

“Our New High Priest”

Heb. 5:1-10

- INTRO. - One of the great challenges in going through the Book of Hebrews is the fact that there are many concepts in it that are foreign to us. Especially for Evangelicals in our day and time, we don't see the need for priests, much less a High Priest.
- And although we saw an introduction to Christ as our High Priest last week, in our text this morning we are introduced to the fact that Christ is a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This makes Him unique (and superior) as we will see.
- Of course, the old covenant centered around the priesthood. And the reason priests were necessary is the fact that sin had separated men from God. The fall of man into sin brought about a barrier between God and men – so a priest was needed to stand in the gap between the two.
- Some kind of blood atonement had to be made for sin – and the priests were the ones designated to make those sacrifices. So the priest (under the old covenant) made thousands of sacrifices every day, but there was one special priest who made an annual atonement for the nation – once a year on the Day of Atonement.
- There was only one High Priest, and for his special sacrifice there could be no “pinch hitter.” No other priest could stand in for him. He had to make this special sacrifice himself. He was the only one who could do it. God Himself appointed a special priest just for this purpose.
- Now, one of the key principles of Bible interpretation is the rule of volume. If a given author devotes a large amount of space to one subject, it is something we should pay special attention to.
- And the fact that the author of Hebrews devotes nearly six chapters to the High Priesthood of Christ tells us that this is something that is very important.
- This is the central message of this book, and it something *critical* for us to understand. We also need to understand the purpose for this particular passage that we will be looking at today.
- This passage is one that compares (and contrasts) the high priests in the Old Testament with our new High Priest, Jesus Christ. It shows that Jesus *not only* qualifies to be a High Priest (according to the standards of Scripture) but also that He is *superior* to all other high priests.
- In theological terms, this passage emphasizes *both* the continuities and the discontinuities between the old and new covenants. We have the *standards* of

the high priest under the old, and the *superiority* of our new High Priest under the new.

- There are some things that are common to all high priests, and there are some things that are unique to Christ. For Jesus to be our new High priest, He had to conform to the standards (given in Scripture) for high priests – but there are some uniquenesses in Christ that make Him superior to every other high priest.
- For example, all human high priests had to offer a sacrifice for their own sin first (because they were sinners) but Jesus did *not* have to do that because He was without sin.
- Another critical uniqueness of Christ is that He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. We're going to see a whole lot about what this means. It separates Christ from all other high priests.
- And again, one of the primary goals of the author of Hebrews is to show that Jesus Christ is superior in every way – and therefore the new covenant is far superior to the old.
- As we will see, Jesus has accomplished more than all the priests in the old dispensation combined. He was able to accomplish what no priest under the old economy could ever accomplish.

- So this passage divides into two parts. Verses 1-4 describe the standards for high priests, and verses 5-10 describe the superior High Priest. Now, those are the two *main* points of our outline, but the sub-points follow what is known as a “chiasm.”
- What this means for our purposes this morning, is that the standards will be listed, and then the depiction of Christ as our superior High Priest will be in reverse order to that. So let's move into this text, and the first main division deals with:

I. THE STANDARDS FOR HIGH PRIESTS (vv. 1-4)

- In vv. 1-4 the author of Hebrews outlines four requirements for high priests found in the OT. Anyone who would serve as a high priest under the old covenant had to qualify in these four ways. The first one has to do with the:
 - A. Source (v. 1a)
 - Look with me at the first part of v. 1, “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God...” (Stop right there.)
 - The first requirement has to do with where the high priest is “taken from.” He is taken from “among men” – that is, he has to be a man. He has to be a man in order to represent men in things pertaining to God.

- Now, I guess the only other category this would reasonably rule out would be angels, but the point (here) is that the high priest had to be human so he could fully understand the weaknesses of those he represents.
- And (of course) this is one of the main reasons why the incarnation of Christ was necessary – and the author of Hebrews has already dealt with this. The Second Person of the Trinity had to become fully human in order to understand our weaknesses. He could *not* represent us as our Mediator without being fully human.
- But notice a couple of details here. First of all, the phrase “every high priest” deals with the issue of continuity. As George Guthrie writes, “When the author states ‘every high priest’ he begins to lay the groundwork for an argument that spans all the way to 10:18...arguing for the superiority of Christ’s high priesthood on the basis of commonly understood truths from the Old Testament concerning the office of high priest.”
- In other words, he is laying out the standards for *all* high priests. These are the requirements, and the first one is, you have to be a man. You have to have solidarity with the people you represent.
- The Greek word for “from among” is the word “ek.” It means “out of.” The high priest had to

come from “out of” the people. This is (perhaps) an allusion to Ex. 28:1, where it says, “...bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me...”

- This is the source. He had to be from among the people he represented. But there is a second requirement, and that is related to:

B. Sacrifice (v. 1b)

- Go back to v. 1, “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins...”
- This has to do with his work. The primary role of the priests (in general) and the high priest (in particular) was to offer gifts and sacrifices to deal with sin.
- And since this passage deals specifically with the *high* priest, I believe this is *not* really talking about the daily gifts received by the priests in general (or the daily sacrifices) but is referring to that unique role of the high priest on the Day of Atonement.
- The high priest (on the Day of Atonement) essentially made two kinds of offerings: a *blood* sacrifice and a *bloodless* sacrifice. The word for “gifts” (in Heb. 5:1) probably points to the grain

offering, which was the only bloodless offering involved.

- It was an offering of thanksgiving and dedication. It consisted of fine flour and oil, mixed with frankincense (to give it a pleasant aroma) and represented the dedication of the high priest to God.
- Of course, we know from the OT that there were all kinds of other gifts that were received by the regular priests on a daily basis – including gifts of money, jewelry, and other valuable items. But I don't think this is what the author of Hebrews has in mind here.
- And the main aspect of his role on the Day of Atonement was to offer sacrifices for sin. These were blood sacrifices, and he had to offer two of them. He had to offer one to atone for his own sin, and the second one to atone for the sins of the people.
- Verse 3 says, "...he is obligated to offer *sacrifices* for sins, as for the people, so also for himself." These blood sacrifices could *not* deal with the sin nature itself, but were given to atone for specific sins already committed.
- This is why the sacrifices had to be offered daily (on a general basis by the normal priests) but even the special sacrifice on the Day of Atonement

could only deal with sin temporarily. (Pause) But there was a third essential quality for high priests, and that is the requirement of:

C. Sympathy (vv. 2-3)

- The fact that the high priest was a sinner himself had its redemptive value, in that it enabled him to "deal gently with the ignorant and misguided." That's v. 2.
- Those are two terms that are used to describe the sin of the people. The first one has to do with those who sin unknowingly and the second one appears to describe those who sin waywardly.
- Or it's possible (as F. F. Bruce explains) that this could be what is called a "hendiadys," which would make this read, "those who go astray through ignorance."
- Either way, the message is, that the high priest is made sympathetic to sinners "since he himself is subject to weakness." He has the same sinful tendencies, and therefore he has sympathy toward other sinners like himself.
- By the way, this is also a good quality for pastors today. As George Guthrie puts it, "What is needed is the highly valuable quality of forbearance, which deals with sin seriously and the sinner patiently."

- Or as Jay Adams puts it, “There is a fine line here, always observed in the Bible, between condoning sin (something no one ever has the right to do) and treating the sinner with gentleness.” (Pause) But there is one more standard, and it had to do with:

D. Selection (v. 4)

- Look with me at v. 4, “And no one takes the honor to himself, but *receives it* when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.” Back in v. 1 it says that the high priest was “appointed.” *Here* we see where he was appointed by God.
- The high priest was *not* just *any* man – he was a man specifically chosen by God. This was *not* an office that could be attained through one’s own choice or ambitions. This was not an office you could “run” for.
- God originally chose Moses’ brother Aaron as the first high priest, and every other high priest after that had to be from the lineage of Aaron.
- And we see (in the history of Israel) that any time anyone tried to usurp that role in an invalid way, they were judged harshly and it brought about disaster.
- When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram tried to democratize the priesthood (and claimed that *any* Israelite could be a priest) the Lord opened up the

earth and swallowed them whole. (You can read about that in Num. 16.)

- In 2 Chron. 26, when king Uzziah usurped the role of the priest, he was stricken with leprosy. And the message is: the office of high priest is *not* one that a person chooses for himself. It is one that God himself has appointed.
- So these are the standards for the high priest. This is the “base line” the author of Hebrews has set for anyone to qualify as a high priest. But from *here* he moves to:

II. THE SUPERIOR HIGH PRIEST (vv. 5-10)

- Beginning in v. 5 he turns from the universal principles related to the old covenant high priesthood to their specific manifestation in Jesus Christ.
- And what we find (here) is that Jesus met all the requirements to be qualified as a high priest, but He exceeds those requirements to show His superiority.
- And remember, this is in the form of a chiasm, so this is in reverse order. So the first thing we see is His:

A. Selection (vv. 5-6)

- Look with me at v. 5, “So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, ‘Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee’; just as He says also in another *passage*, ‘Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’”
- The point of vv. 5-6 is to show that Jesus was appointed by God the Father as the supreme, eternal High Priest. Being a priest “forever” is part of what it means to be appointed “according to the order of Melchizedek.”
- The use of these two OT quotes gives scriptural evidence of that. The Jewish readers (who were the original audience of this book) would have immediately understood these two passages to be messianic in nature.
- Christ did *not* choose this office for Himself, but He was appointed to it by the Father. Even though Jesus Christ was the divine Son of God (the second Person of the Trinity) He did *not* assume this position on His own or seek to glorify Himself.
- In John 8:54 Jesus said, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’” It was God the Father who glorified Christ and granted to Him the authority and honor of eternal High Priest.
- So here we see where Jesus was qualified as High Priest because He met the requirement of having been appointed by God, but we see that He is beyond qualified because He is an eternal priest. He is “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”
- We’re going to see a lot more about Melchizedek when we get to chapter 7, but I need to give you a brief explanation at this point.
- Melchizedek was a king-priest who lived in the time of Abraham, and whose ancestry is completely unknown. He was the king of Salem (which was the ancient name for Jerusalem). Gen. 14:18 tells us that he was the priest of “God Most High” (El Elyon).
- He was a priest long before the Aaronic priesthood was established, and according to Heb. 7:3 his priesthood was perpetual and unending. Although the Aaronic priesthood ended in 70 A.D. (when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans) the priesthood of Melchizedek continues on forever.
- So there are two primary ways this reference to Melchizedek shows the superiority of Christ as High Priest. First, because Melchizedek was *both* a priest and a king (whereas the Aaronic high priest was *not* a king), and the fact that the role of the Aaronic high priest was temporary, while Christ’s was eternal.

- Now, going back to the OT quotes here, you probably recognize the first one as being from Ps. 2:7 (because he has already quoted this verse). We saw that back in chapter 1.
- The second quote is from Ps. 110 and he has already quoted the first part of that Psalm (in chapter 1) but here he quotes v. 4. So, what is he doing with these two quotes? He is tying them together to make the point that the same God who has declared Jesus as His Son has also declared that He is an eternal priest after the order of Melchizedek.
- Both of these Psalms are clearly messianic and here he clearly applies this to Jesus Christ. This gives unequivocal testimony that Jesus is proclaimed by God to be the Davidic Messiah and that He is an eternal High Priest.
- In other words, the author of Hebrews links the concepts of sonship with the concept of priesthood in his Christology. (Pause) Secondly, we see His:

B. Sympathy (vv. 7-8)

- Look at v. 7, “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.”
- This is an obvious reference to His experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. This account (more than any other) emphasizes His humanity. His bitter grieving in the Garden demonstrated that He fully understands human weakness.
- The phrase “in the days of His flesh” points to the time of His incarnation – the days of His life on earth. Of course, we know from Scripture that this was just an interlude for Him (because He existed before and after His earthly life).
- But this was a very important interlude because in it He accomplished some very important things. One of those is that He learned firsthand what it is like to be human and to experience the weakness of the flesh. What He already knew in His omniscience, He learned in a new way by experience.
- And the author of Hebrews has already dealt with this in the previous chapter. He could not have been a fully sympathetic High Priest if He had *not* experienced what we experience in our humanity.
- And (of course) we know from the Gospel accounts that what He experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane goes even *beyond* what you and I have ever suffered.
- Most of us have never sweat great drops of blood because of our grief. And the reason for that is

because none of us have ever been called upon to carry the sins of all mankind in our own bodies on a cross. None of us have ever been called upon to drink the cup He drank – and *that* is what Gethsemane is all about.

- As Ron Phillips writes, “Here the dreaded cup of our sins was first pressed against His sinless lips. A cup that would be fully drained at Golgotha.” It is for this reason He agonized. It was for this reason He prayed “with loud crying and tears.”
- It was the fact that He who knew no sin was about to be made sin for us that led to His agony in the Garden. This is the baptism with which He was about to be baptized (and He knew it).
- In the agony of His soul He cried out to His heavenly Father. This was no casual prayer here! In fact, the Greek words that are used for “prayers and supplications” are *not* the normal words used for praying.
- These are words that express great need and urgent aid. In other words, these prayers came from the deepest agony of a human soul. Yes, He was fully God, but He was also fully man – so this (more than anything else) demonstrates how He became fully sympathetic with our weakness.
- In Mark’s account we are told that He said to His disciples, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point

of death...” (Mark 14:34) and that He was “very distressed and troubled.” (v. 33) He knew what was coming. He willingly submitted to it, but He also agonized over it.

- And (by the way) notice that He prayed “to the One able to save Him from death.” Many have taken this to mean that he was praying that He would *not* have to die – and that since He did die, the Father did *not* answer His prayer.
- This is *not* consistent with the text, because the very next phrase tells us He was heard. The Father *did* (in fact) hear His prayer. Of course, we know from the Gospel accounts, He *did* pray, “Remove this cup from Me,” but He went on to pray, “nevertheless, Your will be done.”
- So we know He was willing to go to the cross, and what He was likely praying for (here in Heb. 5:7) is the resurrection. The word translated “from” (there) is “ek” and it literally means “out of.”
- He knew He was going to have to die, but He is calling on His heavenly Father to deliver Him out of death – and that is exactly what happened through the resurrection. The Father *did* (in fact) answer His prayer.
- But go on (in Heb. 5) to v. 8, “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.” Now, the English doesn’t really do it

justice. This was *not* just *any* son – this was the very Son of God. And yet, even the Son of God (the Second Person of the Trinity) “learned obedience from the things which He suffered.”

- The Son of God was *not* granted exemption from the common law that learning often must come through suffering. Suffering is a very effective teacher.
- Of course, we know that He did *not* have to learn “obedience” in the sense of any disobedience in Him. Jesus was perfectly obedient to the will of the Father.
- We know that *we* have to learn obedience through the unpleasant consequences that come about from our disobedience – but that was *not* true of Him. He was perfect and without sin.
- George Guthrie explains it this way: “That he ‘learned obedience’ means that the Son arrived ‘at a new stage of experience,’ having passed through the school of suffering.” He “graduated” from that school at the top of the class. He perfectly fulfilled all the Father had sent Him to accomplish.
- And there are at least three applications that come from this. First, this means He is a perfect High Priest that demands our praise and obedience. Second, as a “righteous sufferer” we know He can fully identify with any suffering we endure. And

thirdly, He demonstrated to us what it means to relinquish our own desires and to conform to the will of God. The word for “piety” (in v. 8) probably means “submission.”

- Listen, you and I cannot choose whether or *not* we will experience suffering – we can only choose how we will respond when we do. His submission to the will of the Father gives us the pattern we should follow. And this leads us thirdly to His:

C. Sacrifice (v. 9)

- Verse 9 is the pinnacle of this passage. Look at it with me, “And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation...”
- This is the third requirement for a high priest – He had to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people. Jesus did this perfectly, therefore He became for us “the source of eternal salvation...”
- Later we are going to see that Jesus was not only the perfect High Priest, but He offered Himself up as the perfect sacrifice for sin. There are two important ways in which His sacrifice was superior to that of any other high priest.
- First, since He was without sin, He did not have to offer up a sacrifice for himself before atoning for the sins of the people – and second, His sacrifice

was a once for all sacrifice, that did *not* have to *ever* be repeated.

- In fact, His sacrifice did away (forever) with the need for the Temple and the altar. By the time the Temple was destroyed in 70 A. D. believers had come to know this incredible truth.
- Now, there are three very important points of clarification needed in v. 9. First, we need to understand that the phrase “made perfect” does *not* mean that there was any inherent imperfection in Him.
- He was *not* “made perfect” in the sense of having His nature improved. As John MacArthur puts it, “He was eternally perfect in righteousness, holiness, wisdom, knowledge, truth power, and in every other virtue and capability. Neither His nature nor His person changed.”
- No, what this means is that He became “perfect” in the sense that He fully accomplished what He was sent to do. The word for “perfect” (there) means “to complete the purpose for which a thing was created.”
- Through His suffering and obedience He brought to a full conclusion the purpose for which He came into the world. In fact, the word that is used is the same root word as the one used for when He cried out from the cross “It is finished!”

- Secondly, note that this made Him the “the source of eternal salvation.” All the other priests combined could never provide eternal salvation. Only Jesus Christ could provide that.
- All they could offer was temporary covering for sin, but He became the source of everlasting life. By one act, by one offering, by one sacrifice, He was able to save forever those who are His.
- There is nothing *temporary* about what He has provided. His salvation is *eternal* salvation. That means you can’t lose it – because if you could lose it, it would be temporary life, *not* eternal life.
- Even the very *term* “eternal salvation” implies eternal security of the believer. His salvation is *eternal* salvation.
- The word for “became” implies this is something He was *not* before. He *became* the source out of which eternal salvation flows. In fact, He is the one and only source of eternal salvation.
- And notice, this salvation is for “all those who obey Him.” Although some might see in this an argument for “Lordship salvation,” this is probably referring to “obeying the gospel.”
- John MacArthur says this has nothing to do with obeying commands, following rules or regulations,

or obeying the Law. It has to do with “the obedience of faith” (as Paul talked about in Rom. 1:5). In other words, God wants us to obey Him by believing in Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 6:29, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

- And notice that the word “all” (in v. 9) means each individual one. Each person must believe in Him as an individual. No one can do that for you. You can’t depend on the faith of your parents (or anyone else). *You* must put your faith in Him to be saved.
- Now, we’re out of time, but let me give you that last point quickly. In v. 10 we come back around to the:

D. Source (v. 10)

- Look at v. 10, “being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.” This verse is a re-cap and a transition. Rather than being merely human (as the earthly high priest was) He is *both* human and divine. He is the infinite God-man (fully God and fully man).
- As such, He is “designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.” Now, we’re going to see much more about what this means, but we already have enough (here) to response to Him in saving faith.

- MAKE APPEAL
- PRAYER