

## MELCHIZEKEDIAN PRIESTHOOD AND THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

\* \* \* CONSECRATION OF JESUS AS PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK \* \* \*

S.L.H.  
Soli Deo Gloria!

"Where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made  
an high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."  
(Hebrews 6:20)

**Introduction.** Why did Jesus insist on being baptized by John (Matt3:15)? The baptism of Jesus certainly did not represent any repentance on His part, nor did He confess any sins at His baptism (cf. Matt3:6; Luk3:3). Rather, something much more profound was accomplished in the baptism of Jesus, especially in that it was performed by John. To understand what happened at the baptism of Jesus, the relationship between Melchizedek and John the Baptist must be recognized.

**Melchizedek and His Priesthood.** Melchizedek is much more than a name, it is a title. Melchizedek means "King of righteousness" (Heb7:2). Under the order of Melchizedek, the offices of king, priest, and prophet are united (Heb7:1-2). The Melchizedekian priesthood is not a secret or mysterious order, it is simply the priesthood that was authorized by the Most High God (i.e., JEHOVAH) before the establishment of the (temporary) Mosaic covenant (cf. Gen14:18; Heb7:1). The first Melchizedekian priest was Adam, who was created to be both king (Gen1:26,28) and instructed to offer sacrifices (Gen3:21). In the days of Abraham, Melchizedek was Noah's son Shem (Jasher 16:11; see the APPENDIX: SHEM AS MELCHIZEDEK).

With the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant, the Melchizedekian priesthood was paused. Under the Law of Moses, the offices of king, priest, and prophet were separated, with an especially hard separation between king and priest. Kings were to come from the tribe of Judah (Gen49:10) and the line of David (2Sam7:11-16), whereas priests were to come from the tribe of Levi (Num8:19) and the line of Aaron (Exod29:9). More than once a Jewish king attempted to intrude upon the office of the priest, and each time he was immediately judged by JEHOVAH (e.g., Saul in 1Sam13:8-14; Uzziah in 2Chron26:16-21). Then, in the days following the death of David, the Aaronic priesthood was divided in their loyalties; the priests under Abiathar sided with Adonijah in his failed attempt to usurp the throne (1Kgs1:5,7), while the priests under Zadok remained faithful to Solomon, whom David had chosen to succeed him (1Kgs1:39,43). One of Solomon's first acts as king was to permanently disqualify Abiathar and his descendants from serving as priests (1Kgs2:27; a fulfillment of the cutting off of the line of Eli prophesied in 1 Samuel 2:27-35); from that point forward, the legitimate priesthood was descended from Zadok (1Kgs2:35; 1Chron29:22) and known as the "sons of Zadok" (Ezek44:15) rather than the sons of Aaron. The Hebrew name Zadok means "righteousness", and it is no coincidence that the second half of the title Melchizedek is Zadok.

**Who Was John the Baptist?** John's father was Zacharias, a priest who served faithfully in the 1st century Temple (Luk1:5-9). Thus, Zacharias and his son John were descended from Zadok. John was born to be a Zadokian priest, and his service had only just begun when he baptized Jesus at "thirty years of age" (Luk3:23; Cp., Num4:23).

Furthermore, John was associated with the Jewish sect known as the Essenes<sup>1</sup>, who lived at Qumran. The Essene community at Qumran was comprised of faithful Zadokian priests and their families who fled from Jerusalem and reestablished themselves in the wilderness (Matt3:1) when the priesthood was corrupted in the second century BC; they apparently took the vast library of sacred and historical writings (or copies of them) from the Temple with them to their wilderness community, which today are known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. John's baptisms in the Jordan river took place at Bethabara (Jn1:28), approximately 8 miles from Qumran.

**What Happened at the Baptism of Jesus?** John's baptism of Jesus was not a baptism of repentance, but the one-time consecration of a priest by washing<sup>2</sup> (cf. Exod29:4; 40:12; Lev8:6). In baptizing Jesus, John (a priest in the line of Zadok; cf. Luk7:28) reestablished the Melchizedekian priesthood in the Person of Jesus Christ (who had been "born King of the Jews"; Matt2:2). Zechariah prophesied this would happen, and that the reunification of the offices of king and priest would occur in one named "Joshua" (i.e., Jesus; Zech6:11). Jesus Himself said He must be baptized by John in order to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt3:15; note, Zadok means "righteousness"). It also happened that "the Spirit of God descend[ed] . . . upon him" (Matt3:16), empowering Jesus as a prophet; thus, at the baptism of Jesus the offices of king, priest, and prophet were reunited in one Person for the first time since before the Mosaic covenant.

Jesus' work on the cross was a sacrifice for the sins of the world (Heb9:26-28; 1Jn2:2). When He ascended to heaven and offered His own blood on the mercy seat of the Temple in heaven (Heb9:22-26), He did so as a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps110:4; Heb7:21). Thus, Jesus must have been ordained into that priestly order before His crucifixion; He was so ordained at His baptism by John<sup>3</sup>.

**Conclusion.** The death of Christ ended the Mosaic covenant and inaugurated the New covenant (Heb9:15-16). Along with this transition, the Levitical priesthood ended, and the Melchizedekian priesthood was reestablished in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The baptism of Jesus by John was His consecration as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, performed by the final Zadokian priest of the dispensation of the Law.

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<sup>1</sup> The Jewish Essenes have been unfairly maligned by being conflated with the more prominent Egyptian Essenes, who were Gnostics and occultists. There was no relationship between the Jewish and Egyptian Essenes.

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word translated "wash" in these verses means *bathe*; it was accomplished by immersion, and it is the Mosaic practice that becomes baptism in the N.T.

<sup>3</sup> At John's baptism of Jesus, he introduced Him as "the lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn1:29); thus, John recognized even before Jesus' public ministry began that his primary mission would be priestly in nature.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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