

The Advent of Righteousness and Peace – *Hebrews 7:1-3*

Introduction – Advent is the beginning of the church year and includes the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Advent means “coming” or “arrival” and historically the Church has celebrated the anticipation and arrival of God’s comings to save His people. Of course, the greatest historical arrival of God coming is that of Emmanuel, of God coming in the Person of Jesus (Phil 2:5-7). This has happened; He did arrive. Remembering that arrival through celebration is a great balm when trials, persecutions, doubts, and unconfessed sin tempt you to forget what came in that Christmas package.

Hebrews – The whole book of Hebrews is about remembering all the signs that were pointing to the advent of Christ, and the fulfillment of those types that He was. The occasion is probably during suffering and trials that the recipients of the letter were under such that they were tempted to reject or compromise their faith and return to their Jewish traditions which in fact would be the denial of the Person and work of Jesus (Heb 10:26-31). He is greater than all those types and shadows they were tempted to return to. He is greater for you, as well, than any cheap knock off version of salvation, joy, fulfillment, and peace. Advent is the season to remember that (Heb 1:1-4). Melchizedek is just one of those stories, those types and shadows, that offers us a picture into some of what that Gift was and is.

This Melchizedek (Heb 7:1-3) – After rescuing his nephew, Lot, from a battle between nine kings, a mysterious tenth king arrives with attendant blessings (Gen 14:18-20). The Lord wants us to see something in this. In Melchizedek, kingship and priesthood were united as they would be in Jesus. More importantly, in His kingship righteousness and peace are united (Heb 7:1-2). 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 over the world. In chapter 7, Christ is proven to be greater than Abraham because He is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4, Heb 6:20ff). This ancient king is greater than Abraham because the greater blesses the lesser (v7) and received tithes from Abraham (vv4, 9-10). Without genealogy and without a date of birth or death in the text, he provides us with a prophetic picture of the Son of God (v3).

King of Righteousness and Our Problem – Not only is Jesus a righteous king; He is the King of righteousness and His kingdom is where righteousness resides. 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 God more attractive to men, but rather how to make men more attractive to God. 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.

Advent is the remembrance/celebration of God coming to take care of a problem that we could not solve. Christmas is not simply the declaration of Good News, but of hard news. The world needed a Savior. We all needed righteousness and peace – and there was none to be found.

Righteousness and Then Peace – The Scriptures promised this for those who would believe (Psalm 85:10, Isaiah 32:17). When righteousness is avoided (by trying to justify your sin, by trying to fake it with works-based salvation), any semblance of peace turns out only to be a calm before the storm, a moment of silence before the enmity reignites. 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. This is so important to remember and celebrate during Advent/Christmas when we are tempted to “celebrate the holidays” rather than the Advent of the King of kings over all.

And, 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 –

*No more let sin and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love*