

## **AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK (HEB 5:1-10)**

Throughout Hebrews we see this contrast being made between all the O.T. religious ceremonial things and the things that we enjoy as part of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ – a contrast between the old and the new. The argument being made by the writer of Hebrews is simply this: the new covenant in Christ is better than the old covenant found in the Law. It IS true that the old covenant was given to Moses by God. That was the Jewish argument. But God replaced it because of the sacrificial work of Jesus. What Jesus did on the cross changed everything. The audience to whom Hebrews is addressed is made up of both Jewish believers and unbelievers. For Jewish believers, the application is this: “You’re on the right track. Hang in there with Jesus. Don’t go back to Judaism. What you have in Christ is so much better than what you had before!” And for Jewish unbelievers the application is simply, “Quit hanging on to the old and come to Jesus. Embrace the new, the better covenant. Commit yourselves to Jesus. Today is the day of salvation!”

Last time I met with you we looked at this passage. Beginning in Hebrews 4:14, Jesus is introduced as our “great high priest.” He’s a better high priest than any of those earthly high priests. For starters, Jesus is sinless. The other high priests were not. Jesus’ work as our great high priest is complete. Having accomplished His mission of redemption, Jesus returned to the glory of heaven. He entered the Father’s presence and sat down at His right hand (Heb 1:3). By contrast, earthly high priests could never sit down because their job was never finished. Their work went on and on year after year. As our great high priest, Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses. He understands us. He knows what we’re going through because He’s walked in our shoes. Chapter 4 closes with these wonderful words... READ Hebrews 4:16.

What is it that a sinner needs the most? Is it judgment? Guilt? A lecture? A program of recovery? Moral rehabilitation? No. What a sinner needs MOST is compassion. He or she... WE need mercy and forgiveness.

WE need a Savior. And that's exactly what Jesus provides us – a Savior. Salvation by grace thru faith in Him. What a wonderful and compassionate High Priest we have! Which brings us to Hebrews Chapter 5... *Questions?*

The writer of Hebrews continues the concept of Jesus as our high priest... READ Hebrews 5:1-4

Here the writer highlights four standard qualifications for a Jewish high priest under the Old Covenant. Looking at **Q1** Verses 1 and 4 give us the first qualification – they are, v 4, "called by God, just as Aaron was." Verse 1 tells us that "every high priest chosen" is "from among men." So, high priests A) had to be **appointed** by God and B) were in **human** form. Verse 1 says that high priests "act on behalf of men in relation to God." A high priest served as a go-between for God's people, an intermediary, an advocate. The people needed this because they had become separated from God as a result of their sin. In order to be an effective advocate for the people, a high priest had to be like those he represented before God. God did not choose angels or heavenly beings to be priests. He chose men.

The next qualification is that a high priest, C) had to be understanding; had to be **sympathetic** toward people. See verse on prayer list, Heb 4:15. Verse 2 tells us they must "deal gently with the ignorant and wayward." Numbers 15 talks about man's "unintentional sins." These are sins of ignorance, moments of impulse, reactions in anger, overwhelming temptations, things like that. Our problem as fallen human beings is that we are sinners. It's part of our nature to sin. In order for a priest to minister effectively to sinful people it was important that he recognize human frailty and weakness. He had to understand how a person's sin kept them from being in a right relationship with a holy God. And by God's grace, the O.T. Law established a way to deal with sin. Which brings us to the last qualification of a high priest, v 1, to "offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." D) offer **sacrifices** for sins. *[make sure everyone gets these]*

**Q2** asks, "Before a high priest could offer up sacrifices for the people what did he have to do first?" He must first **deal with his own sin**. Verse

3 says, "he is obligated to offer sacrifices for his own sins" before he can make sacrifices for the people, before he can bring anybody else back into a right relationship with God. So the O.T. high priest had an important function. He did for the sinful people what they couldn't do for themselves. He made intercession between them and God. *Questions?*

Now that we have an understanding of the general qualifications for a high priest, notice the similarities between the O.T. high priests and Jesus.

READ Hebrew 5:5-7

**Q3**, just like the O.T. high priests, Jesus was appointed by God. V 5 says that Christ "was appointed by Him who said to [Messiah, Jesus], "You are My Son, today I have begotten You." This is a quote from Psalm 2 which is a Messianic psalm. So then, Jesus our Messiah was appointed by God. In v 6 the writer of Hebrews quotes Ps 110: "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." We'll talk more about Melchizedek here in a minute. So, Jesus met the first qualification.

The second qualification was that the high priest had to be human. This means that Jesus had to become human. V 7 says, "in the days of His flesh," which is a reference to the 33 years of Jesus' incarnation (4 Gospel accounts). So Jesus became a man. Philippians tells us that "though He [Jesus] was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself [NLT "He gave up His divine privileges"], by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (2:6-8). So, Jesus met the second qualification.

Verse 7 goes on to show us how Jesus felt compassion for the people. "With loud cries and tears" to His heavenly Father ("the One who was able to save Him from death"), "He offered up prayers and supplications." And God heard His prayers! In the Gospels we read that Jesus prayed, He interceded, He made petition for His disciples and for the entire Jewish

nation. You see His tears in the Garden of Gethsemane, His lament over the city of Jerusalem, His weeping at Lazarus grave). Jesus felt the pain and sorrow of the people He was around – all the direct result of original sin. As Jesus walked the countryside what He saw and heard broke His heart. He felt more than just a superficial sympathy for people. Jesus felt a deep, divine compassion for them. These were the very people He came to save. So, Jesus met the third qualification.

What about that fourth qualification, the one about offering sacrifices for sins? Did Jesus ever do that? V 8-10 answer that question.

READ Hebrews 5:8-10

**Q4** asks, "How is the sacrifice for sins that Jesus offered different from the sacrifices offered by the O.T. priests?" You never read in the Gospels about Jesus offering up animal sacrifices on an altar. Instead, Jesus Himself BECAME the sacrifice for sins. Jesus offered up Himself as a sacrifice for sins. His ultimate suffering came when He went to the cross and died for our sins. He laid down His life for us! V 8 says, "He learned obedience thru what He suffered." Jesus felt real pain! He felt what we feel to its fullest extent. Jesus suffered both physically, emotionally and spiritually. None of us can even imagine what Jesus went through. Think about it – Jesus, the Son of God, the second Person of the holy Trinity, felt things in a human body for 33 years that He had never felt since eternity past while in heaven.

V 9 says, "He became the source of eternal salvation..." Later in Hebrews Ch 9 the writer tells us, "[Jesus] entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12). So Q3, Jesus met all 4 qualifications of a high priest. But Q4 the sacrifice He offered was different from those other high priests. Jesus is a better High Priest!

Notice in v 9 it says, "He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him." **Q5** says "The eternal salvation that Jesus provides is

conditional. What's the condition?" Obedience... to **Him**. The command of the Gospel is to "repent" and "believe." Acts 5 says that repentance and forgiveness of sins is given to those who obey God (5:31-32). Romans 1:5 talks about the "obedience of faith." 2 Thessalonians 1:8 mentions obeying "the Gospel of our Lord Jesus." First Peter 1:22 talks about purifying "your souls by your obedience to the truth." The truth of the Gospel is that God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish but have eternal life.

OK, so let's talk about Melchizedek. He was introduced to us back in v 6 and we see him again here in v 10. Quoting from Psalm 110 for the second time the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was "designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." Melchizedek is mentioned 8 times in the Book of Hebrews. So it's important that we understand who Melchizedek is. So, who is this guy?

The answer is found in Genesis Ch 14. Let me set the stage for you before I read this.

Abraham and his nephew Lot were nomadic ranchers. God blessed them, their flocks and herds increased. A shortage of available grazing land caused strife between Lot and Abraham's herdsmen. To settle the issue Abraham allowed Lot to choose between the Jordan valley to the east and the land of Canaan. Lot chose to inhabit the lush vegetation of the Jordan valley and he parted ways with Abraham settling in the wicked city of Sodom. At some point Lot and his family were taken captive by raiding armies from the north. When Abraham found out about it he assembled an army of men and led a night attack. He and his men defeated the bad guys and returned victorious with Lot, all his possessions, and his family. As he's returning Abraham encounters this guy Melchizedek.

READ Genesis 14:17-20 [*note: Abraham's name is changed in Ch 17*]

Melchizedek is called the "king of Salem" (Salem = Jerusalem). He is also a "priest of God Most High." He was both a priest and a king. He

precedes Aaron (the priest we are much more familiar with) by some 500 years. The writer of Hebrews presents this rather obscure O.T. guy, Melchizedek, as a type of Messiah because he is a king priest. He is not like Aaron who was only a priest, but not a king. Melchizedek is a priest of God Most High. He's not some pagan priest. He is a God follower. He blesses Abraham and Abraham recognizes the God whom Melchizedek represents and he offers a tenth (a tithe) to Melchizedek. This is an act of worship to God. What's interesting about this event it is that it occurs long before tithes were ever discussed as part of the Law in Leviticus.

So then, Jesus, like Melchizedek, is a King Priest of the God Most High. So, whenever you hear Melchizedek, **Q6**, I want you to think **King-Priest**. If you look thru the Bible you will find only two king-priests mentioned. One is Melchizedek. The other is Jesus. It's a great comparison. *Questions?*

The last part of Hebrews Ch 5 (5:11 thru 6:12) is a lengthy discussion about falling away. It is yet another warning. It's a portion of Hebrews that really confuses and troubles a lot of people. Let me just tell you how I read it, the big picture. At the beginning of our study of Hebrews I mentioned that there were three basic groups that made up the community of Jews to whom the writer addresses. The larger group were Jewish believers. A second group is what I referred to as "fence-straddlers." These were Jews who believed intellectually that Jesus was the Messiah, but had never committed fully to following Him. They were clinging to their Jewish practices. A third group was unbelieving Jews who rejected Jesus as their Messiah. As I read and studied this section – looked at many commentaries which were not in agreement; I even studied this at DTS – what makes the most sense to me, theologically, is that the writer of Hebrews has that second group in mind, **Q7 Jewish "fence-straddlers."** The Jews who intellectually believed Jesus to be the Messiah but would not commit to Him. I will make my case for why I believe this next week and we'll pick up our study in v 11. We'll stop right here today. Seeing Jesus as our great high priest only deepens our love for Him. Let's sing one verse of "Jesus Loves Me."