record any other information about Melchizedek’s life, it’s as if he never died and so he continues to be a priest. He remains a priest perpetually. In the same way, Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father interceding for us; in other words, carrying out priestly duties and we know He lives forever to do so.

While Melchizedek was made *like* the Son of God, Jesus *is* the Son of God. Hebrews points these three things out, building a case for Jesus being the legitimate high priest. This is the point of the prophecy in Psalm 110:4, the Messiah will be according to the order of Melchizedek.

In Hebrews 7:4-10, it is shown how this special priest is even greater than the father of the Jewish nation, Abraham, and by extension, Jesus is also.

Tithes were important in the Mosaic system. The whole tribe of Levi was set apart as God’s special ministers. Because of their special position, they were not to be spending their time raising crops or herds. In order for they and their families to have food, God initiated the tithe system. All the rest of Israel had to bring ten percent of their harvest to the Levites. If the people of Israel did as they were supposed to, the Levites could focus on ministering to God. So, the Levites didn’t pay tithes; they received them from the rest of Israel.

The point the author of Hebrews makes is that the patriarch Abram gave tithes to this special priest, Melchizedek. In Biblical thought, all the offspring of someone is already in their loins; so, anything done by Abram was also done by those who came from him. In this sense, even Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek, showing that his ministry was greater than Levi’s or Aaron’s. Incidentally, this is how Adam’s sin is considered to be passed down to all of us.

From verse 11 on in chapter 7 of Hebrews, it concentrates more on the verse from Psalm 110 to show that Jesus is the Christ and high priest. In verse 11, he asks why God would have had to promise a priest in the order of Melchizedek, if the order of Aaron was sufficient. The reason is because the order of Aaron is not sufficient. The sacrifices they offer are not sufficient to remove sin and when the priests die their priesthood ends.

With Jesus, the sacrifice was perfect and sufficient. Additionally, He was resurrected from the dead, ascended into heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father, continuing His priestly duties; forever. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Psalm 110:4 promise of God raising up a priest of the order of Melchizedek.

In Genesis 14, Abram shows himself committed to God; trusting Him and believing His promises. He stands up well against temptation and he also shows himself to be a man of action when needs be; he doesn’t spend all his time lounging around the tents. In all this, God blessed him with some insight that this Melchizedek was someone special; someone from whom Abram received a blessing. A blessing far better than all the goods of Sodom.

Prayer

How precious is Your word, when it opens up to us that You have had a plan to redeem us from the very beginning. We are far more like Lot than we wish to admit, but we praise You Lord, for Your great mercy. Even while we were Your enemies, You died for us so that we might live with You forever.

Give us wisdom and discernment; help us to see the difference between Your will and ours. Help us to recognize when we simply want to justify our own desires and convince ourselves they come from You. Your ways are pure, O Lord; Your ways are according to Your word in the Bible. May we see through the fog of our own thoughts to the right leading of the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, we offer You praise, for You are Prophet, Priest, and King; You are of the order of Melchizedek but You are far greater than he. You are greater than Abraham. You were here before any of these. You are the Son of God. Blessed be God forever.

In Your most holy name we pray

Amen