



The Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

The Collect.

LET thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of thy humble servants; and, that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. 5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: 6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. (Heb 7:1-6)

To take up the subject of the King of Salem (Peace), who Melchizedek truly was, **or is**, is a daunting task and one that will fall short of any thorough examination in the context of a mere devotion. In fact, books have been written on this mysterious and

glorious personage of whom Abraham paid tithes and received bread and wine. Though we may be able to know enough of Christ for our salvation if our knowledge were limited to the Gospel of Saint John alone, it is incumbent upon the Lover of God to learn all that is within his grasp of knowing about the magnificence of Christ as revealed in every Word of Holy Writ. Christ is more fully revealed to us in the types and figures God has provided all along the way in the Bible narrative. When we are able to see the strengths and failures of those men and women of God in the ancient accounts of the Bible, how much more vividly pure and glorious becomes the anti-type realized in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

There is no type or figure that more fully reveals the character of Christ in the Old Testament than Melchizedek. His absolute identity is, perhaps purposely, shrouded in mystery and awe. We are told so many things about this "Priest of the Most High God" that we almost conclude that he may be the pre-incarnate Christ; but such a conclusion cannot be finally confirmed in the evidence presented. God reveals Himself in small still voices, in gossamer mists, in the voice of Balaam's ass, and with the drawn sword of the Archangel. The mystery of God, and men such as Melchizedek, provokes our greater curiosities and compels us to desire to know more of our loving God, and His Son, Jesus. We love to catch a more resolute glimpse of that figure that moves among the Candlesticks: *And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.* (Rev 1:12-16) These word-pictures intrigue the mind and spur the thirst for more.

Here are some parallels of Melchizedek's characteristics that also describe Christ. I will not attempt, as some better informed theologians may be able to do, the precise limits of these comparisons except to remind the reader that these are all absolute truths revealed in Holy Writ:

First of all, Melchizedek's name is taken from the Hebrew words - (melek) and (tsedeq) meaning "king of righteousness" or *Malki-Tsedek*. Need I point out that Jesus Christ is the ONLY King of Righteousness? Christ is King of Kings and altogether righteous.

Secondly, Melchizedek was King of Salem (Peace). The current greeting in Hebrew remains unchanged, "Shalom aleikhem," or "Peace be upon you!" Jesus Christ is the King of Peace. *1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him.* Christ, too, is the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and Christ blesses His people in their daily struggles.

Thirdly, Melchizedek, like Christ, is a priest without a limited duration in time and office. He is, like Christ, without human father and mother (Mary was mother of the body of flesh of Christ – not the Mother of God as the Romanists love to aver) – or without descent. You will recall that Christ is eternal – the Beginning and the End, the alpha and Omega. Truly without beginning. *3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually* Melchizedek abideth a priest forever – precisely as does Christ.

Fourthly, there are strong communal implications in the Bread and Wine that Melchizedek brought forth to Abraham: *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.* (Gen 14:18-20) Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek in the Bread and Wine as well as in the prayers of Melchizedek. We also observe a glaring fact revealed herein – Abraham gave tithes of his all to Melchizedek. The lesser was blessed by the greater, and the spiritual nature of the relationship is revealed in the tithe offerings to Melchizedek as Priest of the Most High God. Melchizedek blessed the people of God who then were. Christ blessed the people of God for all time and eternity.

Fifthly, Melchizedek received his priesthood, not by the anointing of others, but directly from God just as Christ has done. He was anointed with the oil of gladness and not with the oil of men. He remains a priest forever without descent, for there was none to pass that priesthood on to. Of course, this is a perfect likeness and nature of the priesthood of Christ. No one can tell where Christ has begun, nor where He shall end (for He is without beginning or end). Melchizedek was a priest of a separate nature from all others of the Aaronic priesthood. He had no line of origin or of descent. How like Christ was Melchizedek in his priestly office. We have not known Melchizedek warmly as our own priest, but we have known the greater Personage identified in Christ. He (Christ) is our priest that walks with us daily, that soothes and comforts us in trials and pains, that loves us beyond any measure of doubt – so much so, that He gave His precious life-Blood for us. Do you know this High Priest without beginning or end?