

MELCHIZEDEK'S BREAD AND WINE

Genesis 14:18-20

Intro: In the NT the elements that were used in the Lord's Supper are called "bread" and "the cup." Cf. Matt. 26:26, 27. However, in "the cup" was the "fruit of the vine" (v. 29). The fruit of the vine is wine. The first time these elements are brought together in Scripture is in the story of Melchizedek and Abraham. "Bread" is mentioned in Gen. 3:19; "wine" is mentioned in Gen. 9:21, 24. But Melchizedek is the first to combine the two (although it probably was common practice to eat bread and drink wine together as daily food).

We all know that the bread that the Lord used in the Upper Room represented His body. And we also know that the wine represented His blood. Together they spoke of His sacrifice on the Cross. And this is what He has given us to show forth His death until He comes.

I doubt if anyone who knows about the Lord's Supper can read Gen. 14 without thinking about the Lord's Supper when he or she reads Gen. 14:18. (Read.) And the connection is much stronger when we realize that our Lord was to become "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psa. 110:4). And it is because of this that I am inclined that the Spirit of God, Who is the Author of both the OT and the NT, expected us to learn something about the Lord's Supper from Abraham's experience with Melchizedek, and this provision which Melchizedek made for him.

Let me draw some parallels from Abraham's experience that will apply to us as we come tonight to observe the Lord's Supper. And I hope that you will add this chapter to your store of knowledge that you draw from whenever we come to the Lord's Table.

First of all, I want you to note the context of the contact Abraham had with Melchizedek.

I. THE CONTEXT.

Genesis 14 tells us the story of how Abraham rescued Lot from the four kings who attacked five other kings, one of whom was Bera, the King of Sodom. We are only told about what happened to the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. They were defeated. Some of their people were captured, and the rest were scattered. There seems to be little question but that this was a judgment of God against the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. All of these cities may have been just as bad, but our interest is in Sodom because Lot lived there.

When Abraham heard that Lot had been taken captive, he armed his 318 servants, went after the four kings, defeated them, and set Lot free along with all of the other inhabitants of Sodom.

It was after Abraham returned from this conflict that Melchizedek met him, and brought him "bread and wine."

But since the context includes not only what leads up to a particular passage, but what follows it, let us look at what followed. In fact, before Melchizedek got to Abraham we are told in verse 17 that the King of Sodom went out to meet Abraham, obviously to reward Abraham for what he had done.

And that is the thing that I want you to notice.

Verse 21 tells us that the King of Sodom said to Abraham after Melchizedek had gone,

Give me the persons,
and take the goods to thyself.

How did Abraham respond?

Let me read verses 22-24 to you. (Read.)

Notice carefully how Abraham spoke of God, and then relate this to the last part of verse 18 where we are told that Melchizedek was "the priest of the most high God." This is the first time that this title is used, and it seems clear that Melchizedek must have told Abraham about "the most high God." One of the interesting things about the story of Abraham in the book of Genesis is to see the way the Lord revealed Himself to Abraham by His names, or titles. And this is one of the best of them. It speaks of the exalted position of the Lord, His sovereignty, as well as the fact that He is, as Abraham said, "The possessor of heaven and earth." This means that He was not only the possessor, but He was also the Creator of heaven and earth. Cf. Psa. 24:1:
The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein.

So it was through Melchizedek that Abraham learned more about the Lord.

Now let me make a brief application to our lives.

II. THE APPLICATION.

Let me give you three words to remember. They are:

- 1) Conflict.
- 2) Communion.

3) Compromise.

A. Conflict.

When Melchizedek came to Abraham he was returning from a conflict, a fierce conflict, one in which Lot had already been taken captive, and one which a threat to the peace and safety of Abraham and his men.

I believe this pictures the way you and I come to the Lord's Table each time we come. We come out of conflict. We face the world every day we live. We are surrounded by people who do not know the Lord and whose very influence on our lives seems to draw us away from Him. We face our Enemy, the Devil, who is constantly seeking our defeat. We face the temptations that arise out of our own hearts.

And the conflict is not limited to the six day of the week after Sunday. We face conflict on the Lord's Day as well. This world is not our home, and we always are engaged in some conflict.

This is why we need to come to the Lord's Table. Now let us think about:

B. Communion.

The purpose of the bread and wine which Melchizedek brought to Abraham was to restore him physically. Abraham was tired and weary. His strength was spent. He needed his body, and perhaps his spirit, to be revived.

What a wonderful picture this is of one of the main reasons we are to come to the Lord's Table. This is to be a time of revival for us, the revival of our spiritual strength. It is to be a time when as we remember our Lord, and look again at the Cross, we are reminded of what He has done for us, and where our strength is to be found in our conflict with the enemies which we face. The bread and the cup point us to Christ, and it is in Him that we find our strength to go back out to face the world again.

Like Abraham we may have come tonight from some victorious conflicts. But, on the other hand, we may have come from a defeat. Whatever the case may be, we come tonight to remember our Lord, the possessor of the heaven and the earth, the One Who is sovereign in all things. And He it is Who can change our defeats into glorious victories for His honor and praise. We may suffer our setbacks, but we are on the winning side. Cf. 2 Cor. 2:14. May the Lord make this a special time of refreshing for all of us.

At this point Abraham knew what he was coming from, but he did not know what was ahead. It was another kind of conflict--not with swords, but with a conflict that is far more subtle. I am speaking of:

C. Compromise.

With Abraham, it was a compromise suggested by the King of Sodom. It sounded very reasonable. Abraham was the victor. He had a right to the spoil. We are always inclined to think about our rights, aren't we? It seemed that Abraham was all set up to enter into an alliance with Abraham that would have spoiled the whole story.

I will always believe that it was Melchizedek's time with Abraham that prepared him for this temptation that was to come to him. Abraham had his times of failure, like we all do, but this was not one of them. It seemed that he was ready from what he said in verses 22-24. I would not be surprised to find out that Melchizedek had warned him about what the King of Sodom would do. Abraham had made a vow that, as tempting as the King's suggestion might be, he would have no part of it.

Some NT verses for this are 1 John 2:15-17 and Rom. 12:1, 2.

Do you know that compromise is one of the worst enemies of the people of God today? The church of Jesus Christ is probably more active today than ever, but, at the same time, more ineffective. We have taken on the world's methods, the world's objectives, the world's entertainment. In fact, the church has become so worldly that people on the outside cannot see that we are supposed to be distinctively different.

Concl: How very important it is for us to be here tonight! We are meeting with our Melchizedek. How sad that all of our people have not joined us. We are here to be refreshed in our conflicts, and we are here to be strengthened against the temptations to compromise that will probably face us again before we go to sleep tonight. The Devil does not take a day off on Sunday. And it is only as we find our strength in our Melchizedek that we can live in this world in a way that glorify our Lord. And so, as we take our bread and drink from our cup, may the Lord minister to us as Melchizedek ministered to Abraham 4,000 years ago.