

King of Righteousness and Peace – *Hebrews 7:1-2*

Introduction – In light of the theme of Music Camp this year, I chose this text to consider some of what it means that Jesus is King. In this text, we witness the importance of meditating on the Word of God, on the stories, prophecies, and fulfillment of Scripture, and what it means to dig a bit deeper, to think more broadly along the lines of the flow of the Bible as it is given to us (Heb 6:1-3). Regarding Paul's exposition here, Spurgeon comments in his introduction, *"He makes more of words and names than any of us should have thought of doing, and he was guided therein by the Spirit of the Lord, and therefore he was right. For my part, I am far more afraid of making too little of the Word than of seeing too much in it."*

The Text – *"For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated 'king of righteousness,' and then also king of Salem, meaning 'king of peace,'"*

This Melchizedek – The point of the book of Hebrews is to declare the supremacy of Christ in His person, His offices, and His administration of the New Covenant for His people. The author turns to Melchizedek, an ancient king of Salem (possibly an early name for Jerusalem). Like Jesus, he too was a priest of the Most High God. In Hebrew, his name *melek* means king and *zedek* means righteousness. After being the king of righteousness (*"...and then also..."*), he also was the king of Salem, which should be interpreted, "king of peace." King of righteousness, and then, king of peace. This is one sense in which Jesus became High Priest and King, *"according to the order of Melchizedek"* (Psalm 110:4, Heb 6:20).

King of Righteousness and Our Problem – Not only is Jesus a righteous king, He is the King of righteousness and His kingdom is righteous. Jesus was and is perfectly righteous; His moral perfections embody His entire Person and Life. He is perfectly holy. The problem in the world is not how to make Christ more attractive to men, but rather how to make men more attractive to Christ. The fact is we are all unrighteous and therefore excluded from citizenship in His kingdom. The problem is set succinctly for us in Romans 3:10-12, 23, *"...there is none righteous, no not one...for we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

Unrighteous Men Who Want Peace – There is no way of enjoying peace, real eternal peace, without first experiencing real eternal righteousness. But how could God be just (righteous) and at the same time the One Who justifies (declares us righteous)? He could not be righteous and simply overlook our unrighteousness. But just as Melchizedek came and blessed Abraham, so Christ came in the order of Melchizedek to bestow righteousness on the sons of Abraham, those with the faith of Abraham. He did so on the cross as High Priest, offering Himself as the perfect substitutionary sacrifice. There is no real peace without this imputed righteousness.

Righteousness and Then Peace – The Scriptures promised this for those who would believe (Psalm 85:10, Isaiah 32, esp v17). When righteousness is avoided, a faux-peace will be exposed; but when true righteousness is given, then peace will be a reality. But only in that order. Life without the atonement of Jesus Christ will always cycle down into utter ruin, death, and judgment. Jesus would not take Satan's offer to receive from him the kingdoms of this world (Luke 4:5-8) in an act of unrighteousness. Instead, He came, bound the strong man through His death, burial and resurrection, and plundered his house (Matt 12:29). In the same way, to confess that Jesus was a good man, a good teacher, a good example, a good myth without acknowledging His righteousness and our need for His atoning work, is to make a demonic confession (James 2:19). There is no real peace for the Unitarians, the religious-liberals, the agnostics and atheists, who acknowledge some good in the teachings of Christ, but refuse to confess their need for forgiveness through His blood.

Finally, in the ongoing sanctification of every believer, ongoing peace is a result of ongoing acknowledgment of His righteousness, our own sin and confession thereof. He is the sin-killing King who forgives us, cleansing us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-10).

Righteousness and Peace Have Kissed – "Therefore, having been justified (righteoused) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). And so –

Gospel Righteousness is Offered – There is a Way for any sinner to have peace with God, but only one Way.

Godly Righteousness in a World against God – We cannot have peace with the world by avoiding righteousness.

The Fellowship of Righteousness and Peace – Because God has accomplished both, He loves you with a perfect love. In the righteousness of Christ, He puts His child at perfect peace with Himself.

A Violent Work of Righteousness and Peace – The Son of God goes forth to war, and He will have the nations for Himself. Psalm 110 describes this violent kingly rule according to the order of Melchizedek (vv4-7). There are none who can stand in His way. Not the greatest kings, not the strongest nations, not the devil himself – even his head will be crushed.