

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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The Work of Christ and Our Response

Hebrews 5:1-14

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Today, we will be looking at three points:

- Jesus is our Sacrifice, our High Priest, and our King.
- Jesus is the source of eternal salvation.
- Believers must grow!

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 5:1-4

Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. ³ This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

EXPLANATION: There is a whole lot that needs explaining here. In the Old Testament, there were priests that performed official functions. Their main function, as I look at it, was helping people through the repentance process. By that, I mean the priests helped people with sacrifices in order to be pardoned for sin. When you read about their work, they were very busy people. Why? Because people were grand sinners back then just like we are today.

The priest's job was exhausting. They were also in charge of the tabernacle and moved it when the nomadic people moved. If I remember correctly, they retired at age 50, I assume because of complete exhaustion.

The high priest was the head priest. Once per year on the Day of Atonement, he entered a special place in the temple to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for his own sins and the sins of the people. This is interesting because the sacrifices

happened all year long, but this particular day was very important. If any sin had been overlooked in any way, the Day of Atonement covered any and all sins.

The scripture says that the high priest dealt gently with the ignorance and straying of people because he knew he was also only human. The main characteristic I believe we see here is humility. They were not to think highly of themselves but to understand their calling was from God, and not necessarily related to any particular gifts or talents they had. The first high priest was the brother of Moses, Aaron. And as you know, in time, the Levites were the priestly tribe. They were descendants of Aaron.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 5:5-6

In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.”

⁶ And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

EXPLANATION: What we have here is the fact that God chose the priests and God chose Jesus. The order of Melchizedek is an interesting interjection in the scripture and also needs some explanation.

Melchizedek is only mentioned two other times in the Bible, in Genesis 17 and Psalm 110. What is unusual is that he was a priest and a king.

Melchizedek is an archetype, or a representation, of Christ in the Old Testament. Several times in scripture, we read the phrase “in the order of Melchizedek”. He’s one of those anomalies in scripture of a person having faith in the one and only God who appears outside of the traditional family of faith in the biblical narrative. I am reminded of the parable of the seeds in the New Testament where seeds fell upon different types of soil, and in one instance a bird carried off the seeds. That parable illustrates how the Gospel shows up in a part of the world and no one knows how it got there. Melchizedek is a mysterious character and no one really knew where he came from. No one knew his mother and father or his genealogy. He was before the time of Moses and Aaron – and as I said, the priestly line came from Aaron, so he was a priest before there were priests.

So how was Jesus a priest in the order of Melchizedek? It means he was outside of the priestly order of the descendants of Aaron, known as the Tribe of Levi. And Jesus was also outside of the priestly tribe. Jesus descended from the Tribe of Judah.

Melchizedek was a priest and a king before the Law of Moses. Jesus was a priest and king after the Law of Moses, outside of the Law of Moses.

This is rather complicated to explain to a TV audience and requires deeper digging in order to better understand it, but what the book of Hebrews points out is that priestly functions performed by the Levites were ultimately ineffective.

While on earth Jesus could not be the high priest, because he was not a Levite, but because of his work on the cross, he became our high priest. Jesus has three roles:

1. He is Jesus, Atoner of our Sins.
2. He is High Priest Jesus, interceding on our behalf – like the high priest in Old Testament times who entered the Holy of Holies once per year – except Jesus' atonement is 100% effective.
3. He is King Jesus, King of kings.

Now I want you to get the importance of this. The Old Testament priests sacrifice an animal on behalf of people. They were not the sacrifice themselves. Jesus was the sacrifice for our sins. So he is both the Sacrifice and the High Priest, as well as the King.

JESUS IS THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL SALVATION

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 5:7-10

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Listen as I read Jesus' prayers and petitions with fervent cries.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 22:41-44 *He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

Luke 23:34 *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

John 11:41-42 *So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."*

John 12:27-28 *"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."*

EXPLANATION: If Jesus is not the source of eternal salvation, then his sacrifice was worthless. But he IS the source of eternal salvation; there is no other. You might think this narrow-minded thinking, but actually, it's pretty broad-minded. The scripture says "There is none righteous, no not one." If you stood outside at night and stared at the moon and believed you could get there by merely wishing – no matter how hard you wished, you'll still be standing right here on earth. How silly! I know, right? How much sillier is it for you to think you can attain eternal life on your own? Such thinking is merely childish wishing, yet many believe they have it all figured out.

Jesus is the source of eternal life. There is no other. Since we all deserve death and hell because of our sin, then it's rather broad-minded of God to provide ANY way for us to have eternal life. Well, he did just that – through Jesus.

Next, **BELIEVERS MUST GROW!**

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 5:11-14

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you

no longer try to understand. ¹² *In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!* ¹³ *Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.* ¹⁴ *But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

ILLUSTRATION: This image here is clear. Babies need milk because a baby cannot eat vegetables and fruit and meat. But eventually, a baby can. I am the oldest of five kids. I remember when my brothers and sisters tried different foods for the first time. My mom was a practical mom and she ignored a lot of Dr. Spock's writings. She had a friend who had a baby and the baby cried all the time. My mom told the mother the baby was hungry for something other than milk, and she was right. That baby had some food and was satisfied.

EXPLANATION: The milk and meat illustration in scripture is very good. A new believer needs the milk of the word. New believers are bottle-fed, meaning someone does all the teaching. Eventually, a new believer holds his own bottle and feeds himself.

After milk, the new believer is spoon-fed solid food and then later the new believer feeds himself.

Look in verse 12: *By this time you ought to be teachers...* The words of Hebrews assume that new believers eventually become teachers. Really, I believe all followers of Jesus should aspire to be teachers. A person who's been a believer for a long time should be teaching someone, or a class, or something. I've told this congregation more than once that we should be overrun with teachers.

So the summary of this is that when you are born, others are responsible for your nutrition, but as you age, you become responsible for your own nutrition.

ILLUSTRATION: Dave Ramsey talks about the baby steps to financial peace. The new believer has baby steps, but eventually crawls, walks, and runs – and then should teach others to do the same.

APPLICATION: For those who've been here on Sunday mornings and nights, and on Wednesday nights, I've taught the basics of the Bible, the key elements of the

Christian faith, how we got the Bible, and how to interpret the Bible. I've taught about the Old Testament, what it means, and how it relates to the New Testament. I've taught about the New Testament, what it means, and how it relates to us today. I've taught through several books of the Bible. I've also spent quite a bit of time teaching doctrines, like the priesthood of all believers.

The reason I've done it the way I have is because I want everyone to have the tools to feed themselves. I've not preached feel-good stuff, because such teaching is shallow and an hour after hearing it, you'll feel down, and you'll look for another pick-me-up message. If you grow in Christ and learn, then that's the most permanent feel-good you can have – because even when you are down, you'll still know the truths of scripture and how this wonderful Savior we have walks with us in our cloudiest of days.

Becoming a follower of Christ and growing in the teaching of the scripture is one very serious commitment. But why would you not want to do it? Why would you not want to mature in your faith and understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

ILLUSTRATION: I have a friend who is a pastor. He invited a man to church and the man came. He saw the man in town during the following week and invited him to church again. The man came the next Sunday. The third Sunday, the man did not come. So the pastor called him. The man said, "You didn't invite me. If you invite me I will come." This man wanted a personal invitation from the pastor every single week. You know, that's rather childish, isn't it? It was some type of game to him.

Pastors are under so much pressure to grow their churches, and we've packed the rolls with people who have no intention of committing to anything other than having their names on a membership list.

Why am I saying all this? Because the teaching from Hebrews is very clear: Christians are to mature and produce fruit.

Are you producing any fruit of being a Christian?

CONCLUSION: The title of this message is the Work of Christ and our Response. The work of Christ is complete, nothing more needs to be done to earn our salvation. He is our high priest – we are our own priests, and we can go directly to

the high priest, Jesus, for the forgiveness of our sins. We do not need an intermediary. What is our response to that? Is it flippant or passive? Or is it - “Lord I believe, take me, mold me, make me into the believer you want me to be.”

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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