

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

PART I

STUDY NUMBER EIGHT - Hebrews 5:1-10

In the book of Hebrews, we have a group of people who are contemplating a more comfortable position of going back and living under Judaism rather than to continue on in the beautiful relationship that could be theirs in Christ. So he's dealing with different issues that are going to be involved in the decision, if they make it, to go back and live that way rather than to go on and pay the price of suffering persecution and difficulty by the fact that they are going to be faithful to the Lord Jesus. There is going to be suffering in this world for a stand like that. And we've arrived at Hebrews 5.

Now the last three verses that we looked at last week are very crucial to today's study. I want to review verses 14, 15, and 16 and then we'll jump right into the passage.

v.14 Since then we are having a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us be holding fast our confession.

v.15 For we are not having a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

v.16 Let us therefore be drawing near with confidence to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

We have seen that Christ is superior to the angels. Christ is superior to Moses and the law. And now he's dealing with another very important subject and it's the subject of priesthood.

I don't know if you really feel the impact of this, but I hope you will when I get through. Biblically from Genesis 3 all the way through, it's a give me that you're gonna need somebody to represent you to get into heaven. You cannot do it on your own. Immediately when our first parents sinned, there was the killing of the lamb to clothe them. A holy God is offended by sin.

And so the priesthood is set up in the Old Testament. There is a lamb that is sacrificed for sin. Until we get to the New Testament, when in grace God marvelously provides the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. They are leaving that and wanting to go back and live under the old order.

So to talk about who is going to be your representative is a very important issue. A lot of people don't talk about it. A lot of people take it for granted. We've got to realize, it's absolutely necessary for us to have made preparations so that when we stand before a holy God, there is someone who is there to represent our case and to make provision for our eternal destiny.

The story of Joseph Scriven comes out of the book Amazing Grace by Kenneth Osbeck.

He's a young man who lived in Ireland, grew up and went to school and then he met the girl of his dreams. They were planning on getting married and the night before their wedding she was tragically killed in an accident. Joseph Scriven had the hardest time coping with that. That loss was incredible. But instead of driving him away from the Lord, it drew him closer to Him. He left Ireland and migrated to Canada. Where at Point Hope in Canada he became the good Samaritan of that place. He was found often giving away his clothes and his possessions and others who had needs. He would many times work long hours for a friend without any remuneration at all. He found out that his mother was seriously ill in Ireland and so he sent a letter to her with a little poem that he had written. Shortly thereafter he became seriously ill and on his nightstand a friend came to see him and found this poem. The friend inquired, "Who wrote this?" And Joseph Scriven in the weakness of his voice said, "The Lord and I did it together."

Those words:

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Jesus Christ is not only your great High Priest, He's your friend. And He wants to be that friend and He wants to meet your need.

What is it that stands between you and that intimate, dynamic, restful, peaceful relationship with Him that He wants and longs for with you tonight?

Now, in looking at this passage, Chapter 5:1-10, the passage divides itself into two parts. The first four verses, the author describes what it takes to be a priest in the Aaronic priesthood.

Then he turns around in verses 5-10 and he shows you how Jesus meets every one of those needs.

So God, from the very beginning structured the priesthood. What does that tell you? That tells you that you and I are estranged from God.

And so somebody must intervene in our behalf.

Somebody has to be a spokesman. Every one of us needs a mediator, a priest, we need somebody as a go-between for us. That is why God set up the priesthood in the first place.

Now, having said that, and since it's a life and death issue, let's dig into it and look at the three qualifications for a priest if he was going to be a part of Aaron's priesthood.

There are three things that are said about it then the writer is just going to flip it over and show you how Jesus qualifies on all three counts. That's how the argument is going to flow.

v. 1 For every high priest when he is taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order that he may continually be offering both gifts and sacrifices for sins;

What is the first qualification of a priest? He has to be a human being. He has to be a man or a human person. He has to be able, to be us, to represent us, before God and to represent God, back to us.

#1 He must be a human being.

“Every high priest when he is taken from among men.”

Now, what happens? He “is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God.”

He is under divine appointment in things pertaining to us to make it possible for us to be able to relate to this Holy God. So he is a go-between. And he's there to do what? "Offering both gifts and sacrifices for sins."

What does a priest do when he offers a gift? And what does he do when he offers a sacrifice? And what's the difference?

I want to stop for a second. I want to show you how serious this is. Who is your priest today? Who is your court appointed attorney? Who's your lawyer?

Everyone of us are sinners. We're going into the presence of a Holy God.

Remember Job, he got to that point in the middle of the book where he lost all ten of his kids and he lost all of his business and everything else and he's sitting there in an ash heap, covered with boils and what does he say? He says, I sure wish I had a lawyer.

I wish I had a lawyer to represent me before God because I'd go to court with God and I'd win because I haven't done anything to deserve what I'm going through. So even Job, patriarchal Job, way back then, wanted somebody to represent him in court before God.

Every lost person in the world is in need of somebody to represent them before a Holy God and you can't represent yourself. That's the story.

If I'm going to have somebody represent me in my eternal destiny is at stake, I want somebody who's qualified.

#2, I want somebody that there's a pretty good chance he's going to win and that he's won a few cases before.

I also want somebody who's not only going to make provision for my forgiveness but I want him to make secure my eternal life.

Since I'm putting everything into his hands, I want to know that he can represent me.

Let's say you're getting ready to go to court. It's all over your face. You're guilty as mud. You know if the judge pronounced verdict and justice is done, you're done. What are you going to do about a lawyer? You are going to get somebody to represent you that can defend you and protect you and hopefully coming out of that situation, he is going to win the case.

Since you're concerned about a lawyer, why aren't you concerned about who's going to represent you spiritually since you to have someone when the day comes for you to go to court when you die?

That's all a priest is. He has to have the qualifications that are going to win your day in court otherwise you aren't going to win. It's the very same thing.

His purpose in being in existence, the last of the verse says, “every high priest is taken from among men, he is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order that he may continually be offering both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”

When you do the Bible read-thru, there comes a time when you read the book of Leviticus. It is wonderful when you study in Hebrews and refer to the book of Leviticus. Because you see all these different offerings, all these different sacrifices.

The “gifts probably were the non-bloody offerings. Like the meal offering, the fellowship offering. Those had nothing to do with animals.

But the sacrifices of the lamb, and the bull and the pigeons and all the rest of them, that was blood being shed for the remission of sins. Covering the sins of these Israelites is anticipation that another one was going to come and die on the cross, the Lamb of God, to take away the sin of the world. So the blood is the sacrifices. The gifts were in these other offerings that were made.

When I began to realize the hope and the destiny and the future and the foundation of the priesthood and why it's there and I got so excited.

You know what it's done for me? I'm eternally secure in Christ tonight because I know He's my Priest.

I'll tell you secondly, another thing I'm really excited about, is I'm not only eternally secure, I have the potential for victory because he intercedes 24 hours a day at the right hand of God the Father for me.

I want to tell you something else, I also have the potential for fellowship because I know when fellowship is broken, my Priest is already at work trying to reconcile me to my Father for the failures I've had in my life.

These things have transformed my whole attitude toward my Father and the potential is there because of what Jesus Christ has done on the Cross.

So, first of all, a priest has got to be a human being. Right? Because he's representing us. That's the number one thing for a Aaronic priest.

#2 is in the next verse.

v. 2 who is able to be dealing gently with those who are ignorant and those who are being led astray, since he himself also is continually subject to weakness;

#1—He has to be a human being but

#2— He has to be sympathetic. He's got to be gentle.

Can you imagine going to a priest and you have a problem and you want him to represent you and the priest says, “Oh, let me tell you something. What you’ve done is impossible. I’ve never heard this in all my life. You’re doomed for eternity. Man, you should never have done that!” The priest is just falling out. He’s just in deep grief. And he’s in self-righteous arrogance. “Oh! I’ve never heard anybody do that one!”

How would you feel? A priest has to deal gently and he deals gently simply because he too has experienced these very same things. And knowing that, he deals gently with this whole business of forgiveness and caring for their needs.

Who is he representing? He’s representing God. Does God deal gently?

Look at Micah 7:18, 19?

Micah 7:18, 19

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

What a great Priest! How He takes care of us!

Do you have that same gentle, compassionate feeling spirit for people who really hurt?

You and I ought to manifest that to each other.

Joseph Stowell the president of Moody Bible Institute has a little book called Loving Those We'd Rather Hate and he says:

I can't help but wonder how many of the things that happen to me throughout the course of my life are intended by God to break my proud, self-righteous, and sometimes angry heart, that I might indeed be a man after His own heart, a man who reflects a heart of genuine compassion.

We might define compassion as our commitment to activate ourselves as channels of God's love, mercy, and grace in tender, thoughtful, understanding acts of help, deliverance, forgiveness, and restoration toward those in need.

What's the level of your sensitivity toward those around you who come in an hour of great need? Are you there to meet their needs?

The priest not only needs to be human, but he also needs to be sensitive and he has to deal gently in the situation with those who come to him in hurt.

v. 3 and because of it he is under a moral obligation to be offering sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.

“And because of it”—the fact that the priest is to deal gently—“he is under a moral obligation to be offering sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.”

He has a responsibility, not only to be sure that he himself is in fellowship, that he is offering sacrifices for the people as well. He’s doing both of these things in his function as a priest.

Now here comes the third and final qualification and then we flip it over, we’re done with Aaron in verse 4.

v. 4 And no one is taking the honor to himself, but when he is called by God [he responds to it], even as also Aaron.

Three things:

- 1. He has to be human**
- 2. He has to be compassionate or sympathetic**

But in verse 4,

3. He's under divine appointment

He can't tell you,

"Hey, I'm called to the priesthood and I'm going to be a priest."

That is not an option.

God is the One who chooses who's going to be priest. And He said, "The sons of Aaron are going to be the priests and they are the only ones, there are no other priests who will represent Me under the law." You cannot take the honor to yourself.

Let me describe it to you, what the consequences are when you try to do this. When somebody tried to act like a priest who wasn't one and what happened to him? Do you remember Saul?

Here's Saul, Samuel comes to him, he's the priest. He says, "I want to be back in 7 days to offer the sacrifices. You stay right here with the army. When you come, I'll offer the sacrifices then you'll go to battle against the Philistines after I've offered the sacrifices."

The only mistake was that Saul had his Timex set and the alarm went off on it Sunday, seven days later and Samuel hadn't come yet and he realized he better act.

So he acted and went in and became a priest and made the sacrifices. He had just finished and who walks in but Samuel. Samuel says very simply, very compassionate priest, he says, “You’ve done foolishly.” In other words, you’ve just lost your kingdom. In other words, you aren’t going to get any more chances. It’s all over.

It’s a serious business to go into the presence of God not being adequately prepared.

Every high priest under Aaron’s leadership had little bells on the bottom of his robe so when he went into the holy of holies to sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat at the ark, the people could hear the bells and know that the offering was being accepted. Because if it wasn’t, he was going to be struck dead in the holy of holies.

Do you remember the ordination of the priests in Leviticus 10? What happened to Aaron. All 4 of his boys are ordained to the priesthood at the very same time that Aaron is ordained to the priesthood.

Do you recall what happened? Nadab and Abihu, the two boys, I don’t know if they’d been drinking too much or messing around with drugs or what, but they went in and offered a strange fire instead of doing what God said. And fire consumed them and they were charcoal. Instantaneously both of them were fatalities.

Talk about a sad, sad picture. That's there in the Bible to remind you that you don't take lightly your access into the presence of God. You come by the way that God provides, and not by the way you think is going to gain acceptance for you. It's serious.

Aaron, you have to be human. You have to be sympathetic, and you have to be under divine appointment to be a priest.

The writer is now going to show you that Jesus is under divine appointment. He is the High Priest who can meet all of your needs.

v. 5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you";

“So”—when you’ve got the little word “So”—“So also Christ”

This is the way it is with Aaron. But now....

“So also Christ did not glorify Himself”—take an honor onto himself—“so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’”

What does it mean here when it says at this point, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”?

Let me ask you this, how can a person qualify to be a priest? Well he has to make a sacrifice, doesn't he?

Christ makes a sacrifice of Himself on the cross. Now that the sacrifice is done, you can't have a dead priest. He isn't going to be very good. He's already done, finished. So, when can he become a priest? On Easter Sunday! He's raised from the dead. He's is now a living priest, qualified for the priesthood by the fact that's made a sacrifice of Himself as the Lamb of God, without spot and blemish. He now can function as a priest because He is alive eternally! Isn't that's great!

Now, notice the next verse, verse 6.

v. 6 just as He is saying also in another passage, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Did I just lose you?

In Hebrews chapter 7, I'll spend most of the study on Melchizedek.

He's only mentioned three times in the Bible.

You find him in Psalm 110:4, and that's the verse that's quoted right here. He is found in Genesis 14, there's a little historical clip in the time of Abraham about him. And here he is in Hebrews.

Let me just say this, is it possible for Jesus Christ to qualify for the Aaronic priesthood? You see, if you're a Bible student, you have to say "Absolutely not because He's of the tribe of Judah, the kingly tribe, He's not of the priestly tribe of Levi, so He cannot qualify no matter how hard He would try because He's of the wrong tribe." So He could not be of the tribe of Levi or of the Aaronic priesthood, He has to be of a separate priesthood.

He is of the order of Melchizedek. This is a different priesthood. It's such a neat priesthood that king's can be priests in this priesthood.

Let me make one more statement.

The only way you will win your day in court is to have Jesus Christ represent you on that day of judgment.

You see, Jesus said it right and we need to hear it carefully: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the father but by me."

v. 7 Who in the days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One who is able to be saving Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety,

When was it that Jesus cried? When was it that He offered with such emotion prayers to the Father?

The writer has taken you down into the Garden of Gethsemane. Luke 22 records that He sweated great drops of blood as He begged the Father to let the cup pass from Him. That He wouldn't have to take and experience this horrible death in dying for the sins of mankind.

**Does He know how it feels to really be hurt?
Does He know how to deal gently?**

Yes, He knows how it hurts and He knows how we feel.

#1 He's under divine appointment.

#2 He deals gently with us.

**What did Aaron's priests do in verse 1?
They offered sacrifices and gifts.**

**Why didn't Jesus offer sacrifices and gifts all time?
Because He didn't have any sin to offer sacrifices for.
"He offered prayers and supplications" during the time that He was here.**

He was not going to make any sacrifices for Himself because He didn't need to. But He did make a sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the whole world.

I told you about Ron Mehl, this pastor in Portland that has leukemia. In his book God Works the Night Shift he says this:

You can call heaven's help line anytime, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, and you'll never get some nasal-voiced, part-time angel or God's voice mail.

This is a God who's at the switchboard Himself. And He even works the night shift.

He's always available to us in our time of need. And He's sympathetic, He's gentle.

And verse 8 says:

v. 8 although being a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered;

He was the Son of the Father but He came down here on earth and took on human flesh and He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

It doesn't say He learned to obey, it says "He learned obedience."

He learned what it was to be accountable.

Can I give you a passage?

Philippians 2 describes it.

He emptied Himself of all the prerogatives of glory and he took upon him the form of a servant, and he became flesh, he was made in the likeness of men.

He emptied himself, took the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men, and he became like that of a servant who learned obedience through the things which he suffered.

He humbled Himself and He learned obedience through His death on the cross.

How does He learn it?

“Father, I don’t want to do this. If it’s possible let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless, there’s no issue, not My will but Yours be done. I want to do Your will.”

So He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

Mark Twain says: “Always do right. It will gratify some and astonish the rest.”

Always do what is right and Jesus Christ did that.

That brings us to the 9th verse.

v. 9 and having been made perfect, He became to all those who are obeying Him the source of eternal salvation;

“And having been made perfect.”

The word “perfect” or “Telos” is hard to translate from the Greek language. It’s a word to describe a perfect record. I could say, “He has a 4.0 in the graduate school of obedience” and you’d understand what I’m saying.

I could say, “He broke the tape, he won the marathon.” You’d say I understand that.

Or we could say, “He accomplished all of his goals that he set out to do.” And you could understand that.

The Father’s stamp of approval is on it.

It is a perfect record.

He accomplished it all.

That’s the significance of the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Remember in John 17 he said: “I’ve finished the work you gave to me, do now restore the glory which I had with you before the world was.”

He’s doing the will of the Father. And He accomplishes it perfectly and the Father’s stamp of approval is on it, so what?

He qualifies for priesthood, that's what!

He is a human being, He fully qualifies, He is sympathetic, He understands, and therefore He is appointed by the Father to an eternal priesthood, the priesthood, the order of Melchizedek which is an eternal priesthood. And the priests who are priests in the order of Melchizedek live forever, therefore they qualify to be a priest forever in that order.

v. 10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

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LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: We can come boldly to Christ because our Priest has met the qualifications.

LESSON #2: The purpose of the priesthood was to be "offering both gifts and sacrifices for sins."

LESSON #3: The priest must be characterized by compassion and deal gently with those who are ignorant and are being led astray.

LESSON #4: The priests in Aaron's line had to make sacrifices for their own sins as well.

LESSON #5: To become a priest you must be called by God, designated by Him.

LESSON #6: Christ is a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

LESSON #7: Christ tasted humanity to the fullest extent in the garden of Gethsemane.

LESSON #8: Christ learned obedience through the experience of the cross.

LESSON #9: Christ learned what is involved in obedience when suffering and testing are part of it.

LESSON #10: Christ fulfilled all the requirements for the priesthood perfectly.

LESSON #11: He is the only source of eternal salvation.

LESSON #12: Do you have a priest, and is His name Jesus?

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v.10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Read Hebrews 5:1-10 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.**
- 2. What is the function of a priest, according to verse 1?**
- 3. How does the priest handle "those who are ignorant and those who are being led astray," according to verse 2?**
- 4. What did Christ not do, according to verse 5?**
- 5. In what order is Christ a priest, according to verse 6?**
- 6. How did Jesus pray, according to verse 7?**
- 7. How did Jesus learn obedience, according to verse 8?**
- 8. Jesus became the source of what, according to verse 9?**
- 9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?**
- 10. What lesson have you learned from this study?**

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