



With the skill of an expert detective, the mysterious Melchizedek is rigorously sought through Scripture until his identity is disclosed and established beyond a reasonable doubt. The evidence for this amazing discovery, and its implications for every follower of the High Priest Jesus, will amaze as well as challenge.

THE PRIESTS OF GOD: Unveiling the Order of Melchizedek

by John F. Finkbeiner

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The
Priests of God

UNVEILING THE ORDER
OF MELCHIZEDEK

JOHN F. FINKBEINER

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ISBN: 978-1-63492-586-0

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida, U.S.A.

BookLocker.com, Inc. 2017,

1st Ed., July 2017; 2nd Ed., January 2018

Printed on acid-free paper.

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Cover: Engel Creative

Cover photo: Kathleen

Inside cover illustration: clipartof.com

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-1-
Priests

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The service is about to end. The priest, with hands raised, faces the people and offers a benediction: *“The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance and grant you peace.”*

During Israel’s exodus from Egypt, God taught Moses, his servant, the above benediction (*Numbers 6:22*). With the Creator’s blessing, the people departed, returning to their tents in peace.

The Lord chose Moses and his brother Aaron to stand between heaven’s throne and their family, Jacob’s offspring. We will learn in the following how Moses performed priestly functions, yet never bore the title. With God’s servants, titles are superfluous. It has always been about their actions. A priest of God is known by their fruit, not by their clothing, education or by titles and honors bestowed by men.

Aaron, like Moses, was of the tribe of Levi. God appointed him to carry out his instructions for worship. As chief mediator for God and man, Aaron was chosen to be Israel’s “high priest.”

Go-between

God’s thoughts are timeless. Anyone who ignores, neglects or attempts to alter what the Lord decrees, would be making a very foolish mistake. Priests, or ordained mediators, exemplify the eternal. Priests were created to stand between and represent God to men and men to God. Nothing the Lord makes will ever disappear.

I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.

Ecclesiastes 3:14

In 1903, on a flat stretch of sandy ground near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina (U.S.), Wilbur and Orville Wright, successfully flew the first airplane. Aviation’s pioneers were more intent on building a pilot-controlled, heavier-than-air flying machine, than giving it a name. Pressed to call it something afterward, the brothers referred to their invention as “the Wright Flyer.”

To this day, no one has equaled the feat of the Wright's flying machine or made a perfect reproduction, but every plane or jet built since owes its design to the Wrights' genius. The Flyer came first.

Aaron was not the original priest. In *Genesis 14*, we find the first, the prototype, a man who is to priests what the Wright Flyer is to manned flight. Almost as brief as the flight at Kitty Hawk, a priest of God stepped into history, several centuries before Aaron.

"Then Melchizedek, king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High..." (Genesis 14:18)

As a holy man, Melchizedek stood out. He blessed Abram on God's behalf. (The bread and wine he served have meaning as symbols of Christ's sacrifice.) This mysterious figure stood in the gap. He blessed God Most High, then turned and blessed Abram. *"Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything."* (*Genesis 14:20b*)

Melchizedek, the person to whom Abram paid a tithe (tenth), was the first to bear the title of "priest." But was he the first go-between? Like birds on the wing to the Wrights, we look to heaven for the model from which all other priests are copies. (Later, we will have a lot more to say about Melchizedek.)

The Slayer and the Slain

In Jesus' day, the chief priest took his place before the altar on the holy day of Passover. Lying bound on the altar was a year-old lamb. It was the choicest of the flock, without spot or blemish. At the appointed time, the animal was slain. The priest was the slayer.

Who created blood sacrifices? Our answer is in *Revelation 13:8*, "Who was the Lamb *slain from the foundation of the world*?" If the Lamb was slain before creation, then who was the Slayer? Who was the first to sacrifice a Lamb without spot or blemish? It had to be the Father who offered his own Son for us all (*Romans 8:32*).

We build the foundation for discovery from *Genesis*. As a fallen steward over God's creation, Adam constructed an altar. With a slain animal, our prototype for men worshiped while, presumably, the prototype for all women watched. Forgiveness was granted through Adam's sacrifice for this was God's way. When the first man was reconciled to God, as representative for his family, Eve and their children were also reconciled. Adam was his family's high priest; therefore, he was appointed the slayer.

After “the fall,” death entered the world. With the knowledge they acquired from the forbidden fruit, the first couple saw they were naked. It was God who covered them with skins to remove their shame (*Genesis 3:21*). The first death was an innocent animal. To restore Adam and Eve’s fellowship, the innocence of the slain was necessary. Who was it that reconciled Adam and Eve to God? It was He, the One who was sacrificed before the foundation of the world.

Later, in *Genesis 4*, we meet Cain and Abel, sons of Adam and Eve. Abel’s sacrifice replicated his father’s. Abel was the slayer. He offered the Lord the fat portions from the choicest of his lambs, a pleasing aroma in God’s nostrils. From on high, Abel’s sacrifice was looked upon with favor (*Genesis 4:4*). (Was it because he followed the divine pattern?) To find forgiveness, Abel knew God required a blood sacrifice from an unblemished lamb.

Cain, however, met with God’s disapproval. For his sacrifice, he presented his own invention, a grain offering. If Cain’s objective was to please God and have his sins blotted out, then he failed. But was it his aim? The pattern given in the Garden had to be followed. *Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sin (Hebrews 9:22)*. Since Adam and his family were sinful, the Lord told them to approach the Holy only in the manner He prescribed. They would have wives, sons and daughters who also needed to restore their relationship. Cain’s rejection of God’s way was folly. Deviations from the prototype are futile. In fact, Cain’s actions were rebellious.

By following God’s example, Abel was blessed. He was pronounced justified. Sin was taken away and fellowship restored. For his obedience and martyr’s death, Abel was blessed to be the first listed in “Faith’s Hall of Fame” (*Hebrews 11:4*). His righteous blood still testifies today. Cain may have been repulsed by the thought of taking an animal’s life, but apparently not by shedding the blood of his brother. Sin’s penalty was never to be lost. The substitute’s hand laid on the sacrifice, then the knife, was a needful reminder of God’s wrath on sin. The priest/slayer made the connection as no one else could. Go-betweens lived on because the guiltless sacrifice died in their stead. Through the horrific death of crucifixion, forgiveness for sins was accomplished. To the Father, nothing other than His Son, the Perfect Lamb, was acceptable. It is never out of His mind.

Was the earth full of violence because Cain’s way was perpetuated by his seed? Shedding human blood rather than that of

animals was the example Cain gave his offspring. Through Seth, Adam's faithful son, God preserved a remnant. They honored the Lord by sacrificing spotless animals as an atonement for sin. God forgave them and restored Seth's family and offspring to fellowship.

As it was in Noah's day, it is today. Altars without penitent sinners and "Cross-less" religion substitute for God-ordained worship. In many churches and cathedrals, we have the feel of a mausoleum. The rounded roofs of Mosques are filling the religious landscape once dominated by steeples. In Islam, the blood of God's Son was not shed on a cross 2000 years ago. It was not Jesus, but a substitute who died, according to their teaching. A few of Islam's devout lie prostrate toward Mecca prior to a suicide mission. When Calvary is scorned, the world turns to violence. In the Jihadist's mind, achieving a martyr's death by slaying the innocent earns a ticket to paradise. The German proverb is true: "Devils are worshiped at empty altars."

Before the Flood, only a tiny remnant knew the price sin required. At Jesus' crucifixion, forgiveness was paid. Religionists, horrified at the thought of an innocent animal laid on an altar, omit the Lord's suffering, blood and resurrection. Priests can be duped into believing that God has alternate means to forgive. Too many know nothing of Cain's error or of the Lamb's sacrifice (*Colossians 1:20*).

Guardian

Our focus is on God's design for priests as described in the book of beginnings. It is important we study the origin of "priest," "priests," or "priesthood," terms used over eight hundred times in Scripture. How else can we know what God intended unless we distinguish the true priests of God from the imposters?

Since the word "priest" does not surface until *Genesis 14:18*, a characteristic of our Creator emerges: To understand the subject, we must carefully examine their roles. We already mentioned the priestly function of "go-between" and "slayer." We alluded to another, so let's now look further into the priest as "Guardian."

The task of a manufacturer's quality control team is to ensure that production standards are rigorously maintained. If something goes wrong, then quality control will have to answer for it.

Every successful enterprise has a guardian overseeing operations. If we apply this principle to the spiritual well-being of a family or a community, we would call the overseer a “priest.”

Pastor is a related term, since pastors guard God’s flock. They are shepherds and protectors. They manage the quality of worship. Also, as guardians, they must give an account for keeping the faith pure. They adhere to the formula given Moses, the prophets and apostles.

If blessings are to flow to the people, the obedience of guardians is essential. Decrees are to be obeyed. Priests come and go, but God’s commands must remain unaltered. *Fear God and keep his commands, for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13b)*

In *Exodus*, God issued his decrees for the family of Jacob. The father’s line of male ancestors determined the tribe to whom each Israelite belonged. Tribal elders served as guardians.

From the line of Levi, God chose Moses to shepherd Israel. Since God gave him experience guarding a desert flock, Moses was prepared to lead His sheep through the wilderness.

Moses’ brother Aaron, had a different role. He was worship leader (high priest). His task was to preserve God’s law and follow it to the letter. (The high priest, like a nation’s highest court, was appointed to preserve and protect Israel’s foundation in law.)

With responsibility for so many, Moses could not shepherd Israel alone. Heeding his father-in-law Jethro’s advice, he selected judges or elders. Thereafter, from each tribe, leaders assisted Moses in his role of pastoring or guarding the flock (*Exodus 18:17-26*).

Aaron needed help with the priestly burden. Rather than tribal elders, such as Moses had, the high priest’s load was divided among Levi. Aaron’s sons and other family were to assist in everything pertaining to worship. According to God, duties were assigned to the clans of Levi. When guardians did their job, all Israel remained holy and blessed. In *Genesis* through *Deuteronomy*, duties were detailed so worship could be preserved for future generations.

Guarding the Law was closely related to worship. Priests were charged with teaching God’s commands. Scribes diligently copied God’s decrees just as they were given at Sinai.

As flame-keepers for the Law, guardians zealously maintained the word of God, so neither a jot nor a tittle (the smallest marks on Hebrew

manuscripts) would be omitted or out of place. Adding to or leaving out was an inexcusable error for a scribe (cf. *Proverbs 30:5-6*).

Today's guardians labor to accurately convey God's truth. They know the Bible is the sole source of divine authority. They work to keep His Word as pure as when He first delivered it to the saints.

Offerings

Another job of the priests was to take charge of the offerings. With this responsibility, safeguards were put in place. Only men of integrity could handle the gold and silver. To find out who the guardians were, God administered a test.

In *Exodus 20*, Sinai burned with fire as the Lord spoke. The plan was for the ranking member of each house to be the guardian. If the Israelites were destined to be *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (*Exodus 19:6*), then everyone had to know the rules.

"I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

"You shall have no other gods before me."

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

Exodus 20:2-6

From his holy mountain, God gave his Ten Commandments. To impress on his people the gravity, Mount Sinai thundered and quaked. All Israel saw lightning. They also heard the trumpet of God. With this awesome display, men trembled in fear believing they were going to die (*Exodus 20:19*). Dread came over them. Perhaps it reminded them of the terror Pharaoh instilled in them. That was the idea. If, at the outset, all Israel learned to hold their God-King in total reverence and awe, then they would not test the Lord by becoming disobedient or rebellious (*Exodus 20:20*).

It was in this context that God repeated his warning about idols.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites this: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven:

Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.”

Exodus 20:22-23

Strict prohibitions regarding idols of gold or silver preceded God's directions on worship. In *Exodus 25:1-5*, Moses received word from God on what they were to do with their riches. An offering to the Lord was to be prepared. The people left Egypt with an abundance of silver, gold, plus articles of fine clothing (*Exodus 12:35-36*). In *Genesis 15:14*, God revealed to Abram how he would deliver his descendants from bondage with great possessions.

As slaves, the Israelites had no wealth of their own. Silver and gold belonged to the Egyptians whom they served. Yet when God fought for them, he punished Egypt for their mistreatment of his people. In the end, the Egyptian oppressors were *plundered*.

In *Exodus 25*, God asked his people for an offering. Treasure from Egypt was to be surrendered as an act of worship.

The LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze...”

“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.”

Exodus 25:1-3, 8

The irony of God seeking an offering from freed slaves should not have been lost on Israel. Were it not for God's order to plunder there would be no gold or silver in the camp. On the journey to Sinai, the Israelites served as caretakers of the treasure. Unfortunately, some caretakers began to believe they were owners.

In *Exodus 25:1*, God requested that the people give from their heart. Had they surrendered all their wealth, a great tragedy would have been averted. Opportunity to express love was the idea behind their voluntary giving. Not everyone chose to participate.

Robbing God of what is his, always becomes a snare. It did not escape Aaron's notice when, after the offering, certain Israelites paraded about, showing off their gold and silver ornaments. And so, they displayed the hard evidence that they worshiped riches rather than the God who saved them from slavery.

There would be little hesitation when a later offering was given. It came in the form of an invitation to worship another god.

Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."
Exodus 32:2-4

Those who held onto their treasure the first time, surrendered it on the second occasion. In the end, this group was forced to drink the gold withheld from God. Not gladly surrendering to the Lord what was never theirs, cost the idolaters their lives (*Exodus 32:35*). Offerings of God's people for His use are the responsibility of priests—or the priests and the people bear the consequences.

In the last days, the horrible scene in *Exodus 32* will be repeated (*Ecclesiastes 3:15a*). People will decide: Offer their wealth from their heart for God's purposes or keep it. Those choosing the latter, will find their gold will serve as a trap. Their treasure will be surrendered to the beast. Riches the Lord gives, ultimately belongs to him. Gold, not freely returned to the Giver, becomes an idol.

Aaron's heart must have been corrupted. He could not have been committed to God's offering. When the grateful, in *Exodus 25*, offered their treasure, the chief priest was charged with giving it to whom it was intended. But did he joyfully fulfill his role?

Praise

When Cain refused to sacrifice a fattened lamb, he chose a *reckless path*. Likewise, by withholding a treasure entrusted to them, Israel's idolaters opted to follow Cain's road to perdition. Aaron, and many other Levite guardians, failed their test. They refused to return to God what he required. In *Exodus 32*, Moses' absence became the occasion to reveal who in Israel had an idolatrous heart.

The camp was divided; calf worshipers on one side; on the other, those who grieved Israel's lost innocence. While some praised golden idols; others wept over the great sin they were witnessing.

Wickedness at Sinai also separated some religious leaders from God, and from their brothers. It was a repeat of "The Fall" in Eden. It

was Eve and Adam, who at the first opportunity, disobeyed God and ate what was forbidden (*Genesis 2:17*). Priests, especially, should know this: Praise is an offering that God regards as devoted. Glory and majesty belong to Him alone.

“Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

Exodus 34:14

Nothing angers the Holy One as much as supposed priests praising idols. Three thousand died because of God’s wrath.

The Lord alone deserves praise. His jealousy is stirred when those he’s blessed show affection to other gods. As a kingdom and priests, we must carefully monitor who receives the praise. It must go upward toward the One enthroned on high.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.

Hebrews 13:15

From atop God’s holy mountain, Moses and Joshua heard the roar. Joshua thought it was men preparing for war, but they were not war cries. Revelry had reached their ears (*Exodus 32:6*). Moses knew what the noise was about (*32:7-8*). He said,

*“It is not the sound of victory,
it is not the sound of defeat;
it is the sound of singing that I hear.”*

When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned...

Exodus 32:17-19a

As people praised calf idols, it seems Aaron made himself absent. He was the keeper of the offering and chief guardian of God’s commands. He was supposed to direct the praise to God. The celebration over the idols was all Aaron’s responsibility.

An idol did not rescue Israel from bondage, yet a gold calf received their praise. People ran wild (*Exodus 20:2-6, 22-23*). They gave glory for their deliverance to a god fashioned by human hands. As a result, God’s anger burned (*Exodus 32:8-10*).

No one ascends the Lord’s holy hill who offers praise to idols or swears by what is false (*Psalms 24:3-4*). The matter of misdirected

praise was settled long before Aaron, or Jacob, or even Abraham. It was settled in heaven. There, another guardian miserably fell short of carrying out his priestly assignment (*Ezekiel 28:14*).

Joyous celebrations delight the Lord when he is the focus. David led Israel in rejoicing (*1 Chronicles 15:25-29*), while the king blessed God. In return, the entire nation was blessed. But when did the High Priest Aaron direct songs of praise heavenward? When did he encourage dancing and singing to delight in the God who saves? His chance to lead praises was lost by default when Moses and their sister Miriam took the worship leadership in *Exodus 15*.

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them:

*"Sing to the LORD,
for he is highly exalted.
The horse and its rider
he has hurled into the sea."*

Exodus 15:20-21

Pharaoh's army had been destroyed. Before the sea swallowed them, it had parted for Israel. In *Exodus 15*, spontaneous praise broke out, but where was Aaron? Did he express joy or raise his voice in song or his hands in praise? Did he dance? Was he among the worshipers? It appears that Aaron was absent.

Beware of spiritual leaders who never join in when genuine God-directed praise breaks out. Instead of chief worshiper, they leave the praise to others. God's priests are to revel in unrestrained worship.

The sword and scepter

When it was suggested that Aaron make an idol, what should his response have been? From their knowledge of Aaron, did his fellow priests suspect he would accommodate their idolatry? How could Israel's high priest commit such a great offense? Had he been zealous, he would have cut the offenders to pieces.

Guardians carry weapons. Cherubim posted on the east side of the Garden bore flaming swords. They flashed them back and forth to keep Adam from the tree of life (*Genesis 3:24*). The one holding the scepter bears the sword.

Priests may appear harmless, but are they? Was the Apostle Peter sword-less? In *Acts 5:1-11* we have the account of Ananias and Sapphira. Judgment came out of Peter's mouth and struck Ananias dead. Later, in the same way, his wife was killed also.

Is it accurate to say that Peter was a priest? Catholics claim he was the first pope. We will see throughout this study, it is about actions, rather than titles. In the early church, Peter served as a guardian of the faith. He was ordained for ministry in *Matthew 16:18*. Jesus declared his confession was the Church's foundation. Flesh and blood did not reveal to Peter that Christ was the "Son of the Living God." The Heavenly Father did. Priests of God affirm the true Name of the Lord Almighty, the name they defend with their sword.

The resurrected Lord breathed on his disciples and said, "*Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.*"

Ananias and Sapphira died with their deceit unforgiven. Later, Simon the Sorcerer's pride took him to the edge of death. In *Acts 8:20-24*, Simon believed that Peter not only had the ability to slay him, but the authority to send him to hell. On this occasion, Peter showed mercy. He held the keys to the kingdom. As witnessed by the Spirit, he bore the divine sword of judgment (*Luke 10:19*).

Many reject the idea of priests brandishing a sword. Specific cases call for priests of God to use the authority given them. A stroke of the sword may signify allegiance to God and zeal for his glory. As with Jeremiah, it could be necessary to strike down a blasphemer or a threatening false prophet (*Jeremiah 20:6, 28:15-17*).

Priests anoint rulers. When royals do evil, they may also be their executioner (*2 Kings 11:12-16*). Christ, our High Priest, will show his wrath with his sword and scepter (*Psalms 2:10-12*). When He wields the two-edged sword, the flesh of the wicked becomes meat for the carrion-eating birds (*Revelation 19:19-21*).

Paul charged Timothy to *guard the gospel of Christ* (*1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 1:14*). Fight the good fight. Keep the faith. These are orders for sword-carrying priests. There are duties God's priests must never shirk: fighting for the faith is one.

On the eve of his betrayal, Christ asked a curious question.

“When I sent you [his disciples] without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack for anything?”

“Nothing,” they answered.

He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one...”

The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.”

“That is enough,” he [Jesus] replied.

Luke 22:35-36, 38

Warning: In the end times, Gospel guardians or priests of God will be armed and dangerous. We might not see it yet, but their weapon will be mighty to the tearing down of strongholds. The sword will come from their mouth. Like lightning, it will consume those trying to do them harm (cf. *Revelation 11:5*).

More than meets the eye

If I asked to describe a priest in the beginning, what would have come to mind? Would it be a person appearing holy, wearing the familiar vestments or perhaps the headpiece of a cleric? Would we envision them at an ornate altar, waving a censer or performing a sacred ritual? After only a partial exploration of the Scripture, we may have a different perspective. We have been shown priests out in the community, far from a church building. De-emphasized are the externals. The functions we have highlighted are what will soon be again. The Lord wants us to know his priests’ duties and callings.

A loving father disciplines his wayward child. A mother teaches her children the Ten Commandments and *23rd Psalm*. A young girl helps raise funds on behalf of suffering saints. A teen holds a friend’s hand as he intercedes for the young man’s ailing mother.

A student defends God’s honor and truth against a godless college professor. A guardian rebukes his Christian friend for immoral behavior. A go-between leads her fellowship in a prayer of corporate repentance. “I forgive you” is spoken with sincerity to an attacker. A child kneels by their bed asking the Lord to make her parents quit fighting, and, instead, love each other.

There is more to God’s priesthood than meets the eye. It is the measure of who they are as saints. Never considering the title, they

daily do the work and assume the role. This is the righteous in action. For all time, this is God's will for his kingdom, a kingdom of priests.

In Jesus' name, I come against all dividing walls. I pray against false ideas that make distinctions between priest and people. Prepare God's servants for every deceitful attack. As we await our Lord's return, give us joy in fulfilling his will and allow us to embrace the reality of a kingdom of priests. Amen.

*

Melchizedek

*

Throughout the investigation, a name, perhaps an alias, appears that captures the attention of the lead inspector. It was a matter of time before the evidence shined a light on him, yet no one seemed to know his identity. Though a team of detectives had worked hard on the case, they could not determine his name.

Officially, he was a “person of interest.” Inspectors from the department were convinced that to solve the mystery they had to learn all they could about this mystery man. But where would they start?

Person of interest

Any credible study of *The Priests of God* must confront the subject of Melchizedek. Scripture describes him as *priest of God Most High*. Even his name invites curiosity. Without fanfare, our person of interest steps onto the Bible’s center stage with another hero. Afterward, he vanishes, as if into thin air. *Genesis 14* is where we start:

*Then Melchizedek, king of Salem brought out bread and wine.
He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying,
“Blessed be Abram, by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.
And blessed be God Most High,
who delivered your enemies into your hand.”
Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

Genesis 14:18-20

Can we say that Melchizedek demonstrates his standing with God by blessing Abram? Earlier God had said to Abraham, “*I will bless those who bless you...*” (*Genesis 12:3a*).

Melchizedek is *priest of God Most High*. His actions are consistent with his title. In this phrase, there is an implied definite article. It does not read “*a priest of God Most High*.” He is simply *priest of God*, as in “the one and only” high priest. Does this indicate he held a unique and lofty position among the people of his time? In *Psalms 110* we find out he was the head of an order. An order named after him means he was the original. From him would come many.

In *Genesis*, we have examples of priestly functions, such as sacrificing to God; however, in *Genesis 14*, we have our first reference to “priest.” This means Melchizedek is earth’s first appointed and anointed *priest of God*. He is the prototype. This makes him a bona fide manifestation of the woman’s seed of *Genesis 3:15*, but more on that later.

Even with the revelation that the Melchizedek in *Genesis 14* is a type of first-fruits of a holy priesthood, we still have little to go on—that is, if it were not for references in *Psalms* and *Hebrews*. We tend to gloss over material we do not fully understand, but the day of insight is upon us! It is time to boldly dig into this mystery. In searching the matter out, we may discover royal roots (*Proverbs 25:2*). Let us place Melchizedek under the bright lights of the Word. In doing so, we will be amazed at what we find.

Regarding *Psalms 110*, most agree it is prophecy concerning the future glory of Christ. The psalm’s focus was not on the priest Melchizedek, but on his order. He was king of Salem, (“king of peace”). His name translates “king of righteousness” (*Hebrews 7:1-2*). This is the royal part. He is the priest of God Most High. That speaks for itself of his priesthood. There is no separation of functions, as in the separation of church and state. Melchizedek is both king and priest. We will file this information for now and proceed.

The term *order of Melchizedek* indicates he produces a line of offspring. Periodically one of his seed surfaces displaying their ancestor’s traits as a priest and king. Special investigators ask questions, so, let’s ask some. For instance, about Melchizedek and his priestly seed, who receives the revelation in *Psalms 110:4*? It is David, a royal son of Abraham (*Genesis 17:6*) and a son of the royal line of Judah. David is in the ancestral line of Christ (*Matthew 1:1*).

Next, was David an historical? (Of course!) So, if we concur that the record shows Jesus was born in the royal line of David, then would it not follow that Melchizedek had to be historical also? If so, can we agree there is a possibility that Melchizedek is David’s ancestor; therefore, an ancestor to Jesus also?

Uniting Melchizedek’s priestly and royal line with David’s royal line through Judah—and I would argue David is priestly as well—would it not produce an order of “royal priests”? According to prophecy, Christ’s followers are heirs, *heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ* (*Romans 8:16-17*). What can we prove? Would references to David

as our Millennial king over a united Israel in *Isaiah (55:3)*, *Jeremiah (23:5)* and *Ezekiel (37:24-25)* support our assertion that Melchizedek, David and Christ have common traits and an ancestral link?

To make a judgment, the legal standard is not absolute proof. Readers may want that kind of proof, but that is not the requirement, nor is it God's standard. Faith must be involved. Matters are settled using "beyond a reasonable doubt" as the standard. "Beyond a reasonable doubt" is achieved when or if the preponderance of the evidence supports our argument. Evidence has weight. Weightiest is the testimony of God's Word. It is absolute. Accurately interpreted Scripture is the most reliable and credible of all. Nevertheless, we insist on two or three Biblical references to confirm a matter. Relying on God's Word, we will follow a trail that leads to truth's discovery.

Mystery

The final Melchizedek Scripture references are in *Hebrews*. It is vital to understand the context of *Hebrews* under consideration offers arguments for Jesus' eternal priesthood and its superiority to the order of Levi. From *Hebrews 7*, scholars have concluded Melchizedek was an early appearance of Christ. Put another way, they maintain that the man speaking to Abram (or Abraham) in *Genesis 14* was really Jesus. It may seem like that is true. *Hebrews* does give that impression, yet does God intend for us to draw that conclusion? If we have a mysterious Melchizedek—which obviously we do—is it possible God provided superficial clues to throw off the casual investigator? If ever there was a time to doubt a scholar's conclusion, this is it.

After affirming *we have a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek*, we have wording that sounds like a Biblical mystery.

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High... Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a high priest forever.

Hebrews 7:1a, 3

Like the Son of God, he remains a high priest forever, implies a distinction in persons. Plainly, Melchizedek is not the Son of God, but resembles Him in a specific way. *Like* is a comparison or a simile.

Is there something *Hebrews 7:1-3* is trying to say we would be wise to grasp? The third verse intensifies the mystery by casting a veil over Melchizedek by stating he is *without genealogy*. What if we take this to mean his name does not appear in any of the Bible's genealogies? For a noteworthy figure, this is highly unusual.

A typical genealogy would read like Peleg's in *Genesis 11*.

When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg. And after he became the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu. And after he became the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

Genesis 11:16-19

We will look at Peleg again, but for now, ask yourself, did this man have father or mother? (Yes, this is seen in *Genesis 11:16*). Did he have a beginning of days and end of life? (Yes, it is on record along with his father's record. Peleg lived 209 years based on *Genesis 11:17*). Did Peleg have offspring? How do we know? We have the Bible's trustworthy testimony. The genealogical record of Adam's seed from Noah lists Peleg in Abraham's ancestral line. But where is the priest of God Most High Melchizedek?

A logical explanation is that Melchizedek is absent because Scripture omits the genealogy for Eve's seed. Perhaps this is so God's treasured possession will only be revealed in the last days.

Inheritances were passed from fathers to male heirs. As to property rights, women were almost inconsequential (cf. *Numbers 27:1-7*). Since Melchizedek had no genealogy, then—it could be said—he is without father or mother, no beginning or end of life. This is true when comparing him to Peleg or Abraham. Does this mean Melchizedek was never born, or does it mean the facts of his birth are unknown? Those who work within a system of accountability know the rule: "If it is not recorded, it never happened."

Nothing of what we read in *Hebrews 7* negates Melchizedek's humanity. It only draws us deeper into the mystery. (I maintain this is God's intention). Though *Hebrews 7* seems to contradict my assertion that Melchizedek was fully human, it makes clear he was not Christ, the Son of God. We will leave *Hebrews* for now and return to *Genesis*.

Divided

To borrow a phrase from Sir Winston Churchill, the cloud around Melchizedek is one of many of the Bible's "enigmas wrapped in a mystery." Answers will remain hidden from those who lack an appreciation for God's ways. He delights in veiling his treasures. As with a serious collector, the most valuable items are only shared with a select few who appreciate the worth of what they are seeing. Those who ask, seek and knock receive. *Proverbs* confirms this.

... for attaining wisdom and discipline;
for understanding words of insight...
...for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.

Proverbs 1:2, 6

We pray and ask God for wisdom and discipline as we search for apples of gold in the pages of his Word (*James 1:5*). In *Genesis 11:10-32*, Abram (later Abraham) is found in the line of Noah's eldest son, Shem. Abram is, of course, highly significant to God's story. In *Genesis 12*, the Lord pronounced him *father of a great nation* (the Israelites). In *Genesis 17:4-7*, God re-named Abram, Abraham, which means "father of many nations."

Let us go further back in time, to generations after Noah. There lived the afore-mentioned Peleg, Abram's ancestor. His *Genesis 10* introduction includes the curious statement: "...in his time the earth was divided..." (*Genesis 10:25b*). (Pause a moment.) Peleg's name means "division." A clue could be a string, or a strand of hair or a fingerprint. Something small can be very significant. In Peleg's *time, the earth was divided* according to *Genesis 10:25*, but what does this mean? It is a mystery begging to be explored.

The earth was divided, but who divided it? If we proceed on the assumption God did, we suspect it is event of monumental proportion. What was divided during Peleg's two centuries on earth?

If you ever watched a skilled detective, they may depart from the path of the obvious to follow a hunch. Something called intuition, which is a combination of experience and instinct. It might lead an investigator in an unpredicted direction. Call it a hunch or speculation, but there is something in *Genesis 10:25* that probably unlocks our mystery. We should know soon enough.

Some have cited *Genesis 10:25* to support “Continental Drift,” a theory first argued in 1915 by Alfred Wegener. The theory proposes continents were a single land mass that expanded leaving oceans and seas. Renamed “plate tectonics” in the 1950’s, the theory gained wide acceptance from scientists based on supportive geological and fossil evidence. Continental Drift cannot be proven, but we see the effects.

Some claim that, since creation, the cosmos has been expanding. Scripture as well as the Continental Drift theory back this up.

*I am the LORD,
the maker of all things,
who stretches out the heavens,
who spreads out the earth by myself.*

Isaiah 44:24

Continental drift gives a plausible explanation of how migration occurred. For example, why do Asia’s Mongols strongly resemble Native Americans. How was Australia, a continent surrounded by a great sea, populated with Aborigines? Or how did Polynesians migrate to remote Pacific islands? After God dispersed the people of Babel, in *Genesis 11*, how did thousands of languages fill the earth? Citing geological evidence of a global cataclysm, the most plausible answer is that a major catastrophic event created natural barriers of mountains, deserts and waters. Afterward, people groups were divided and became isolated. What else explains how the Genesis’ Flood story appears among cultures throughout the earth?

Is continental drift implied in *Genesis 10:25b*? We cannot say for sure, but it cannot be dismissed either. We ask, “What else could ‘divided’ refer to?” A change in the earth’s topography is not all that may have divided. Another division, one with an impact on God’s plan for all nations, may also have occurred.

What if the division had to do with a promise in *Genesis 3*?

So the LORD said to the serpent, “Because you have done this...

*“And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.”*

Genesis 3:14a, 15

What if the division in Peleg's time veiled *the woman* (above) in mystery? What if the dividing prevented the devil's ability to trace her seed? I am referring to *the woman* in *Genesis 3:14*, the mysterious woman and mother to the saints in *Revelation 12:13-17*.

Ask a biology student and they will tell you that for reproduction to occur there must be a male and female. It will not be the man's seed, but the woman's that crushes Satan's head (*Romans 16:20*).

Since the promise of Satan's demise was specific to the woman's offspring (*Genesis 3:15*), we should agree the fulfillment resides in her womb. (*Hebrews 7:3-9* makes a similar argument. Regarding the superiority of Melchizedek's order, we see Abram gave him a tenth. The lesser tithes to the greater. Therefore, Melchizedek was greater because, at that time, Levi's order was still in Abraham's loins).

Named in Abraham's line in *Genesis 11* are the royal offspring from Noah and Shem. We assume Peleg provided the royal and his wife the priestly seed. From their union, Abraham and Sarah were birthed generations later.

At that time the earth was divided may be intended to alert Bible detectives to another path of inquiry: What if the precious seed of the woman in Peleg's time divided and began to scatter over the earth? What if daughters of Eve gave birth to families or communities of migrants that eventually populated distant islands and remote villages? What if we take "divided" to mean some of the woman's seed was scattered to the four winds, while others bearing Messiah's seed remained near to where Bible events later took place? The woman's seed never disappeared; it only dispersed.

Families can look at their histories as examples. My cousin had three daughters, one traveled far to the east, settling in Italy, another went southwest to Arizona, in America, and the third stayed close in the eastern U.S.—and that's only one generation! Division in Peleg's time may have included several generations of sons and daughters. Implied is that the patriarch's children scattered.

Assuming continental drift is more than a theory, scattering people by language and oceans indicates God presented Satan with an impossible challenge: Since the woman's seed was dispersed throughout the world, how was he to eliminate her as a threat? Too many seed-bearers were in too many places to prevent the evil one's fate, a crushed head.

One mystery regarding the offspring of the woman has been cloaked in mystery until the last days. The woman's seed will join with Abraham's seed (Jacob's male descendants). United, they produce the kingdom and priests foretold in *Revelation 1:5-6*. During Messiah's soon coming 1000-year reign, Abraham's seed and the woman's priestly seed will reveal one new man and woman. They will number as the sands on the seashore or the stars in the sky. This is one of the amazing signs revealed in prophecy.

In antiquity, women were not included in genealogies. Lists of generations of daughters and mothers are non-existent. We know nothing of Peleg's daughters, for example, other than he had them. God appointed one woman after the other to reproduce her kind.

Two kings meet

Before the Flood, the devil needed only to corrupt Seth's offspring. God prevented it. The evil one's efforts to corrupt godly seed was foiled by the Flood. From Peleg, when the earth and righteous offspring divided, Satan's corruption focused on a few male offspring of Shem and their seed.

As numbers increased, tribes grew into people groups, then nations with kings to rule over them. For protection, kings built fortified cities. Armies were formed by kings for the security and prosperity of their kingdoms. Some used their might to plunder the weak. Some kings sought glory and riches.

Abram was a *wandering Aramean (Deuteronomy 26:5)*, which means he was a stranger in the land of Aram (the northwestern area of the Euphrates River). Although Scripture does not give Abram the title of king, he was one: *Genesis 13* states he ruled over a large household. He was rich in servants, silver, gold, flocks and livestock. What he lacked was land, which made him a wanderer. Abram did not possess property by God's design. The Lord's promise of land made in *Genesis 15*, was for Abraham's descendants.

We return to the events in *Genesis 14*. Retaliation against an alliance of four raiding kings led Abram into battle. As a king-like ruler of a multitude of servants, Abram had a standing army. He had 318 men trained to fight and to protect his household (*Genesis 14:14*). It was not until Abram's nephew, Lot, was captured that God's servant went to war. Avoiding alliances with other kings, he acted alone to locate his nephew and rescue him from the raiders.

Since the Lord was with Abram and blessed him, he succeeded where others failed. The kings of Sodom (where Lot lived) and Gomorrah had fought the raiders, yet suffered defeat.

Abram refused to form an alliance with Sodom and Gomorrah. It was not for the cities of the plain that he pursued their enemy. It was to save Lot and his household.

When Abram returned in victory with freed captives and the spoils of war, he was greeted by Sodom's king. As a reward to Abram, the king offered a share in the rescued possessions.

But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.'"

Genesis 14:22

Abram's response brings us to our premise regarding the seed. It must be protected. Intermarriage between the woman's and the devil's seed must be prevented. An illustration is God's command in *2 Corinthians 6:14*, "*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?*"

A pledge was made, Abram would reject fellowship with Sodom's king. His mission was not for Sodom's benefit, or to add to his wealth. Abram's motivation was Lot, the probable heir to his household and estate. In *Genesis 19*, Lot would need the help of angels to escape Sodom before it was destroyed. Lot violated the law of the fellowship of light with darkness. The violation forever corrupting his seed.

Abram accepted nothing from Sodom, not even a thread, or a thong of a sandal. Can we guess why God made Abram promise to take nothing? Could it be that everything of Sodom's was polluted by idolatry and dedicated for destruction? As with Jericho in *Joshua 6*, God wanted all the silver and gold of Sodom and Gomorrah committed to the smoldering ash heap.

Idolatry dominated Ur, the city from which Abram came. It was not that he would be isolated, but that the Lord wanted him separated from idolaters. When someone is on the path of self-destruction, it is always best to distance oneself. It was enough that Lot lived among the Sodomites. If Satan could draw Abram into the relationship Lot

had, then he would also become corrupted. But Abram kept his distance, guarding his seed and that of Sarah.

Abram's reaction to Melchizedek, as opposed to Sodom's king, was very different. Verse 18 shows a bond between Abram and the King of Salem (king of peace). This is an interesting piece of evidence: In Melchizedek, we have a priest manifested in righteousness and royalty. He was a type of Christ, yet he was not Christ. In Abraham, we have a man of faith, a father of kings, also a model for Christ. The two represent "righteousness and faithfulness," the descriptive name given for the Holy City or the New Jerusalem (*Isaiah 1:26*).

It was Abram (Abraham), *father of a great nation* (*Genesis 14:13*), the seed from which nations and kings would fill the earth (*Genesis 17:3-7*), along with Melchizedek, the "King of Salem." Melchizedek lived among the people who would remain outside of Abraham's covenant, yet it was the priest of God Most High who "blessed the father of our faith" and offered bread and wine.

When these men came together In *Genesis 14*, there was no altar built for a sacrifice. Instead, the bread and wine of fellowship were shared representing communion between saint and Redeemer. This was the division: Two orders to whom God revealed himself. Divided perhaps by ethnicity, language or culture, but united in worship.

The greater

The man standing before Abram was known throughout the east. By the time they encountered one another, it had been centuries since the earth was divided. Scripture has recorded the moment Melchizedek and Abram experienced true fellowship. Was this divine appointment in or near Salem, the land of the Jebusites (Jebus Salem)? Was this the reason God Most High brought Abram from Ur, and then from his place among the Arameans? Was the ground on which they stood holy?

The two kings of God became one as they praised the Creator of heaven and earth. In Scripture, we will not witness their like together again—two seed bearers blessing the LORD, God Most High—not until Jethro, priest of Midian, sits with Moses and partakes of the wine and bread (*Exodus 18:1-12*). We'll look at that reunion later.

In *Psalms 110:4*, we have an example of divine wisdom choosing David as the prophet who revealed Melchizedek's order of priests.

This prophecy in the *Psalms* did not escape the attention of the writer of *The Book of Hebrews*.

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

Hebrews 6:19- 7:3

As *Hebrews* continues its argument, we learn Melchizedek and Abram came together in *Genesis 14:18* revealing the former's authority over the latter. *Hebrews* states, “Just think how great he [Melchizedek] was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder!” (*Hebrews 7:4*)

The man the Bible calls “the father of our faith” has long been regarded as a great hero—and rightly so! Yet, in Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, we have, according to God's standards, someone greater than Abraham! We have a king and priest from whom an eternal priesthood derives its name, an order chosen by the Father for his Royal Son.

Since Jesus is *High Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek*, would it mean our Lord is also his offspring, in the line of Eve? There have been many priests in this order, and more to be revealed, but Scripture only highlights a few. They are veiled in humility like the mother who bore the Son in *Revelation 12:5* and those who *obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (12:17)*. Does Jesus' High Priest title indicate there will be many priests in his order? Does it mean there is a priesthood over which Christ exercises authority? Is this priesthood made up of brothers and sisters who share a common ancestry (*Hebrews 2:12*)?

If this is reasonable, then there is one conclusion to be made: As we approach Jesus' return, many will learn they are Melchizedek's seed (physical as well as spiritual). If they bear this seed, they are

destined to be royal priests and priestesses with Christ. Does this explain why the devil has spared no effort to harm the saints?

If what I offer is accurate—and I am confident it is—think of the implications. Revealed in the last days will be a new order, for the old Levitical and ecclesiastical order will make way for the new. Unlike much of what we call the priesthood, with its attention to religious affairs and material things, will submit to prophets, priests and rulers of the coming age. Resurrected from the pages of Scripture are priests who become kings and prophets who are priests. They will serve as judges in the Kingdom. They will rule under the authority of the King of kings and Lord of all lords, their high priest.

Priestly offspring

If, suddenly, the investigator's eyes open wide, it is because he is on to something. The tangent he took was not a diversion, but a path to discovery. He found a treasure. Stepping into the room full of gold coins and jewelry was an accident, or was it? There is something about Melchizedek that promises much more.

Perhaps the most surprising qualification of Melchizedek's priestly order is noted in the *Hebrews 2* example of Jesus:

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering...

For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 2:10, 17-18

Could it be that membership in the royal priesthood of God involves embracing Christ's suffering (*2 Timothy 2:12b*)? Since our High Priest suffered to make atonement for sin, we, too, as a *royal priesthood* (*1 Peter 2:9*), must follow in his steps (*1 Peter 2:21*). Priestly offspring are afflicted for the same cause. Privilege is costly, but the royal seed of Melchizedek refuses to shrink back from the path God has chosen.

We will continue to follow this thread through Scripture. For now, as a priest of God, a formidable challenge presents itself. It appears,

that to enlist as a member, we must enter the suffering of others in the order, as well as that of the Lord. In Melchizedek's order, affliction is necessary to perfect or complete the qualifications for God's priesthood. Knowing stories of Melchizedek's offspring should help prepare the last day saints to achieve their destiny as priests of God. We will even learn from Melchizedek himself.

Honored

Years ago, in a Friday evening assembly in a church, I joined hundreds of other Vietnam veterans as we watched a legless U.S. Marine in his dress-blue uniform being wheeled to a microphone. We stood to honor him as he began to speak. He sat erect displaying a colorful array of ribbons earned while in service to his country.

Listening that evening to this warrior left me with no doubt who was the greatest among the great in that building. Not just because this soldier suffered—many vets did—but the Marine I saw demonstrated the glory and stature his suffering produced.

I treasure the moments I had the following day, sitting next to him. I had heard his stirring testimony. I had no problem stating the obvious and admitting he was a better man. I would proudly serve him the bread and wine of fellowship...but first, I must earn the right.

*

*My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding,
and if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
and if you look for it as silver
and search for it as hidden treasure,
then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.*

Proverbs 2:1-5

The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

Daniel 2:47

The Search

*

The royal ball had ended. If he was ever to see the beautiful maiden again, the prince had to find the owner of the glass slipper. As determined as his son, the king dispatched servants throughout the kingdom. Their search was for the foot that fit the slipper. Nothing would make the king happier than welcoming to the palace the woman who stole the prince's heart.

Considering her stunning appearance and unmatched grace, Cinderella was found in an unlikely circumstance. The future princess was in rags, on her hands and knees, scrubbing a floor. Mistreated by her step-mother and evil step-sisters, she managed to preserve her sweetness. In the hands of the royal servants, Cinderella's true heart and goodness would be rewarded at long last.

Find the fit

The prince coveted his prize. He needed to know the radiant eyes and lovely face were not an apparition. Her perfection and sudden exit at the stroke of midnight led others to suggest she was an angel. He could not argue their point, but, still, he had held her hand. He knew she was real. The glass slipper she left behind was not imagined.

What the fairy tale prince believed about Cinderella, I am convinced is true about Melchizedek. I am certain the priest who served Abram bread and wine, was a flesh and blood man. If it is as I think, then Melchizedek is discover-able in our Bible. We are on a royal mission. We have a few verses that only fit one person. So, let us search, not for a foot, but for the person. Find the fit and we solve the mystery.

Melchizedek's identity presents a challenge, yet we are on the King's business and He wants him unveiled. As servants, if we look in the Bible for a mysterious figure, someone who virtually appears out of nowhere, then we may have our man. If he exhibits traits of a prophet, priest and king, then I assume we have a fit. As with Cinderella, might we discover Melchizedek in a most unlikely circumstance? For example, could he be found outside *The Books of Moses* or outside the Bible's historical books? Is there a man with the

in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you. ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

Matthew 22:29-32

Jesus reminded the Sadducees of God’s words to Moses from a burning bush (*Exodus 3:6*), so are Abraham, Isaac or Jacob among the dead or among the living? In *Luke 16:22*, we see a rich man before enduring a “second death.” The patriarchs died once, yet they remain today very much alive (cf. *John 11:25*).

Add David to the list

Eternal life is God’s gift. From Job’s introduction, we cannot deny he was a believer (*Job 1:1*). What about David, the greatest of Israel’s kings? Is he dead? It says he became *old and full of years*, a prelude to dying (*1 Chronicles 23:1*).

David son of Jesse was king over all of Israel... He died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor.

1 Chronicles 29:26, 28a

If David died and remains that way, then the world has seen the last of him. Is that so? Isaiah lived centuries after the time of David. The Word of the Lord came to the prophet, and said,

*I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.*

*See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander of the peoples.*

Isaiah 55:3b-4

Long after Isaiah died, the Word of God was spoken to Jeremiah.

*“In that day,’ declares the LORD Almighty,
‘I will break the yoke off their necks
and tear off their bonds;*

*no longer will foreigners enslave them.
Instead, they will serve the LORD their God
and David their king,
whom I will raise up for them.”*

Jeremiah 30:8-9

Many regard Pentecost in Acts 2 as the Church's birth. Among the Jews, were representatives of all nations. The disciples had also gathered for the feast when the Spirit descended. The result was the multiplication and proliferation of holy servants.

God set apart witnesses like Saul (Paul) to declare His glory to the nations (*Galatians 1:11-17*). He was a chosen instrument to carry the name of the Lord to the Gentiles and to scattered Israel (*Acts 9:15*).

Following the apostles' model, early disciples proclaimed Christ to distant peoples. In a short time, loyal followers had grown in number until they were a great multitude. In every town where they proclaimed the gospel, churches formed around those confessing Jesus.

The Book of Acts is a glimpse into the future for God's holy servants. As an end-time's manifestation of the Church, the innumerable crowd in *Revelation 7:9* will be represented by an army of 144,000 of Jacob's offspring. Twelve thousand from each of Israel's favored tribes will serve under the Lord's command. All will earned the privilege by passing the love and purity tests (*Revelation 14:4-5*).

Their Commander is none other than *the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation (Revelation 3:14b)*. As the Great Day of the Lord unfolds, the armies of heaven will appear on white horses following their King and High Priest. The army of God is not wearing armor, but the white linen of priests. Their fight is over. Their battle has been won (*Revelation 12:11*). They serve only as eyewitnesses to God's vengeance (*Psalms 37:34* and *91:8*). The last battle of the age belongs to the Lord (*Deuteronomy 32:34-35a*).

This is the message of the true Church, a declaration of glory and victory that will echo throughout all generations: "Jesus Christ is Lord." This confession from the mouths of holy servants will be heralded until time is no more.

Those who claim that the Church will escape (i.e. not endure) a time of great distress, do not know the prophetic Scriptures nor the vital role of Melchizedek's priests. When the Lord bares his mighty arm to save, he chooses eyewitnesses that will forever testify to his marvelous works. Those born during the Millennium will need to hear of the deliverance of the saints, and of those who patiently endured Antichrist's oppressive rule until the end (*Daniel 7:25-27*).

As to the 144,000, they are sealed by God, bearing his mark on their forehead (*Revelation 7:3, 14:1*). They are divinely protected from death and spared of God's wrath (*Revelation 9:4*). They do not "avoid"

but are “kept while in the midst of” as witnesses to the woes and plagues on evildoers (*John 17:15-21*). The gathered are safe in the sheepfold prepared for the flock (ex. Goshen, *Exodus 9:25-26*).

A difference between the wicked and the righteous is their witness. The wicked testify to the lie. They are ungrateful and refuse to give praise and glory to God. Since they are controlled by their sinful nature, they will not take a stand for Christ or endure with patience. The righteous, however, are overcomers.

He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderer, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

Revelation 21:7-8

Martyrs

Those who love their life will lose it; those willing to lose their lives for Jesus’ sake will find it. Living with abandon is the goal of servants. Read Christ’s encouragement to believers in Smyrna.

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Revelation 2:10-11

Martyrdom is a choice. For the redeemed in the last days, it may be the only option. Priests of God will be ready to be poured out like a drink offering. Decisions to *be faithful even to the point of death* are made in advance. A crown from the Master will be the reward.

With the opening of the fifth seal, John witnessed souls under the altar in heaven. *They had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained (Revelation 6:9).*

They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their

Change set laws

Where do we read God's estimation of His Word? Is it in the Old Testament, the part too often unjustly criticized?

*The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul.*

*The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.*

*The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.*

*The fear of the LORD is pure
enduring forever.*

*The ordinances of the LORD are sure
and altogether righteous.*

*They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;*

*they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the comb.*

***By them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.***

Psalm 19:7-11

In this psalm, God's commands receive the highest praise. Why will many miss the warnings, but expect the rewards? Is it because they have a different opinion of the Law than God does? We are all for the blessings, but do we know the benefits of obedience to God's ordinances? His priests do. It was like this in Israel before the Assyrian captivity or Judah's exile. God's law was ignored. Sin abounded. The sword of devastation followed. Through the prophets and in the law, his people had been warned (*Deuteronomy 28:15-68*).

Who is the provocateur that seeks to change the set times of God, as well as his set laws? We know him as Satan, God's adversary. In the last days, the adversary plans to do his best to undermine the Word through the Antichrist and his false prophets.

*"He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints
and try to change the set times and the laws."*

Daniel 7:25a

The sovereign rule of God is at stake. Will He permit rebellion? We see signs of the rise of the law-breakers.

“In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior.”

Daniel 8:23-25a

Who will oppose the stern-faced king, this master of intrigue? Unlike the rebels, holy servants, will arise and speak with power the decrees of the Lord. *Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him? (Revelation 13:4b)* God’s priests will answer the call.

The heavens declare the glory of God. On display is His accurate foretelling of events (his law) and the exact time they will appear (his set time). In the sky, he placed the sun and moon. He prophecies about what will soon take place based on signs in the heavens.

Completed Christians

A goal of *The Prophets, Priests and Kings Series* is to instruct the saints about where God is going. He wants his people to know in advance, so they will be ready. Despite all the enemy’s schemes, the devil is powerless to thwart the Lord’s purposes. It is time to lift the veil of prophecy that has darkened the minds of God’s saints.

The Lord has declared that Jew and Gentile will reunite as Israel. We read this in *Deuteronomy 30, Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 37, Hosea 1, Micah 2* and *John 10:16*. In the disciple’s question to Jesus in *Acts 1:6*, we note a regathering is assumed.

Christ’s yet unfulfilled mission is the restoration of the Kingdom ruled by David and Solomon. For this to occur, Jesus must physically return as the Lion from the Tribe of Judah and make his enemies a foot stool for his feet (*Psalms 110:1*). When all rebellion is crushed, the kingdom will belong to the saints, God’s people Israel, for everlasting ages to come (*Daniel 7:27, 9:20, 24*).

A word often used for Jews who confess Jesus as their Messiah is “completed.” “Completed Jews” preview the devout among the house of Judah who will *look upon the one whom they pierced and*