

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

HEBREWS LESSON 5 (Chapter 7)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“And having been perfected, Christ became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Heb. 5:9). Welcome to our study of the Book of Hebrews. The Book of Hebrews is all about the supremacy of Christ. Hebrews 1 through 7 shows that Christ is greater than anything in the Old Testament—greater than angels (chapter 1), greater than Old Testament salvation (chapter 2), greater than Moses (chapter 3), greater than Joshua (chapter 4), and greater than Aaron and the Levites (chapters 5 and 7) because He is of the priestly order of Melchizedek. Chapters 5 through 7 break down in a unique way. Chapter 5:1-11 is the beginning of the writer’s argument about Christ being of the order of Melchizedek. But in the middle of the argument (5:12 through the end of chapter 6) the writer offers up a rebuke of the Christians to whom is writing for not having grown as they should have. Chapter 5:1-11, and all of chapter 7, shows us how Christ is greater than Aaron and the Levites, and is of the divine priestly order appointed by God (Ps. 110:4).

The writer begins in Hebrews 5:1-4 by showing that the priests were taken from among men so that they could associate with, and offer sacrifices for, men. First, of course, they were to offer sacrifices for themselves. Then they were to offer sacrifices for the people. But what is interesting about Hebrews 5 is that no priest ever took the honor of being a priest upon himself. This means that a person did not simply wake up one day and say to himself, “You know what? I think I’ll be a priest today.” The priesthood was something that was divinely appointed by God ahead of time. Notice Hebrews 5:4—“No man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron.” A person simply did not wake up one day and decide, “I think I’ll be a priest today.” The priesthood was something that was appointed by God. As far back as the times described in the Book of Exodus and Numbers, God decided (Ex. 28:1) that the priests would be those who were the descendants of Aaron and who were of the tribe of Levi. This was divinely appointed by God. What’s interesting about Jesus is that He did not descend from Aaron, and He was not of the tribe of Levi, yet He still was a priest.

But how could that be the case? Here, the Hebrew writer is trying to convince Christians that they should not go back to the Old Law. And one of the main arguments that he offers is that those Christians possessed a new and better priest, yet one who was not of the tribe of Levi. How, then, could Jesus be a priest? Notice Hebrews 5:10, which is one of the key passages in this argument—“[Jesus was] called by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.” Jesus was not a descendant of Aaron or from the tribe of Levi. Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, which was in fulfillment of the promise of divine prophecy. One of the key prophecies discussed in the Book of Hebrews is found in Psalm 110:4—“The Lord has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” We see here the introduction of Jesus, Who is a Priest not for a time period, but forever, just like Melchizedek was. In chapter 5, the Hebrew writer also makes the point that just as Jesus suffered and learned obedience, He now “is the

author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.” Jesus is a different kind of Priest, being of the order of Melchizedek. He is able to save people today because He has an undying and unchanging priesthood. Notice Hebrews 5:8-9, which is an important commentary on the priestly role that Jesus fills according to the order of Melchizedek. “Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.” Jesus is a perfect Priest, but He demands of us that we obey Him. Revelation 22:14 says, “Blessed are those who do His commandments.” Being a faithful child of God, accepting the priestly role of Jesus, and making His sacrifice viable for us means that we must be willing to obey Him. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” We cannot be a faithful child of God and receive the benefit of His sacrifice and the efficacy of His blood without obeying the Gospel. In Luke 6:46 Jesus asked, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” We must be obedient to God if we hope to be pleasing to the Father.

Hebrews 7 gives us a more in-depth discussion of Melchizedek. In Hebrews 5:11 the writer said that he had much to say about Melchizedek, but the people had become immature and dull of hearing—which prompted a sharp rebuke (probably one of the strongest in the Bible). He reminded the people that by that time, they should be teachers, yet they needed someone to teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God. Let us consider how Christ is of the order of Melchizedek, and what that means to Christianity today. Notice Hebrews 7:1-4, which provides the backdrop to the discussion about Jesus being of the order of Melchizedek.

“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated ‘king of righteousness,’ and then also king of Salem, meaning ‘king of peace,’ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.”

Here we have the background about Melchizedek, a great historical figure. Genesis 14:18-20 is where we learn the history regarding Melchizedek. Melchizedek was both king and priest. Notice how that ties in perfectly with Christ’s role. Jesus is “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16). The text of 1 Timothy 6:15 describes Him as the “blessed and only potentate.” Notice that Jesus also is a Priest. In Hebrews 8:1 the writer says that this is the main point. We have a great High Priest—Jesus, the Son of God, Who is able to offer Himself as a sacrifice (Heb. 10:12), and Who stands between God and man.

In Genesis 14 we see Abraham at the battle of the kings. He wins this great battle, and on the way back he meets Melchizedek, a priest of the Most High God. Melchizedek blesses Abraham, who, showing honor to Melchizedek, gives him a tithe (one-tenth) of all the spoils of the war. The major point that the Hebrew writer stresses is that Abraham, through whom all of Israel (including the Levites) would come, bowed down to Melchizedek, showing that Melchizedek was greater than the Levitical system. Melchizedek possessed two messianic titles that tie into Jesus. Not only was he a king and priest like Jesus, but Melchizedek, according to Hebrews 7:1-4, is called “king of righteousness.” Jesus Himself is a righteous King. He is perfectly righteous, and “learned obedience through the things He suffered” (Heb. 5:8). He was “tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). He “committed no sin, nor was guile in his mouth” (1 Pet. 2:22). God “made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf” (2 Cor. 5:21). Melchizedek, too, was a king of righteousness. So was Jesus.

Another title given to Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 is “king of kings.” Jesus is a peaceful King, and His kingdom is a kingdom of peace. In Isaiah 9:6 Jesus is referred to as “the prince of peace.” In Isaiah 2:3-4 we are told that at the inauguration of this kingdom, men would beat their swords into plowshares, which presents the idea that Christ’s kingdom no longer would be a kingdom of war. The Gospel is the Gospel of peace. We are to bring the good news of Jesus to everyone. We no longer (as was the case in the Old Testament) are trying to do away with an enemy.

In regard to the similarity that Melchizedek and Jesus share as priests, we need to notice that Melchizedek (and here we are talking not about his birth, but about his priestly order) is said to have been “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.” As long as Melchizedek lived, he was to be a priest. According to the Old Law, a priest had to have a father and mother who were from the correct tribe. We learn from Exodus 28:1 that the priests were to be descendants of Aaron. In Numbers 15:25 we see that the priests were to be taken from “the brethren of Israel.” The requirements of the priesthood, then, were that the priests would be from the people of Israel and of the lineage of Aaron. Also, under the Old Testament system, the Levites had a beginning point and an ending point to their priestly service. Let me illustrate. In Numbers 8:24-25 we read,

“This is what pertains to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and above one may enter to perform service in the work of the tabernacle of meeting; and at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, and shall work no more.”

There was a specific beginning age for a Levitical priest—the age of 25. At the age of 50 (during the time of the tabernacle), that was when the priest ceased doing his work. So, the Levitical priests had a beginning and an end. Melchizedek, however, did not. He was “without father or mother.” That is to say, his parents were not descendants of Aaron or of the tribe of Levi. He had no beginning or ending days to his priesthood. He was a priest who was divinely appointed. He served because God said so, not because his parents were descendants of Aaron or because they came from the tribe of Levi. Melchizedek’s priest began and stopped when God said.

How does all of this tie into Jesus? If Jesus is a Priest, then He is a Priest forever like Melchizedek. Christ’s priesthood did not depend on Him having come from the correct tribe. His priesthood was not dependent upon Him starting out as a Priest at a certain age or ceasing to be a Priest at a certain age. He remains a Priest forever. But there is an even deeper point. In Hebrews 7:9-10 the writer makes the point that the Levites, through Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek. Therefore, the Levites and the Levitical order were inferior to the priesthood of Melchizedek. By default then, if Jesus is of the order of Melchizedek, then the Levitical priesthood system and the Old Law are inferior to Jesus as a Priest. In fact, the Bible makes it clear that a person could not be forgiven of sins under the Levitical system. If he could, why would there be a need for another system? Hebrews 10:3-4 tells us that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. Under the Old Law, a person went to the priest, who offered an animal sacrifice. That sacrifice, however, could not completely remove a person’s sin, which is why a change was needed. That is why Jesus is “of the order of Melchizedek.” The main point that the Hebrew writer wants to get across is found in Hebrews 7:12 (and if you miss this, you will have missed the whole point of the lesson): “For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.” Jesus is of the order of Melchizedek. Since it was promised and prophesied (Ps. 110:4) that He would be of that order, and since Jesus is now serving as Priest, it is clear that if there has been a change in the priesthood, then it necessarily follows that there must be a change in the Law. Practically speaking, you cannot claim that Jesus is the

Christ without at the same time claiming that the Old Law has changed and become a New Law. Any association with Christianity proves that Jesus is our Priest, and that the Old Law has been done away with. When we recognize Jesus as the Son of God, as Priest, and as the accepted sacrifice for our sins, by default the Old Law, the Ten Commandments, and the Levitical system all cease to exist. Jesus is of a different priestly order.

Here is an argument that the writer wants to make clear for his readers. No one from the tribe of Judah ever served at a Jewish altar (Heb. 7:13). Yet the Lord came from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14). The necessary inference, then, is this: If no one from Judah ever served from the altar because Moses never said that anyone from Judah could be a priest, yet Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, then Jesus is not a Jewish priest, but is instead a priest under the Christian system. There is an important point contained in Hebrews 7: 14—"For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood." Here we have a clear statement about Jesus being, not of the tribe of Levi or of the descendants of Aaron, but instead of the tribe of Judah. We often talk about "the silence of the Scriptures." This is a passage that teaches us very clearly the importance of this concept. The Hebrew writer makes the point that Jesus is not of the tribe of Levi, and thus could not be a Jewish priest. Moses never said anything about people from Judah being priests. Therefore, such was unauthorized under the Old Law. When God said that people from the tribe of Levi could be priests, we learn from that statement that those were the only people who were allowed to be priests. When God said what He wanted, by default all else was excluded. When God said that the people of Levi were to be priests, that meant that people from any other tribes could not serve as priests. Thus, here we learn about the importance of the silence of the Scriptures. It is not what is left out that is emphasized, but what is said that is emphasized. If God tells us something, we need to understand that that is all God wants us to do.

How does that apply to Christianity today? When God tells us what He wants, by default that excludes everything else. When God tells us to worship Him in spirit and in truth, we need to understand that that is all God wants us to do. Let's look at a practical example. When God tells us to sing, as He does in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, we know that we are to "teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord." God said sing. That is all that He wants us to do because He did not say anything else. We learn from that information that God does not want us to do anything else. Sometimes people will say, "But God didn't say not to..." God did not say that a person from the tribe of Judah could not serve as a priest. But God **did** say that the **Levites** were to be priests. Thus, when God tells us what He wants, that is all He wants of us. If He tells us to sing, we need to understand that He does not want us to use a guitar or drums. God tells us what He wants, and we must take Him at his word. The Scriptures confirm this repeatedly. We learn from 1 Corinthians 4:6 that we are not to go beyond what is written. The New Testament is our law for worship today. If something is not found within the pages of the New Testament, then we are not to do it. If that is what God says, then we need to do only that. Revelation 22:18-19 emphasizes that we must neither add to, nor take away from, God's Word. If we bring something in that God has not commanded, then God will not be pleased with us. If we remove something, God will be very displeased with us as His people. Colossians 3:17 says, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." "In word" means whatever we say. "In deed" means whatever we do. We must always have God's stamp of approval. The Bible teaches us in Jeremiah 37:17 to ask, "Is there any word from the Lord?" Romans 4:3 asks, "What do the Scriptures say?" This section of Hebrews is a very practical section about the authority and Word of God, and how we must not go beyond what God has said.

Since Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, He could not serve as a priest under the Old Law. But there is something that Jesus was able to do. I want to direct your attention to Hebrews 7:25-26. What profit is there to us in having Jesus as our high priest according to the order of Melchizedek? What does that mean? Where is the power in that? Here is the answer.

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens.”

Jesus, because He is a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, is able to save us to the uttermost. He is able to save us completely. The Old Testament priests could not do that. They could offer sacrifices, but those sacrifices did not really take away sin. The priests themselves were sinners, which is why they first offered sacrifices for themselves. But Jesus, as our High Priest, is completely able to save. Outside of Jesus there is no salvation. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6). Acts 4:12 teaches us, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” And, not only is Jesus able to save completely, but His priesthood never ends. He is there to make intercession for us. His sacrifice always stands, and is completely able to remove our sins. Acts 2:38 tells us that through Christ, our sins can be remitted. In 1 John 1:7-10 we are told that even after we become a child of God, the blood of Jesus cleanses us of our sins. Under the Old Law, the priests died. But Jesus is not going to die, so we do not have to worry about our priest dying and another taking his place. According to John 11:25-26, Jesus was resurrected and now sits at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 1:4). He is the go-between between man and God (1 Tim. 2:4-6).

But here is another great attribute of Christ as our high priest. Not only can Christ save completely, and not only will He never die, but He also is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and higher than the heavens.” Hebrews 7:27 says that He “does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.” Under the Old Law, the priests were by no means perfect. Priests were sinners just like everyone else. But Jesus is not like that. He is holy—**perfectly holy** (Lev. 11:44). God said, “Be holy, as I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15). Jesus Himself is holy. He is harmless. He is not going to do harm to anyone. We can approach Him with boldness (Heb. 4:16). We can know that He is as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove, and that He wants to help us get to Heaven. He does not have any preconceived notions or ideas. He is not acting out of human pride. He is holy, harmless, and undefiled. Jesus has not tasted of sin. He was tempted—no doubt about that. But He was not defiled by sin. He is holy, harmless, and undefiled. And He is “separate from sinners.” Because Christ is not in the camp of sin, He is able to approach God. He is able to be in the presence of God for each one of us. That is why He is our Mediator and our Priest. He is “higher than the heavens,” sitting at the very throne of God in order to make intercession for us.

The basic idea of Hebrews 5 and 7, then, is that in Christ we have a Priest today. He is not of the Levitical system, but is of the order of Melchizedek. Since He is of that order, He will never grow old or die. He is a perfect Priest Whom God has appointed. He can completely save us as both our Priest and our Sacrifice. In Hebrews 10:12 we are told, “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.”

Today, our appeal to you is to allow the sacrifice and priestly nature of Christ take hold in your life as you obey the Gospel. Jesus is our High Priest. His sacrifice stands. But have you obeyed the Gospel? Christ's priestly service will mean nothing to you if you are unwilling to obey Him. Hebrews 5:9 teaches us that Christ, "having been perfected, became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." Have you heard the Word of God (Rom. 10:17)? Have you believed in Jesus as the Son of God (Jn. 3:16)? Have you repented of the sins in your life (Lk. 13:3)? Have you confessed the name of the Savior (Acts 8:37)? Have you been baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins? Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). We are pleading with you today to let Jesus serve as Priest in your life by obeying the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR HEBREWS LESSON 5 (CHAPTER 7)

1. According to Hebrews 5:4, who appointed priests under the Old Covenant?
2. According to Exodus 28:1, from what tribe were priests to come under the Old Law?
3. According to Hebrews 5:10, who called Christ to be a priest?
4. According to Hebrews 5:10, was Christ called to be a priest after the order of Levi?
5. According to Hebrews 5:10, after whom was Christ called to be a priest?
6. What prophecy about Christ is found in Psalm 110:4?
7. According to Hebrews 5:9, what is Jesus Christ?
8. Who, according to Hebrews 7:1-4, did Abraham meet after his victory in the battle of the kings?
9. According to Hebrews 7:4, what act of tribute did Abraham pay to the person he met after the battle of the kings?
10. What important fact did Abraham's act of tribute (Heb. 7:4) prove regarding the person to whom he paid the tribute?
11. What important point for us today is found in Hebrews 7:12?
12. According to Hebrews 10:12, what sacrifice did Christ offer as our High Priest?
13. From what tribe, according to Hebrews 7:14, did Christ come?
14. What important principle is included in the latter part of Hebrews 7:14 when it speaks of the fact that "our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood"?
15. What important principle is found for us today in 1 Corinthians 4:6?
16. What important principle is found for us today in passages such as Jeremiah 37:17 and Romans 4:3?
17. According to Hebrews 7:25, what can Jesus do for us as our High Priest?
18. According to Hebrews 7:26, why can Jesus do such important things for us as our High Priest?
19. According to 1 Timothy 2:4-6, what important role does Christ play for us today?
20. According to 1 Peter 1:15, what important spiritual trait does God want us to display in our lives today?