

because Melchizedek is mentioned several times of the course of several chapters. Instead we will refer to specific verses as they become relevant to our study.)

Genesis 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he **was the priest of the most high God.** **19** And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: **20** And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

Psalm 110:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. **2** The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. **3** Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. **4** The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, **Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.** **5** The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. **6** He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. **7** He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

In each passage, Melchizedek is identified as a priest. This identification of Melchizedek as a priest is intriguing. Certainly, pagan priests existed among other ancient peoples. Likewise, the Old Testament recognized pre-Abrahamic figures as prophets and at least one post-Abrahamic Gentile (Balaam) as a prophet of God. However, Melchizedek is a unique and peculiar instance of a non-Levitical priest of God who is identified, not as a pagan priest, but as a priest of the Most High God. This fact, clearly attested to in both Testaments, invites questions and begs for an explanation. How could a non-Levite, non-Israelite living before the Mosaic Covenant become and be considered a priest of God especially since no man takes upon himself the honor of such a priesthood (Hebrews (5:1-4)? The lack of a scriptural elaboration on this plain fact in the three passages that discuss Melchizedek implies that an explanation was already sufficiently available and that no further elaboration was needed in these texts. Identifying where Melchizedek's priesthood is introduced and explained will be important as we continue this inquiry. The lack of detail in Genesis 14 itself indicates that an adequate explanation for Melchizedek's service should be provided by Moses earlier in the Book of Genesis.

But the simple fact presented in these texts that we must grapple with is that God himself recognized the legitimacy of Melchizedek's priesthood. This fact is established by Abraham's homage to Melchizedek in Genesis 14, God's promise to David to make his heir a priest of Melchizedek's order, and Hebrews 7 which directly argues for the superiority of Melchizedek over the Levitical priesthood. So, Melchizedek was certainly a bona fide priest in God's eyes. Yet Hebrews 5:1-5 states plainly that "no man taken this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." This does not mean that God invites or appoints each individual priest in a personal fashion or selection. Certainly Aaron's sons were priests, not by virtue of individual invitation by God himself, but automatically by

virtue of having been appointed by inheritance. God set up the Levitical priesthood as a whole even though God didn't select and ordain each individual priest in that order. Whether God personally selected Melchizedek similar to the selection of Aaron is unclear. Nevertheless in order for Melchizedek's priesthood to be legitimate, the priestly order itself must have been set up by God in some way. Melchizedek's priestly order could not have been of his own or another man's mere human invention or design. This forces us to consider where, when, and in what way God set up this pre-Levitical priestly order.

Here, section two of our study provides insight that might otherwise be lacking. Using a historical and exegetical approach to early Genesis, we were able to establish that Moses recorded the inauguration of priestly intercession with Cain, Abel, and Seth and then traced that priestly service through Enoch and Noah down to Abraham. Moses' chronicle of the priestly service of these godly men from before the Flood provides the necessary foundation and explanation for Melchizedek's priesthood in Genesis 14. Likewise, it explains why Moses did not feel it was necessary to account for Melchizedek's service in the text of Genesis 14. He had already clearly established the origin and existence of this pre-Levitical service in the first few chapters of Genesis. Those who were faithfully following Moses' text would not be in need of an explanation for Melchizedek's priestly service. Our exegetical conclusions from section two are confirmed both by the recognition of the priesthood of Melchizedek and by Moses' lack of explanation for Melchizedek's priesthood in Genesis 14.

Furthermore, Hebrews 7:16-17 indicates that the legitimacy of Melchizedek's priesthood is tied into his long life. In section one of our study, we established that before they sinned, Adam's children were able to enter into the garden of Eden. This would allow them access to the tree of life, whose fruit God did not prohibit. Access to this fruit sufficiently explains the long life of the patriarchs before the Flood. It is reasonable then to understand the coupling of Melchizedek's long life with the legitimacy of his priesthood in Hebrews 7:16-17 in connection with Moses' accounts from early in Genesis recording persons who could enter into the garden and who had long lives functioning as priests. This, in turn, implies a connection between these persons and Melchizedek.

The intrigue surrounding Melchizedek is further compounded by noting that not only is Melchizedek himself recognized as a priest of God, but both Psalm 110 and Hebrews 5:6, 10, 6:20, 7:11, 17, and 21 all speak of an order of priests to which Melchizedek belonged. Psalm 110 uses the Hebrew word "dibrah" (01700) which is used only 5 times in the bible and is translated variously as "cause, order, estate, end, regard." The Book of Hebrews uses the Greek noun "taxis" (5010) conveying the idea of "an order, succession, rank, arrangement." Hebrews 5:6 and 10 likewise quote Psalm 110 using "taxis" which is the same word used in Psalm 110 in the Septuagint. Hebrews 7:5 explains Christ's position in Melchizedek's priesthood as an office of priesthood comparable to the Levitical priestly order using the Greek word "hierateia" (2405.) Verse 11 again uses the Greek noun "taxis" to compare the order of Melchizedek with the priesthood (2420) of the Levites. Here the word priesthood is translated from the Greek noun "hierosune"

(2420) meaning “priesthood.” Verse 12 uses this same word to refer to a changing of the Levitical order to Melchizedek’s order. And verse 15 states that Christ is a priest just as Melchizedek was a priest. The Greek word “homoiotes” (3665) is used. The discussion continues through the chapter with these same words being repeated.

A clear parallel is created between Melchizedek and the Levites. The language used in Hebrews clearly presents a second priestly order comparable to the Levites and yet this other order of priests both comes before and continues after the Levitical priesthood. It is certainly conceivable that this other (“heteros” 2087,) non-Levitical order of priests contained only Melchizedek and Christ. However, it is certainly just as possible, given the language and Levitical comparison, that, like the Levitical order, this other priestly order included many persons besides just Melchizedek (and Christ).

Certainly, the New Testament indicates that, as participants of the New Covenant through Christ, we are priests and kings (Revelation 1:6, 5:10, and 1 Peter 2:5, 9). In this respect our priesthood parallels that of Melchizedek and Christ, but contrasts with Aaron and his descendants. We will also note that this kingship distinguishes Melchizedek’s service from Aaron and his sons. Aaron and his descendants were only priests. They were not kings.

Nevertheless, Hebrew’s reference to another order of priests comes from Psalm 110, which is not referring to us as participants in the New Covenant, but to Christ. So, we are not the members of this order that these texts intend. Who then might have been the predecessors or fellow priests of the same order as Melchizedek, an order which predated even Abraham? Once again, section two provides helpful insight. The reason that Psalm 110 and Hebrews can refer to Melchizedek (and Christ) as part of an order of priests comparable to the Levites is because other men had served as a part of this order. As we have seen, this at least included Cain, Abel, Seth, Enoch, and Noah, an order of priests spanning over one and a half millennia of time, about the same duration as that of the Levitical priesthood itself.

Likewise, we should note the context of Genesis 14. The events which precede Abraham’s encounter with Melchizedek are relevant to our ongoing study of redemption in Genesis and afterwards. In section two we established that redemption is consistently discussed in reference to liberating relatives from bondage to strangers. This is the exact circumstance in which Melchizedek comes out to Abraham in Genesis 14. As the beginning of the chapter explains, Lot and his household are taken captive as a result of a conflict between several kings (Genesis 14:13-14). Upon learning of the fate of his nephew Lot and his family, Abraham pursued Lot’s captors and overcame them, releasing Lot and his household. Here we have Moses presenting Abraham as the quintessential kinsman redeemer with regard to Lot and his family who had been taken into servitude by strangers. This is the circumstance which Moses presents as prompting Melchizedek to visit Abraham and bless him. We will return to the significance of this exchange as we move ahead. For now we are simply drawing

attention to the fact that this account in Genesis 14 is closely tied to Moses' larger discussion of priesthood and redemption. This provides further basis for our inclusion of Melchizedek in our study of these subjects.

As we continue with our investigation of Melchizedek we turn to remarks made in Hebrews regarding particular characteristics of Melchizedek's priesthood. There are several aspects of Melchizedek's priesthood that are emphasized.

First, it is clear from Genesis 14 and Hebrews 7:4-7 that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. This superiority may easily be attributed to Melchizedek's priestly and kingly status. But this merely sidesteps the real question. How and why did this man come to a position (kingly and priestly) which made him so much greater than Abraham, especially in spiritual authority? We must consider that Melchizedek is not the only king that Abraham encountered or interacted with in his life or even in Genesis 14. And yet in each of the other occasions the biblical text always presents Abraham as superior. But this is not the case with Melchizedek. Instead, Melchizedek is shown to be Abraham's superior. The question is how and why is Melchizedek Abraham's superior when other kings were not? To answer this question will require further effort regarding the identity of Melchizedek. For now we can note that Genesis 14 provides indications that this superiority is not merely a function of Melchizedek's kingship.

Second, Hebrews 7:3 declares that Melchizedek represents one without father or mother, without descent, without beginning of days or end of life who continued as a priest forever. The comparison offered in Hebrews 7:16-28 similarly indicates that, like Christ and unlike the short lifespan and service of Levitical priests, Melchizedek's priestly service was facilitated by a long life. Psalm 110 also provides some indication of this longevity of service occupied by Melchizedek when it prophesies a future priest who would be of the order of Melchizedek and be a priest "forever." Psalm 110:3 may also speak of longevity of life in the phrase "thou hast the dew of thy youth," a phrase that easily infers perpetual youth. Likewise, Hebrews contrasts Melchizedek with the Levitical priests in regard to the shortness of their lives. This implies that, Melchizedek actually did live and serve as priest for a long time in comparison to Aaron and his sons. Added to this is the fact that the bible doesn't always inform us of the fathers and mothers and births and deaths of all Aaronic priests. This implies that Hebrew's citation of Melchizedek in this regard is not merely a matter of the text's lack of mention of his father, mother, birth, and death in Genesis 14.

This reference to Melchizedek's long life in Hebrews deserves a little more attention. As already mentioned, one conventional view is that perhaps Melchizedek's longevity is solely a matter of the brevity of Genesis' description. Genesis 14 provides no mention of Melchizedek's priestly lineage, ancestry, birth, or death. Under this common consideration, the text of Genesis makes it possible to illustrate Christ's unending priestly service even though, as a matter of historical reality, Melchizedek himself would not in any way actually exhibit any of these traits. It should be emphatically noted that in this scenario, Hebrew's comparison to Christ is created not by actual longevity regarding Melchizedek

himself but by the brevity of Genesis' text, or more simply, by a characteristic of the text rather than a characteristic of Melchizedek. The illustration is made available because the lives, lineages, services of the Levitical priests are important Old Testament accounts provided for various Levitical priests. But additionally, there were specific legal requirements for their priestly lineage as well as the age at which their service began. Genesis 14 makes no mention of Melchizedek's ancestral qualifications, length of service, birth, or death, so it can be used as an illustration predicting that the Christ would be a priest without ancestry, birth, or end of days. This conventional understanding of Hebrews remarks about Melchizedek is functional, but it is worth considering the alternative as well. Perhaps Hebrews intends to convey that Melchizedek himself actually reflected in some real way these particular traits which are shared by Christ. Perhaps it is not merely the brevity of the account which permits the illustration, but something about Melchizedek that made him seem to be without father or mother, without birth or death, and without descent.

To be clear, we are not meaning to imply that Melchizedek is Christ. This is another conventional understanding. According to this view, Melchizedek is what may commonly be called a Christophany by theologians. This notion that Melchizedek is Christ is problematic for several reasons.

First, it is difficult to see how Melchizedek can legitimately be compared to Christ if Melchizedek is Christ. You can compare Christ to David, but you can't compare the historical figure of Jacob to the historical figure known as Israel. Likewise, you can't compare Abram to Abraham, because it is simply the same figure identified by two different names. And if the author of Hebrews understood Melchizedek to be Christ, then we might reasonably expect him to indicate that this is the case. He clearly does not, but instead maintains a distinction between the two throughout his lengthy discussion. It is this sustained distinction which facilitates the comparison and illustration that the author is intending to make. If Christ is Melchizedek, then the illustration's utility is dissolved, for the two are not simply alike, they are one and the same person. There would be no novelty or insight in comparing them. Therefore, the author's comparison itself indicates that he didn't expect his audience to think that Christ and Melchizedek were one and the same person. Rather, he is attaching the legitimacy of Christ's priesthood to that of Melchizedek. This legitimacy too would be undermined if Christ was Melchizedek. Again it's one thing to say that Aaron's sons are priests like Aaron was because Aaron functions as an accepted precedent that legitimizes the acceptance of his sons as priests. But if there were some debate about the legitimacy of Aaron's priestly status, for instance, Aaron himself would have no value as an established precedent.

Second, we must confront the fact that Moses' account of Genesis 14 provides no indications that Melchizedek is God and no indications that Abraham identified him as such. Rather, Melchizedek is presented as another earthly king in an account which discusses several earthly kings with whom Abraham interacts. Since Moses has already recorded that Abraham has personal interaction with God prior to Genesis 14, we would expect that if Melchizedek was God, Abraham

would have acknowledged this in the exchange and Moses would have recorded it in the text. The fact that this does not happen indicates that Moses did not intend his audience to identify Melchizedek as God.

Third, the need to identify Melchizedek as Christ stems from an inability to find a suitable explanation for his superiority to Abraham, for the biblical recognition of his priesthood, or for his longevity and lack of descent, etc. But if the bible provides an adequate explanation for how Melchizedek can exhibit these characteristics without being Christ, then the impetus to identify Melchizedek as Christ is undermined. As we continue we will see a sound explanation is available from the scripture which is not merely a facet of the brevity of the account in Genesis 14.

But how could a mere man be comparable to Christ in the ways mentioned by Hebrews? Could Melchizedek's life in some real, historical way aptly exemplify these key features of Christ's priesthood (albeit perhaps not exactly or only partially)? Perhaps some real-life similarities or perceptions about Melchizedek in his own lifetime even provided the basis of such a prophetic description lacking birth records, end of days, or ancestry. Certainly, the close proximity to the Flood makes the possibility that Melchizedek was a real, historical person very possible. After all, early post-flood generations had exceptionally long life spans compared to those who were born only a few generations later. If Melchizedek lived soon after the flood he could have lived for a long time and even outlived many people whose lives could have come and gone during the lengthy tenure of his priestly service. To generations born long after him, Melchizedek's descent, birth, and origins may have been quite unknown and obscure. To subsequent generations who aged and died while Melchizedek survived, Melchizedek's priestly service and life would have seemed to endure almost endlessly. Given the historical setting of Genesis 14, it is certainly both biblically and conceptually possible that Melchizedek's lengthy priestly service and obscure origins could have been more than just a function of descriptive brevity in the Genesis 14 account. But who could possibly have been a priest of God and superior to Abraham with such surpassing age and obscure origin to the ancient world? We will return to this question as we continue with our study. For now, we will note that Melchizedek would, at the latest, have to have been born a few generations after the Flood.

Another factor about Melchizedek's identity that is supplied by Hebrews pertains to the meaning of his name. Both Genesis 14 and Hebrews 7:2 indicate that Melchizedek may, in fact, not be a proper name, but rather only a title. As Hebrews 7:2 explains the Hebrew word used in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 is really a compound word formed from the noun "melek" (04428) meaning "king" and "tsedeq" (06664) meaning "righteousness." Therefore, Hebrews states that Melchizedek means "king of righteousness." It is, therefore, conceivable that Melchizedek was a title that was commonly used as a name. The use and assumption of titular names for kings may have been common in the ancient world. Furthermore, if Melchizedek was of exceptional age, his birth name may have long since become obscured for later generations who conceivably could have known him instead simply by his co-opted titular nomenclature "king of

righteousness.” These considerations of the historical context coupled with Hebrews certainly allow for the possibility that Melchizedek was not the actual name of this biblical figure, but merely a title. If this is the case, then we must wonder what the actual name of Melchizedek might have been?

Further clues regarding Melchizedek’s significance come from Psalm 110. We looked at the text of this Psalm earlier. It should be noted that this is a Psalm of David and that God is promising David in particular that one of his descendants would be a member of the order of priests of which Melchizedek was also a part. Therefore, this text connects David and his family in a unique way to Melchizedek and his priesthood.

In this context, it is useful to note that in various Old Testament passages, David and his sons (including Solomon and Nathan) are counted as priests and allowed to perform priestly functions. (See 2 Samuel 6:18, 1 Chronicles 16:2, 1 Chronicles 21:26, 1 Kings 8:63, 2 Chronicles 7:5, 2 Samuel 8:17-18 and 1 Kings 4:5.)

1 Samuel 21:1-6 (as well as Matthew 12:4, Mark 2:26, and Luke 6:4) all relate that David was able to eat of the showbread. This was the holy bread that was consecrated to the Lord and allowed only to the priests (Exodus 25:30, 29:23, 35:13, 39:36, and 40:23.) In 1 Kings 4:5, David’s sons are called “officers” and “chief rulers.” But the Hebrew word that these words are translated from is, in fact, “cohen” (03548.) Of the 750 times that the Hebrew word “cohen” occurs in the Old Testament it is translated as “priest” 744 times. In fact, “cohen” is the common term for the Levitical priests. And the first use of this word occurs in Genesis 14:18 in reference to Melchizedek.

Now it is possible to suggest that this exception was granted to David and his sons because they were the kings of Jerusalem. After all, Melchizedek himself was priest and king of Jerusalem (Salem.) In this respect, it is conceivable that as Melchizedek’s kingly successor David was allowed to act as priest. Here it is crucial to note that though David and his sons were allowed to act in priestly roles and make offerings, King Saul was not (1 Samuel 13:8-13, 14:35-37.) Therefore, kingship could not have been the basis for allowing David and his family to perform priestly service. This is also supported by the fact that only David and Solomon served as kings. None of David’s other sons were kings, and yet they are said to be “cohen” (priests), which is the same word used to identify Melchizedek as a priest.

Whatever the reason, David (like Melchizedek) provides an excellent representation of Christ as both king and priest. But we must point out that some of David’s sons who are called priests or made offerings before the Lord, were not kings of Jerusalem. Only Solomon became king of Jerusalem. So, if allowance was made for priestly activities to Melchizedek’s successors, the kings of Jerusalem, this allowance would not necessarily extend to those who were not kings. And so, an explanation may still be necessary for why David’s sons (who were not kings) were acting as priests. At this point, we can see that Psalm 110

suggests a connection between David's family and Melchizedek and his priesthood.

A second indication of a connection between David's family line and Melchizedek comes from Genesis 38. As Ruth 4:18-22 explains, David's line begins with a man named Pharez.

Ruth 4:18 Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, 19 And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, 20 And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, 21 And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, 22 **And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.**

Pharez is the son of Judah by a woman named Tamar.

06557 Perets

the same as 06556, Greek 5329 farev; ; n pr m

AV-Pharez 12, Perez 3; 15

Perez or Pharez =" breach"

1) twin son with Zarah **of Judah by Tamar and ancestor of two families of Judah**, the Hezronites and Hamulites; from the Hezronites **came the royal line of David and Christ**

The account of Pharez's birth is provided by Moses in Genesis 38. According to verse 13, the setting for the later portion of the events described in the chapter is not far from Timnath, which is not far west of Jerusalem.

According to Moses' chronicling of events, chapter 38 takes place at around the same time as Joseph's being sold into slavery in Egypt. Joseph was around 17 years old when Judah takes his first wife and has three sons. (See Genesis 37:2 and 38:1-2). We can therefore assume that Judah, as Joseph's older brother, would have been perhaps around 20 years old. As Genesis 38 explains, Er was Judah's firstborn,) Onan was his second born, and Shelah was the youngest.

Genesis 38:6 advances the timeline somewhat. Now Er, Judah's oldest, is himself mature enough to be married. If we assume that Er was perhaps around 20 years old, then Judah would be around perhaps 40 years old. At this point, Judah takes a wife for Er named Tamar. But, because Er was a wicked man, the Lord slew him (verse 7). So, Judah instructed his second son, Onan to marry Er's wife (Tamar) to raise up seed unto Er (verse 8-10). This practice wherein a man took the widow of his deceased brother is established in the Levitical code (Deuteronomy 25:5-6) and mentioned in the New Testament (Matthew 22:25, Mark 12:20, Luke 20:29.) Again, we see that Moses is providing accounts of the Jewish patriarchs which relate to what later became Law for the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. This will be important as we continue through these events.

Because Judah's second son, Onan, did not fulfill this obligation, the Lord likewise slew him. It would have been customary then for the next brother to again take the widow as his wife. Genesis 38:11 confirms that this was the case,

but Judah is hesitant. He provides two rationales for his decision not to give his third son (Shelah) to Tamar. The first is that Shelah is too young. While this seems to have been a legitimate reason, it was also not Judah's only reason. Verse 11 indicates that Judah was worried that Shelah would die also. It is important to realize the peculiar circumstances of these events.

First, although it is not at all strange that the Old Testament would discuss a man taking the wife of his deceased brother, it is strange that Tamar's husbands keep dying. And they are not simply dying natural deaths. Instead, God is deliberately slaying them. Upon reading this passage we are prompted to wonder. Why is God so uniquely concerned about these specific men that he is prompted to slay them in particular? After all, there must have been many unfaithful and sinful men in the world at that time. And yet God wasn't going about slaying all of them. The only apparent basis for God's actions is that both men were husbands of Tamar. This points to Tamar herself as the cause of God's concern. The fact that Tamar was the reason for God's unique interaction is also supported by two additional factors.

Second, although both Er and Onan are stated to be evil or to have acted wickedly, neither is killed in regard to behavior committed outside of their marrying Tamar. This implies that their deaths were in some way uniquely related to their taking Tamar as a wife.

Third, Judah is hesitant to give his third son (Shelah) to Tamar after the death of the first two. The text provides no indication that Shelah was wicked. And yet Judah is concerned for the safety of his son. What is most noteworthy is that Judah is not generally concerned that God will kill Shelah. He is only concerned that God may kill Shelah if Shelah marries Tamar. Thus, Judah's concern about the wellbeing of his third son is relieved so long as the son does not take Tamar as a wife. If this concern was due to Shelah being wicked, then Judah's fear for him would not have been allayed by simply postponing his marriage to Tamar. If God was in the business of slaying wicked men or those who acted sinfully and Shelah was like his brothers, then Shelah's life would have been in danger as regardless of any marriage to Tamar. And yet Judah connects Shelah's safety directly to Tamar and seems to have no fear for the child's life outside of his marrying Tamar.

These three facts indicate that God's action to slay Er and Onan was directly related to something about Tamar herself. Although the text strongly indicates that this is the reason, it does not specify why God would have been particularly concerned about Tamar and the worthiness of her husbands.

As we have seen, throughout the text of Genesis 38, Moses makes direct connections to provisions he himself establishes as Law. Recognizing Moses' references to these ordinances provides some insight into what is going on here with Tamar.

First, as we have already noted, Genesis 38 is describing what Moses established as the ordinance of Levirate Marriage. According to Deuteronomy 25:5-10, this ordinance required a man to take the widow of his deceased brother as his own wife and to bear children by her in his brother's name. It is important to note that Genesis 38 makes it clear that Judah was obligated to give his sons to Tamar in marriage when her previous husband died.

Second, verse 14 shows that Judah was not fulfilling his obligation to give his youngest son Shelah to Tamar. Accordingly, Tamar goes to the entrance of the main road into the city of Timnath (verses 14 and 21.) This parallels Deuteronomy 25 where a widow whose brother-in-law does not fulfill his obligation is instructed to go to the city gates in order to make the man's refusal known.

Third, in Genesis 38:11, Judah tells Tamar to remain a widow in her father's house until Shelah came of age. According to Genesis 38:1-4, Judah's sons were Canaanite on their mother's side. As Leviticus 22:12-13 states, the daughter of a priest who married a stranger was no longer allowed to eat of the holy offerings of the priests unless her husband died and she was childless. This is exactly the case with Tamar when Judah tells her to go back to the home of her father and remain as a widow. The parallel of these accounts indicates that Tamar was the daughter of a priest. According to Leviticus 21:7 (and also Ezra 10:10, 18 and Nehemiah 10:28) priests were not allowed to marry foreigners. And yet, Judah's sons were foreigners on their mother's side. In contrast to Judah, but in correspondence with Leviticus, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all had wives from among their own family line. In Genesis 24, Abraham goes to great pains to prohibit Isaac from marrying a Canaanite woman.

Fourth, in the course of the events, Tamar becomes pregnant by Judah even though Judah is not aware of Tamar's identity when he slept with her. Upon hearing that she was pregnant (not knowing it was by himself,) Judah calls for Tamar to be burnt. Judah's call for her to be burnt when he thinks she has acted adulterously is directly paralleled in the Law of Moses. The punishment for adultery in the Law of Moses was typically death by stoning (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:21-24.) However, Leviticus 21:9 states that in the case of the daughter of a priest adultery required being burning.

Moses' continual references to Levitical Law would have been easily recognized by any Israelite reading Moses' account of Genesis 38. These details explain why it was that God took decisive action against Judah's sons in regard to their marriage with Tamar. The details of the Genesis 38 account clearly show that Tamar was the daughter of a priest and that God himself took an interest in ensuring that her husband was not a wicked man or a Gentile. In particular, Judah's three sons were half-Canaanite, particularly reviled foreigners from the covenant of Abraham and God clearly did not want the priestly rights of Tamar's family to be lost by having children with these men. Moses' account indicates that God wanted the priestly rights of Tamar's family to remain intact. So, her descendants (including both David and Jesus) came from Judah himself, from the

unmingled stock of Abraham. God's actions show that Tamar was the daughter of an important figure. For surely God was not concerned with taking such actions against the daughters of pagan priests. The fact that, like Genesis 14, these events take place hundreds of years before the institutions of the Levitical priesthood is also intriguing. We must wonder, who was the important priest that was the father of Tamar, a woman who became the mother of the all-important Messianic, Davidic, royal line of Judah's descendants?

At this point it is quite reasonable to consider whether Tamar is of any relation to Melchizedek. This connection is suggested by several biblical factors that we have already discussed. First, Melchizedek was the priest-king of Jerusalem. Second, Jerusalem was not far from Timnath where much of Genesis 38 takes place. Third, David is descended from Tamar and Judah. Fourth, David and his sons are allowed to function as priests even though Saul was not. And fifth, it is to David that God promises a descendant who will be of the order of Melchizedek. These observations suggest a connection between Tamar and Melchizedek. Later in our study we will consider the chronological possibilities of such a connection. For now we will begin to pull together these many biblical details into a picture that does two things. It will explain who Melchizedek was. And it will reveal that Genesis 14 was intended in part to record Abraham's reception of the priestly service that had been handed down from the pre-Flood patriarchs.

The passages we have been examining provide an oddly connected set of biblical factors. When compiled together an interesting picture emerges.

We have the existence of a priest of God who is part of a priestly order which predates the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. We also know that the name used in Genesis 14, Melchizedek, may quite possibly be a title and not an actual personal name. Likewise, Melchizedek's birth and ancestral lineage may have been sufficiently obscure as to be unknown to many of his contemporaries. Conversely, both Psalm 110 and Hebrews 7 indicate that Melchizedek may have lived a very long life in service as a priest. Like Christ, but unlike the Levitical priests, his priestly tenure seems to have extended over many generations of men. Beginning in Genesis 3-5 with Abel, Cain, and Seth and continuing to include Noah, Abraham and his sons, evidence is available suggesting that various patriarchs acted in the role of intercessor and made offerings to the Lord. Beginning in the early chapters of Genesis and continuing through the New Testament, the bible chronicles the continuation of intercessory and priestly men from Abel to Noah to Abraham to the Levites and to Christ. David and his sons are somehow also allowed to participate in priestly duties and privileges. Melchizedek, who blesses Abraham, is both king and priest of Jerusalem, a position shared only by David, his son Solomon, and ultimately by Christ. Christ is clearly shown to be a descendant of David as well as a priest in the same order as Melchizedek. King David provides a prophecy of this Messianic priestly status in Psalm 110 which Jesus himself refers to in the New Testament. And David's maternal progenitor Tamar was apparently the daughter of an important priest of God who lived centuries before the establishment of the Levitical priesthood somewhere near the area of Jerusalem.

All of these facts are conveniently fit together by identifying Melchizedek with Noah's son Shem. While speculative, this conclusion is supported by and explains all of the other scriptural observations we've been examining in the course of this study.

First, we should consider an account Moses provides in Genesis 9:20-28 regarding Noah and his sons. Here Moses reports an occasion in which Noah became drunk and fell asleep uncovered in his tent. Ham sees Noah's nakedness and takes no action except to tell Japheth and Shem about it. Japheth and Shem cover Noah by walking backwards into the tent with a garment so that they do not see Noah's nakedness. Upon hearing what happened, Noah pronounces a curse on Ham's descendants (the Canaanites). In verse 26, we note that Noah declares that Shem would rule over the Canaanites who would be his servants. It is also important to note the phrase "Blessed be the God of Shem" in verse 26. Noah only makes this kind of statement regarding Shem. Noah does not affiliate either of his other two sons with a relationship with God. These factors all fit quite well with Melchizedek who, just five chapters later, Moses presents without introduction as reigning over the Canaanite city of Salem and identifies as a priest of God.

We should also note that in Genesis 9, Shem is the only son for which the text specifically uses the word "blessing." Moreover, we find Moses makes sure to include Melchizedek's blessing upon Abraham. The nearest preceding blessing is the account in Genesis 9 which Noah gives to Shem. The comparison here implies that Melchizedek and Noah are in the same position. Both men are giving the progenitor's blessing designating their primary heir and conveying inheritance rights. This custom of patriarchal blessing is well-established in Moses' writings. (See Genesis 25:11, 27:23-37, 48:2-22, and 49:1-28.) A comparison can even be made to Hebrews 7:1, 5-7 which explains that the Levites proceed from Abraham in the same breath as it declares that Abraham was blessed by his superior, Melchizedek. These considerations suggest that Genesis 14 constitutes Moses' record of the transmission of rights to Abraham from his progenitor Shem who had likewise received them from his father, Noah.

Second, the chronological information Moses provides also tells us that Shem was indeed still alive at the time of Genesis 14. Genesis 10:10-11 reports that Shem lived for another 502 years after the flood. But how long after the Flood was Genesis 14?

We can answer this question by turning again to Moses' accounts in Genesis. We will start by determining how long after the Flood Terah, Abraham's father, was born. When we add these numbers together we arrive at a total of 222 years from the Flood to Terah's birth.

Noah's son Shem had a son named **Arphaxad, 2 years after the Flood** (Genesis 11:10).

Arphaxad was 35 years old when he had a son named Salah (Genesis 11:12).

Salah was 30 years old when he had a son named Eber (Genesis 11:14).
Eber was 34 years old when he had a son named Peleg (Genesis 11:16).
Peleg was 30 years old when he had a son named Reu (Genesis 11:18).
Reu was 32 years old when he had a son named Serug (Genesis 11:20).
Serug was 30 years old when he had a son named Nahor (Genesis 11:22).
Nahor was 29 years old when he had a son named Terah (Genesis 11:24).

Next we will determine how old Terah was when Abraham was born. According to Genesis 11:26, Terah was 70 when he had three sons. But we don't know his exact age at Abraham's birth. To get this number we must compare Genesis 11:32 and 12:4. When we do we find that Terah died at age 205 and that Abraham left for Canaan land just after that when he was at age 75. If Abraham was 205 when Abraham was 75 then Terah was 130 when Abraham was born. We must then add 130 years to the previous total of the amount of time from the Flood to Terah's birth. This means there was a total of 352 years from the Flood to the birth of Abraham.

The next question then is how old was Abraham at the time of Genesis 14? Using the information provided by Moses, we can determine that Abraham was around 80 years old when he encountered Melchizedek in Genesis 14. This is established from Genesis 12:4 which indicates that Abraham was 75 when Terah died and Genesis 17:16 which states that Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born. Since Genesis 14 occurs between these two events we can assume that Abraham was around 80 years old when Melchizedek blessed him. Using these figures, we can conclude that Genesis 14 occurred approximately 432 years after the Flood.

Since Genesis 11:10-11 reports that Shem lived for 502 years after the Flood, we can be sure that Shem was still alive at the time of Genesis 14, when Abraham encountered Melchizedek. In fact, Shem would live for another 70 years after this event. But where was Shem? According to Noah's statements in Genesis 9:26, Shem would dwell in the tents of Canaan. This indicates that Shem would eventually come to live in Canaan land. This is exactly where the story of Genesis 14 takes place. Shem is alive and in Canaan land and the Canaanites are his servants, which suggests that Shem rules over them. At the same time, Melchizedek is the king of Salem, a major Canaanite city.

But, what about Tamar? If Tamar is related to Melchizedek this would mean that Tamar is related to Shem. Identifying Melchizedek as Shem explains Moses' treatment of Tamar as well. It would perfectly parallel the transmission of rights to Abraham, the seeking of a wife from the line of Shem, and the maintenance of priestly rights that we see Moses concerned with in all of these passages. But, could Tamar have been Shem's daughter? How old would she have been at the time of Judah if she was Shem's daughter? To answer this question we must determine how much time has occurred between Genesis 14 and Genesis 38.

We have established that Abraham was around 80 years old at the time of Genesis 14. We also know that Isaac is born 20 years later when Abraham is 100 years old (Genesis 21:5). Isaac, in turn, has Jacob and Esau at age 60 (Genesis 25:26).

We have already seen from Genesis 37:2 and 38:1-6 that Judah was perhaps around 40 at the time of the events of Genesis 38. The only piece of information that is missing is Jacob's age when Judah was born. There is no direct place where Moses reports this number. So far, without Jacob's age at Judah's birth, we have a total of 120 years between the time of Genesis 14 and Genesis 38. This 120-year total includes 20 years from Genesis 14 until Isaac's birth, 60 years until the birth of Jacob, and 40 years for Judah's approximate age at the time of Genesis 38. Let's assume that Jacob was 85 years old when Judah was born, then we would have a total of 205 years from Genesis 14 to Genesis 38. If Tamar was Shem's daughter and was born at the time of Genesis 14, then she would be 205 years old at the time she bore Pharez to Judah in Genesis 38. While this age may seem excessively high to us we must remember that the first three generations of Shem's descendants all lived to be over 400 years old (Genesis 11:12-17). Moreover, we know that according to Genesis 11:10-11 Shem begat sons and daughters for 502 years after the Flood. This means that Shem lived 70 years after Genesis 14. So, if Tamar was Shem's daughter she would not need to be born until as much as 70 years after Genesis 14. This would mean that instead of being 205 at the time of Genesis 38, she may only have been around 135 years old. And since the second and third generation descendants of Shem lived for over 400 years, this would mean that Tamar was only about one-third or at the most halfway through her life span. This would be equivalent to 25-40 years old in the modern era where women live on average between 75-85 years. In addition, Abraham's wife Sarah conceived at age ninety, though she, like Abraham, was many more generations removed from Shem than Tamar would have been. Moreover, from Genesis 17:19 we learn that Sarah was 10 years younger than Abraham, yet when Abraham is 75 years old, Abraham and the Egyptians all consider Sarah attractive enough to be desired by the Pharaoh even though she is 65 years old (Genesis 12:5, 11-15). At this point in history, Tamar's age poses no problems with our model. Ultimately, these biblical considerations make it more than plausible that Shem was the priest who was the father of Tamar.

In regards to Melchizedek's long life, Shem is also a perfect fit. A comparison of Shem's lifespan to the generations leading to Abraham shows that Shem lived well into the life of Abraham even after the birth of Isaac. To later post-flood generations Shem's pre-flood birth, lineage, and the beginning of his priestly service would have been exceedingly obscure. To those who lived, aged, and died during the long course of Shem's life, his priestly intercession would have seemed to endure almost perpetually, thus creating the analogy of an enduring, undying priest as described in Hebrews. In fact, a comparison of Shem's life side-by-side with the lifespans of his generations down to Abraham reveals that out of 8 generations between Shem and Abraham, only Eber lived longer than Shem (Genesis 11:10-32, see chart below). In other words, with one exception (Eber), Shem outlived 8 generations of his descendants.

No.	Name	Shem's Age at Birth	Age at Birth of Son	Years after Son's Birth	Total Age	Shem's Age at Death
	Shem		100	500	600	600

1	Arphaxad	100	35	403	438	538
2	Salah	135	30	403	433	568
3	Eber	165	34	430	464	629
4	Peleg	199	30	209	239	438
5	Reu	229	32	207	239	468
6	Serug	261	30	200	230	491
7	Nahor	291	29	190	219	510
8	Terah	320	(130)	(75)	205	525
9	Abram	450	100	(75)	175	Abraham 150.
10	Isaac	550				Isaac 50.

A consideration of these facts allows for the following scenario.

The book of Genesis records the work of an early line of priests who, before the Flood, lived for long periods of time making offerings and intercession for men. The last of these men was Shem, son of Noah. Shem was blessed by his father to have authority over Canaan and so he is King of Salem (Jerusalem,) the major city of ancient Canaan Land. As the end of Shem's long life of priestly service drew near, God selected Abraham, a man who would faithfully follow his commands and instruct his children in them. God's intention was to use Abraham and his descendants to continue the line of priestly intercessors he had prophesied in Genesis 3. Abraham's grandson, Jacob, foretells that from the line of his fourth-born son Judah would come a royal ruler. Like Abraham and Isaac before him, Judah takes Tamar, a daughter from among his ancestral people in the house of Shem, to be a wife for his son. Instead, Judah and Tamar conceive children conveying Shem's royal and priestly rights to their descendants in fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy of Judah's line as rulers. Several generations later God establishes a covenant with Abraham's descendants and institutes the Mosaic Law and Levitical priesthood. This covenant and priesthood were to continue until Christ would come in fulfillment of the purpose of this intercessory and atoning role. Like his forefather Shem, David ruled Canaanite land as king of Jerusalem. David's kingship over Jerusalem and his direct lineage from Shem through his maternal heredity from Tamar, allowed David and his sons (even those who were not kings) to participate in priestly activities without judgment. And so, David and his sons represent the Messianic picture of a priest (and king) in the order of Melchizedek. David himself may express some awareness of this in Psalm 110. As a descendant of David, Judah (and Tamar), Abraham, and Shem, Jesus Christ inherits the non-Levite priesthood and fulfills the ultimate and final purpose of the priestly intercessor. (Incidentally, Tamar is mentioned in Christ's lineage in Matthew 1. This exceptional mention itself implies that Tamar's significance in these matters was well-known in the first century.) Thus, as Hebrews explains, like Shem, but in an even more perfect capacity, Christ's priestly service endures over the passing of many generations.

In closing, it should be noted that some of the reasons discussed above likewise prompted rabbinic texts to conclude that Melchizedek was Shem and that Tamar was the daughter of Shem.

Melchizedek – Melchizedek presents a problem for traditional Jewish teachings: he is not a descendant of Aaron, from whom all priests must be descended - in fact he pre-dates both Aaron and Levi - yet he is described as a priest. Several explanations were offered. In the Midrash, the Rabbis identified Melchizedek with Shem son of Noah, who, although also not a descendant of Aaron, was believed to have officiated as a priest. (E.g., Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 32b; Genesis Rabbah 46:7; Genesis Rabbah 56:10; Leviticus Rabbah 25:6; Numbers Rabbah 4:8.) Rabbi Isaac the Babylonian said that Melchizedek was born circumcised. (Genesis Rabbah 43:6.) Melchizedek called Jerusalem “Salem.” (Genesis Rabbah 56:10.) – wikipedia.org

Tamar – Tamar was the daughter of Shem, the son of Noah. Shem was a priest, and when Tamar was charged with fornication (Gen. R. lxxxv. 11) she was condemned to be burned to death in conformity with Lev. xxi. 9. – Jewish Encyclopedia, Read more:
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=41&letter=T#ixzz1DspioN2X>

In conclusion to this section, we can see the significance of Melchizedek in relation to Moses’ chronicling of the transmission of priestly service from Cain, Abel, and Seth to Abraham and Aaron. If Melchizedek is Shem (and there is every reason to conclude he is biblically-speaking), then Genesis 14 is a critical point showing Abraham being blessed by his forefather Shem and receiving the inheritance of these rights directly from Shem. The Book of Hebrews picks up on these significant issues in explaining the redemptive work and priesthood of Christ. Like Abel before him, Christ enters in to the heavenly city and makes priestly intercession before God on behalf of his human family. Like Melchizedek, Christ continues to live and make intercession while generation after generation of men live and die.

In the next section below, we will examine more fully the implications and connections these conclusions have regarding priesthood in the New Covenant.