

Hebrews 5:1
Jesus Our Great High Priest

Every day in the city of Jerusalem the fragrant aroma of sacrifices burning on the altar filled the air.

- The smoke arising from the meat offerings and grain offerings provided a visible reminder of the ordinances and mandates of the true and Living God.

That continual aroma was a constant reminder of God's holy requirements as well as their inability to meet those requirements apart from the intervention of a mediator.

It is NOT hard to see that Ancient Judaism was a very tactile religion.

- You could hear the Levites as they offered prayer and praise to God.
- You could smell the burning flesh on the altar of sacrifice.
- Frankincense mixed with oil and fine flour baking on the altar produced a fragrant aroma.
- Throughout the day the splashing of water in the many ritual washings reminded them of their need for cleansing.
- The O.T. ordinances of God provided an array of sensory experiences.

On the great Day of Atonement you could actually stand in the crowd and literally feel the blood of the sacrifice as the High Priest dipped the hyssop into the silver pail and sprinkled the sacrificial blood all over the crowd as God's prescribed covering for sin.

- You could literally walk away with the evidence of atonement on your head.

Any Jew in that day who observed the lives and the worship of the Disciples of Christ could ask a few tough questions:

“Who is your High Priest?” Who is your mediator, who stands in the gap between you and God? Who offers the sacrifices that atone for your sin?

- How are your sins going to be pardoned when there is no ongoing sacrifice and no one to intercede for you?
- How can you claim that the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant when you have no high priest?

It's not hard to see how alluring it might have been for these Hebrew people to return to the sensory experiences of the old covenant practices, especially when Nero began his persecution of the Church. But that would have been a fatal mistake.

IN Chapter 1 (Hebrews) The Holy Spirit informs us that this same God who spoke in the past by the Fathers and the Prophets has provided His definitive and Final revelation in His Son.

- He warns them NOT to abandon Jesus the Son because He is a greater mediator than the angels who mediated the Old Covenant.
- He warns them not to harden their hearts to God's Final Word of that has come through one who is greater than Moses,
- He pleads with them to embrace the Rest of God that is greater than any rest provided by Joshua.

Here in Ch. 4 Vs 14 we come to the very heart of this book of Hebrews where the priesthood, the sacrificial offering and intercession of the Lord Jesus are shown to be greater than the Levitical priesthood and all of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

- We have a better covenant with better promises that are assured by a better priest who offered a better sacrifice.

This is how we are going to break down this passage this morning.

We are going to begin in Ch. 5: 1 as we seek to understand the priesthood of Christ and then we will reach back to Chapter 4 to explore the implications of His priesthood in our lives today.

Heb 5:1-4 Describe three basic qualifications that every High Priest was required to meet.
Heb. 5: 5–10 describe how Jesus meets and exceeds all of those qualifications.

Biblical qualifications for the High Priest

1. Selected by God (from among men)
2. Sympathetic with men
3. Sacrificing for men.

First: The High Priest must be Selected by God from among men.

Hebrews 5:1 **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.**

- It was required of a priest that he share in the nature of the persons for whom he officiates. Very simply: he had to be a man.
 - Only a man could represent Men to God.
 - Only a man could effectively stand in the gap for men.
 - Only a man who experienced firsthand the sufferings of men could minister to men in an understanding and effective way.

Before the Roman occupation; The High Priests in Israel were chosen by God from among men.

It was not an office that a man could chose for himself rather it was an office that was appointed by God.

- Much like being a Pastor, it is not a job that you simply apply for; it is a life calling that God summons and directs a man into.

- We see that in the priesthood of Aaron:

Exodus 28:1 (*God speaking to Moses*) "Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests — Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

Exodus 29:1 "Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. Take one bull of the herd and two rams without blemish,"

- After that the Lord went on to describe the sacrifices that were necessary for the sanctification of the priests.
- Because the Priests were human, because they were sinful they had to offer sacrifices for themselves before they could minister on behalf of the people.
- With these stipulations in mind we reach back to Hebrews Chapter 2 to see the priestly qualifications of the Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 2: 14 *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,*

17 *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

- The condescension, the incarnation of Jesus Christ was absolutely necessary in order for him to serve as our great High Priest.
- Paul describes how the Lord Jesus emptied himself and put of human flesh.

Philippians 2: 5 *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,*
 6 *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,*
 7 *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*
 8 *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

- According to Paul Jesus Meets the qualifications of being human.
- Now we ask the question, "when was he called by God to be a Priest?" (Ch 5)

Hebrews 5: 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."*

- Just as Aaron did not assume the position of high priest for himself neither is Jesus a self-appointed Priest. He did not seek his own glory and exalt himself. He was appointed by God.

- The Scriptural support for Christ's appointment is gathered together by the author of Hebrews from two places in the O.T. Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4. Both are quoted in Hebrews 5:5-6.

At first it seems a bit strange when the author points to Psalm 2 because the context of the Psalm only speaks of Christ as King. It says nothing about Him being a priest.

Psalm 2: 7 **I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.**

- It is only when you combine Psalm 2 with Psalm 110:4 that the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood comes into focus.

Psalm 110: 4 **The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."**

- Under the Mosaic Law all of the priests were appointed from the tribe of Levi. They were required to have Levi Jews.
- BUT Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (That was the kingly tribe.) No one from the tribe of Judah ever served in the office of priest.
- This man Melchizedek who was both King and Priest lived 640 years before the Aaronic priesthood came into being
- WHO was this man Melchizedek?

Melchizedek was a contemporary of Abraham. As I said, His life and his priesthood actually predate and supersede the Mosaic covenant and the Levitical priesthood.

We find him in Genesis

Genesis 14:17 **After his (Abraham's) return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) 19 And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him (To Melchizedek) a tenth of everything.**

- The fact that Abraham gave a tenth of all of the spoils of war to Melchizedek insinuates that Melchizedek was in fact greater than Abraham.
- The writer of Hebrews uses this narrative to prove that the priesthood of Jesus is greater than the priesthood of Aaron since Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

WHAT does this mean to ME and YOU?

It means that we can rejoice with confidence knowing that today WE have an eternal High Priest who is interceding before the Father on our behalf.

- One who was selected by God to represent us. Jesus is the perfect mediator between God and man because He is fully God and fully man.

OK We see that Jesus became a man and He was selected by God from among men, now we move on to the second qualification: He must also be sympathetic with men.

- 2 Jesus is sympathetic with men – because he shared the frailty of our human existence. He understands our needs, he feels our pain and he can relate to us in all of our trials.

Hebrews 5: 2 **He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.**

- This verse speaks of the solidarity between the High Priest and the people that he represents.
- The High Priest does not belong to a different class of humanity. He bears the same flesh and blood as every other human being.
- Because he is like his brothers “*Beset with weakness*” the same human frailties, He is able to deal gently with those who are wayward and ignorant.
 - The priest knows what it is to endure pain, infirmity and rejection so he is able to be compassionate and merciful to his brothers.
- In Chapter 4 the author wrote:

Hebrews 4:15 **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

Hebrews 2: 18 **For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

- The “Days of our Lives” are filled with hardship, affliction and at times tragedy and loss but for those of us who are “In Christ” we have a compassionate and merciful High Priest who stands before the Father on our behalf.
- He is able to relate to our feelings and our struggles because he faced every temptation known to man and yet he remained sinless.

I don't believe that any man ever suffered or endured temptation to the extent that Jesus Christ suffered and was tempted.

- I want you to think about this, realistically, I believe that the severity of our temptation never rises to the level that Jesus experienced simply because we normally give in.
 - Physically, morally, emotionally we all eventually succumb to temptation. Not so with Jesus. He never gave in. He never gave up.

This Jesus, who is called the Second Adam, endured temptation to the highest degree possible simply because he refused to yield.

Isaiah described Jesus as being **despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:**

- Can you think of anyone who endured the overwhelming pressures that Jesus endured especially on that night when he was abandoned in the Garden of Gethsemane?
- Can you think of anyone else, in all of human history who literally sweat drops of blood because the pressure to yield to temptation was so great?
- *“If it is possible let this cup pass from me!”*
- I believe that the writer of Hebrews alludes to Gethsemane here in Chapter 5 when he states:

Hebrews 5:7 *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.*

- IN order to atone for our sins, the Lord Jesus had to endure the just wrath of God for every sin committed by his chosen people.

What a comfort it is to know that we have a Great High Priest who is chosen by God, and sympathetic with men.

- What great confidence to know that He stands at the right hand of God where he ever lives to intercede for us.

Before the throne of God above I have a strong and perfect plea
 A great High Priest whose name is love, Who ever lives and pleads for me
 My name is graven on His hands, My name is written on His heart
 I know that while in heaven He stands No tongue can bid me thence depart

When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within
 Upward I look and see Him there Who made an end of all my sin
 Because the sinless Savior died My sinful soul is counted free
 For God the Just is satisfied To look on Him and pardon me

- The Last Point for today: The High Priest offers sacrifice for the sin of his people.

3 Sacrificing for men.

Hebrews 5: 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,*

- Living among men, in the flesh for 33 years. Enduring every temptation known to men, all the while living in sinless perfection, Jesus became perfectly suited to serve as our High Priest.
- In his death Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb. In in His death and resurrection, He was the great High priest who presented Himself, his own blood to atone for the sins of men.

Hebrews 9: 11 *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of*

this creation) 12 he 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.

- The Jewish high priest entered an earthly temple every year carrying the blood of a goat in hopes of covering the sins of His people.
- BUT Jesus entered into the temple that was NOT made with hands.
- This One who was tempted in every way yet was without sin traveled beyond the heavens into the true Holy of Holies where he offered His Own blood as the complete and final payment for the sins of his precious people once and for all.

What does all of this mean to US? What are the implications of Christ's High Priestly ministry for believers today? ONE WORD: Confidence!

Hebrews 4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The Priesthood of Christ assures me that

- We can be reconciled to God. The debt has been paid, the perfect sacrifice has been made. NOW I have an advocate with the Father, **Jesus Christ the righteous one and He is the atoning sacrifice for my sins.....**
- We can pray with confidence. Neither reconciliation nor prayer would be possible apart from the sacrifice of Christ. But, because Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice, reconciliation and prayer are possible
- We can live at peace and with a clear conscience - NOT because we have been made perfect BUT because the perfect one has removed our iniquity and given us the gift of His perfect righteousness.
- We have access to the throne of God where we receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need.

LET us hold fast to our confidence. (our confidence is not in ourselves but in Him who saved us and called us to himself)