

SERMON
SERIES

AND WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE HIM FOR WHOEVER WOULD DRAW NEAR TO GOD MUST BELIEVE THAT HE EXISTS AND THAT HE REWARDS THOSE WHO SEEK HIM.

HEBREW'S



26

HEBREW'S
VERSE BY
VERSE STUDYLET US DRAW NEAR IN
*Faith***SESSION OBJECTIVE: HEBREWS 5:1-10**

To understand what makes Jesus a superior high priest.

Read the Text:

"For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. 3 Because of this, he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. 4 And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; 6 as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." 7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. 9 And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, 10 being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 5:1-10, ESV)

Study the Text:**Jesus, the Greater High Priest**

In chapters 1 and 2, Jesus is exalted above the angels and proclaimed as the ultimate lawgiver. In chapters 3 and 4, He is proclaimed as the greater Moses and the ultimate covenant-maker. Now, in chapter 5, Jesus is also described as the superior high priest. Below is a breakdown of the key words and concepts in this passage.

THE HIGH PRIEST

Verses 1 through 4 provide a synopsis of the role of the high priest in the Old Testament. George Guthrie has provided four main principles to the office of high priest that are helpful for our present study:¹

¹ George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, The NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry C. Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 186-87.

These details matter because they highlight the inferiority of the Old Testament high priests to Christ's priesthood.

1. **He must be human.**

First, verse 1 indicates that the high priest must be chosen "from among men," indicating the importance of the humanity of the high priest. The Genevan Reformer, John Calvin, wrote: "He is fitted to reconcile us to God, because he is man...had he been taken from among angels or any other beings, we could not by him be united to God, as he could not reach down to us."²

2. **He must represent humanity to God through the offering of gifts and sacrifices.**

Second, verse 1 further states that his appointment is for the explicit purpose of acting "on behalf of men in relation to God" by offering "gifts and sacrifices for sins." Guthrie adds, "According to the Old Testament, the high priest shares in the general responsibilities performed by all the priests, including leading in worship by participation in various offerings (Ex. 29:1-46; Lev. 1-6)."³ This role becomes most important on the Day of Atonement, when he offered sacrifices for the sins of the people of God in the most holy place (Lev. 23:26-32).

3. **The high priest must deal gently with humanity since he himself is sinful.**

Third, the high priest himself is a sinner in need of sacrifice. This is one of the first marked shifts between the Old Testament high priests and the high priesthood of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament high priest was required to be gentle towards those who were "weak," or *sinful*, because it would be hypocritical otherwise to treat the people harshly, knowing that he himself was just as guilty. Practically, it would mean being patient with and showing mercy to people who had sinned in light of his own need for patience and mercy before God. This reality also impacts the high priest's role on the Day of Atonement in that he had to offer a special sacrifice for himself before he was permitted to offer for the people (Lev. 16:11).

4. **God is the One who confers the office of high priest by appointment.**

Finally, the high priest only becomes a high priest by God's selection (Heb. 5:1). In the Old Testament, priests had to come from the tribe of Levi. Beyond that, they also had to specifically descend from the line of Aaron. Even then, the high priest was specifically appointed by God Himself. No one comes into the role apart from divine selection: "but only when called by God, just as Aaron was" (Heb. 5:4).

THE SUPERIOR HIGH PRIEST

Verse 5 establishes that God has conferred the title of high priest onto the Son, as well: "So also, Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by Him who said to Him: 'You are my Son, today I have begotten You'" (Heb. 5:5). The selection of Christ to the role of high priest comes in the same way that it has come to every high priest: *divine appointment*. The author once again applies Psalm 2:7 to show that the same Incarnate Son of God who has mediated a new covenant and is the greater Moses has also been appointed to a unique priesthood.

However, there are important differences between Christ's priesthood and the old priesthood.

² John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005), 63.

³ Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 188.

1. Jesus represents humanity to God through the offering of His own flesh.

First, Jesus is human, and it is His own human flesh that He offers as the mediator between God and man. Verse 7 indicates that He “offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death.” The term “offered” is the Greek word προσφέρω (prospherō), which means something like “to apply to, to tender.” It’s payment language. Jesus makes the offering as the high priest, but the offering is His own flesh, which serves as “tender” to the debt-collector, who is His God. Jesus, then, is the perfect mediator. He, in His deity, submits that which He has assumed in His humanity to reconcile all of humanity back to God. Thus, verse 8 declares: “He learned obedience through what He suffered.” And His sacrifice was sufficient: “He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Heb. 5:9). Jesus is not only the high priest, but the sacrificial lamb. He is not only the representative of humanity, but the One who transforms humanity.

2. Jesus is gentle by grace, not necessity.

Beyond that, Jesus is perfect and, therefore, does not need to offer anything for His own sake. That means, then, that His gentleness and sympathy (Heb. 4:16) are not required of him, but are merely grace. It would not be hypocritical of Jesus to not act with gentleness because He does not require that which He gives. He does so from His own gracious Being, and nothing else.

3. Jesus is not part of the Aaronic priesthood but rather of the Melchizedekian priesthood.

Most importantly, however, is the details concerning Jesus’s priestly line. The author of Hebrews anticipates the inevitable argument that would come from the Hebrew people to which he is writing: “How can Jesus serve as a high priest if He is not only not from Aaron’s bloodline, but also not even a Levite?” Again, recall that priests must not only be Levites but also from Aaron’s bloodline; only then can they be selected by God for service. Jesus, however, is not from the tribe of Levi but from Judah (Matt. 1:3; see also Is. 11:1; Rev. 5:5). The author appeals to a much older priesthood that predates Israel altogether: *the order of Melchizedek*. What is this order? And who is Melchizedek? More will be said about this mysterious figure in chapter 7, but for now, what is important is that his priesthood differs from Aaron’s priesthood in that it is not by tribe or bloodline. Like the Aaronic priesthood, the Melchizedekian priesthood requires God’s appointment of priestly duties to the individual; unlike the Aaronic priesthood, there is no required bloodline as a prerequisite for this appointment.

What About Now?

If Jesus is the superior high priest, then He is the best option to turn to for the forgiveness of sins. The role of the high priest was to make offerings for sins on the Day of Atonement, yet the old priests had to offer for themselves as well, because of their own sin. Jesus, on the other hand, does not have to make offerings for Himself because He is perfect, and yet He offers Himself on our behalf as an act of grace. Jesus, then, is the best option to run towards for forgiveness.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Hebrews 5:1. Who chooses the high priests? What qualifies them? What is their role?
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- 2. Read Hebrews 5:2. Why can high priests deal gently with people they serve?

Day Two

- 1. Read Hebrews 5:3. What is the high priest obligated to do before he offers a sacrifice on the Day of Atonement?

- 2. Read Hebrews 5:4. Who must select the high priest? Who was this also true of?

Day Three

- 1. Read Hebrews 5:5. Who else did not exalt Himself to the position of high priest? What is the basis on which Jesus was selected?

- 2. Read Hebrews 5:6 and Psalm 110:4. What is the significance of the order of Melchizedek?

Day Four

- 1. Read Hebrews 5:7-8. What did Jesus “offer up” as a high priest? How did he learn obedience?

- 2. Read Hebrews 5:9-10. What did He “become” as a result of His suffering? How is the priesthood of Melchizedek different than the Aaronic priesthood? (Hint: See above notes)

Discuss the Text!

Session 7 Discussion: Grace

The grace of our high priest Jesus Christ is truly grace. While previous high priests had grace because they themselves required it, Jesus does not require it and yet gives it regardless. Talk as a group about the beauty of grace, both given and received.

- 1. Icebreaker: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “grace?”
- 2. What’s the nicest thing someone has ever done for you that you did not deserve?
- 3. What’s the greatest act of kindness you’ve done for someone else who didn’t deserve it?
- 4. Is the idea of “grace” attractive to the world? Why or why not?

5. Why is grace generally so hard to receive?
6. Kid Talk (For Home): Pick a day and take your child to go get ice cream or a toy of some kind and when they ask why, tell them there is no reason; you just love them (bonus points if you pick a day when they get in trouble at school). Explain to them that this gift you've given them is grace; undeserved, and totally from a place of love. Then talk to them about the grace God gives us in Christ by faith.

Takeaways:

1. Jesus is a greater high priest than any of the previous high priests.
2. Jesus is a priest by God's divine choice.
3. Jesus confers grace to us though He Himself does not require it.