

Note: One of the great puzzles of Scripture is the identity of Melchizedek. By the rule of *first mention* (which says that the first mention of a subject sets forth the essential truth concerning the subject) we are compelled to accept that Abram, and the rest of the kings of Canaan recognized Melchizedek as the king of Salem. The natural assumption is that this king, like the rest, was a human being. There are two lines of argument presented below that support this conclusion. The first is grammatical, and the second is textual. It is the belief of this author that these work together to show that Melchizedek is not a pre-appearance of the Son of God, but rather a type, or a representation of the Son of God.

Grammatical Argument: Hebrews 7:3 has encouraged many students to think Melchizedek was a *Theophany* (an appearance of God in the physical world) or a *Christophany* (a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ in the physical world): “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.”

Yet, the verse depended upon to make this claim is the verse that denies it. For, the Scripture says not that Melchizedek is the Son of God, but that he is "made like unto" the Son of God. The phrase *made like unto* translates ἀφομοιωμένος (*aph-omoio-me'nos* [Strong No. 871— ἀφομοιοῶ “assimilate closely: — make like”). This word, as it is found in our text, occurs only in this text. It is an enigmatical term, but we may trust the translators of the KJV—the word is rightly translated *made like unto*. Nevertheless, the exercise of parsing this word can be helpful in dissolving any doubts about its meaning.

There is no question that the etymological root of the term is ὁμοιος (*homoios* [Strong No. 3664] “similar (in appearance or character): — like, + manner).” However, the spelling in the word points to ὁμοιοῶ — *homoioo*, [Strong No. 3666] “from 3664; to assimilate, i.e., to compare passively, to become similar: — be (make) like, (in the) liken(-ess), resemble.” In other words, it's the same word, only in this case it indicates that something (Melchizedek) has been "*made in likeness unto*." Hence, the essential idea of the word is to be *made like*.

Strong identifies the prefix as ἀπο (*apo* [Strong No. 575]), saying that it "usually denotes separation, departure, cessation, completion, reversal, etc." It generally communicates the idea of *from*. This Greek preposition always takes the genitive case, and in our text it modifies the indirect object, *Son of God*. The idea is that the *Son of God* stands as the model *from* which Melchizedek is made a likeness.

The suffix, $\mu\epsilon\nu\text{-}\omicron\sigma$ (*men-os*) indicates that the word is a passive participle, nominative, singular, and masculine. That it is *passive* indicates that Melchizedek is the subject being acted upon, or *made like unto*. That it is a participle indicates it takes, in this case, properties of a verbal adjective in its function. That is, the verbal phrase, *made like unto*, points to *the Son of God* as the model from which the likeness is made. That it is *nominative* indicates it is directed to the subject who is made like unto the Son of God, that is, Melchizedek. And that it is singular, and masculine is obvious in its portent.

The parts of the word, taken together, indicate that Melchizedek is purposely set forth in Scripture in a manner intended to convey a close resemblance to the Son of God. Further, the word in this text conveys the idea that the *Son of God* is the model, the *actual*, if you will, from which Melchizedek is made the likeness. In other words, the *Son of God* actually possesses the characteristics that are ascribed to Melchizedek for the purpose of making him *like unto the Son of God*. The translators rendered the expression *made like unto* and in the context of the passage, it is clear the Spirit intends us to understand not that Melchizedek is the Son of God, but rather, that he is presented in Scripture in such a manner as to purposely present him as a representation of the Son of God. It is clear, therefore, that Melchizedek is not the Son of God. However, we do not fault any who take the view that Melchizedek is a pre-appearance of Christ in human form. We do, however, offer the following general observations.

Textual Argument: Whenever a Theophany (or Christophany) occurs in Scripture, He is identified as God, or called Lord. For example, when God appeared to Abram, the Scripture clearly identifies Him as Lord (Jehovah) [Genesis 18:13]. No where in Genesis 14 do we find any reference to Melchizedek as Lord, nor does Abram refer to him as such.

Some have suggested that Melchizedek must be a Christophany because Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. The reasoning is that Abraham could only pay tithes to Christ, who presently receives them from us [Hebrews 7:8]. However, Levi received tithes, and that did not make Levi Christ. Indeed, all tithes, including those presented under the Levitical priesthood are rendered to God—the Bible declares plainly that the tithe is holy unto the Lord [Leviticus 27:30, 32; Numbers 18:26; Deuteronomy 14:23; II Chronicles 31:6]. A correct understanding of the language of Hebrews 7:3 (see above) reveals that the idea is that when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, he, that is Melchizedek, was standing as a

likeness unto the Son of God. The point is that Christ is preeminent over Melchizedek, Aaron, Levi, Abraham

Finally, the Apostle Paul, whom we believe the Holy Ghost used to give us Hebrews, complained that the Jewish believers were unable to receive what light he had regarding Melchizedek [Hebrews 5:10-11]. One wonders why the Jewish believers, who accepted the testimony of John 1:1-14, would have any problem receiving the notion that Melchizedek was a pre-appearance of Christ in the physical world. Surely, every Jew who received *Jeshua Ha Mashiach*, would rejoice in such a revelation. On the other hand, if in fact Melchizedek was a Gentile king-priest ruling in Salem (Jerusalem) before Abraham [Genesis 14:18-24], especially if Melchizedek was a descendant of Ham, an Amorite [Genesis 10:15-16; with 14:13], it is easy to understand why the Holy Spirit would judge these Jewish believers unable to receive it. Consider the implications to a Jewish believer if in fact Melchizedek was a king-priest unto God ruling in Jerusalem before Abraham received the promise.

Genesis 14:13 reveals that the Amorites originally dwelt in the land of Canaan, and that they were confederate with Abram. From Genesis 15:16 we discern that, from God's point of view, the Amorites possessed the land of Canaan by His divine decree. Ezekiel 16:3, 45, informs us that the Amorites founded Jerusalem. Those who dwelt in the city of the Amorites, called Salem (Jerusalem—Psalm 76:2) were called Jebusites [Judges 19:10]. The Jebusites held Jerusalem before Abraham's day, and continued to hold that city during and after the invasion of Israel into Canaan [Judges 19]. It was not until David took the city that Jerusalem became the capital of Israel [I Chronicles 11:5]. However, in Genesis 10:15-16, we learn that the Amorite was a descendant of Ham. Finally, we notice that God has determined to take the land away from the Amorites and give it to Abraham, but Abraham would have to wait until the iniquity of the Amorites was full. Did God demote Melchizedek? It appears not. Melchizedek is indicative of that priesthood established from eternity in Christ Jesus, the Son of God. That priesthood is made up of *king-priests* [Revelation 1:5-6; I Peter 2:5]. He lost earthly *Jerusalem* but gained the heavenly *Zion*.

We may be sure that informing Jewish believers that Melchizedek was actually Christ Jesus in a pre-incarnate manifestation would have been easily received. However, informing them that God actually had a Gentile son of Ham serving Him as *king-priest* in Jerusalem before Abraham would

have been difficult. To have a son of Abraham paying tithes to a son of Ham would be very difficult indeed for Jewish believers to receive. What believer is not surprised at these revelations? The fact is, however, that God intends to reconcile unto Himself all in Christ Jesus—including Ham. Have ye not read the prophecies concerning Egypt, and noted God's intention to gather them to Himself? Indeed, some of these prophecies speak of Egypt with a tenderness usually reserved for Israel [Isaiah 19:18-25].

Therefore, we conclude that Melchizedek was *made like unto the Son of God*, but was not in fact the *Son of God* for the following reasons. First, the language of Hebrews 7:3 makes it clear that Melchizedek is neither to be promoted above Christ, which is blasphemy, nor to be elevated to the status of Christ—he is presented in Scripture in a manner intended to convey him as a *likeness*, a resemblance of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. The text in which he is mentioned does not offer any support for the idea that he is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. The fact that the Spirit deemed the Jewish believers unprepared to receive what He had to say about Melchizedek indicates that there was something about the subject that would be difficult for Jewish believers to receive. They would certainly have no problem receiving the revelation that Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. On the other hand, the revelation that he was, in fact, a Gentile *king-priest*, descended from Ham, ruling in Jerusalem before Abraham, to whom Abraham paid tithes, would certainly be something that would choke the faith of Jewish Christians. Indeed, our attitude toward Ham and his descendants is such that it is difficult for any Christian to receive. We should not choke on this! God intends to reconcile to Himself all things through Jesus Christ the Son of God: "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" [Colossians 1:20].