

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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THE WORK OF CHRIST AND OUR RESPONSIBLE RESPONSE

Hebrews 5:1-14

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I have two points to my message today, both named in the title:

- The work of Christ.
- Our responsible response.

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 5:1-6

*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. <sup>2</sup> He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. <sup>3</sup> This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. <sup>4</sup> And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.*

Since the priest was a sinner, he dealt carefully with those who sinned. And so it is today. Let us be careful in our dealing with others, not only me as a pastor but you as a believer.

<sup>5</sup> *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.”* (The priests were chosen by God, not self-appointed.) <sup>6</sup> *And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”*

**EXPLANATION:** Two things make Jesus’ priesthood unique and greater.

- Forever – all priests in the Bible eventually died. Jesus is alive today and serves as our high priest.
- Different order – Priests were from the tribe of Levi. Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi but from the tribe of Judah.

This scripture makes reference to Melchizedek who many people think is an archetype, or a representation, of Christ in the Old Testament. 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.

Last year when I was preaching the series about Abraham, Melchizedek came on the scene. Now keep in mind Abraham came way before Moses and the Law of Moses. He came way before there were any tribes of Israel.

Abraham was called by God to move to a new territory, and we know about his adventures. He was the father of the Jewish nation. God's relationship with Abraham was personal, ongoing, and dynamic.

An oversimplified way of saying it is that there were only a few spokespeople for God, at least that we know about – in fact, it was Abraham and that was about it. Recall the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. God destroyed the two cities because of their wickedness. Abraham's nephew, Lot, lived nearby. Four kings from other places came and looted everything that was left in the desolation of the two cities. They also captured Lot and his family.

Abraham took 318 of his men to rescue Lot. They fought it out with the armies of the four kings and were victorious. As Abraham and his men were returning from battle, a very interesting thing happened.

Remember, God was in the process of revealing himself. All Abraham knew was the oral tradition about Adam, Eve, Noah...and that God was talking with him personally. The interesting thing that happened was that the King of Salem, named Melchizedek, brought bread and wine to Abraham and his men. To feed 318 men, plus Abraham, would have been a lot of effort – who knows how many people he brought with him.

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 14:18-20

*Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, <sup>19</sup> and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. <sup>20</sup> And praise be to God Most High, who delivered our enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

King Melchizedek was a man of God, but no one knew where he came from or how he became a priest. He was what's called an anomaly, something that deviated from the known standard.

Abraham recognized at that point that God was at work in other places in the world and not just with him.

The fact that Melchizedek was a priest and a king made him quite unique. Another King named Uzziah also wanted to be a priest, and God did not allow it to happen. Melchizedek was a priest and a king before the Law of Moses, and now here is Jesus who is both a priest and a king after the Law of Moses.

## **1-THE WORK OF CHRIST**

Many, many years later, long after Abraham was gone, the Jewish nation began to develop into twelve tribes. One of those tribes was the Levites. They were designated as the priestly tribe. Their role as priests was to bring people to God through the sacrificial system.

Now, fast-forward a couple of thousand years into the time of Jesus. The Jews of Jesus' day were no longer self-governed. They were under the Roman government, but they all still practiced their Jewish faith, and they knew which tribe they were a part of. The priestly tribe of the Levites still existed in Jesus' day.

Now listen to this: While on earth, Jesus could not be our high priest because he was not a Levite, but after he completed his work on the cross, he was given three roles:

1. He is Jesus, Atoner of our Sins;
2. He is King Jesus, King of kings;
3. He is High Priest Jesus interceding on our behalf.

The high priest is over the other priests. People went to the priests to go through the ritual of the sacrifice to be forgiven of sin. The priests served as the mediators between people and God. Then the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies to offer a higher sacrifice.

**APPLICATION:** Today, because of what Jesus has done for us, we do not need a priest. Jesus is the High Priest. He is the mediator between God and man.

Now I want you to get the importance of this. The Old Testament priests sacrificed an animal on behalf of people. They were not the sacrifice themselves. They did not have to die for their own sin. The animal sacrifice was a substitutionary atonement. Jesus was the sacrifice for our sins and is now both the sacrifice and the High Priest, and the King. Do you get it? Jesus is our Sacrifice, our High Priest, our King. He is the whole package. We don't need anything or anyone else to be right with God.

**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.<sup>8</sup> Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered<sup>9</sup> and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him<sup>10</sup> and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.*

Listen as I read prayers of Jesus:

**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.*

**SCRIPTURE: 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.*

**SCRIPTURE: 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."*

**SCRIPTURE: 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.*

So as verse 7 of Hebrew 5 says, Jesus agonized in prayer.

**SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 5:7**

*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.*

**2-OUR RESPONSIBLE RESPONSE TO THE WORK OF CHRIST**

**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. <sup>12</sup> 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! <sup>13</sup> Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

This image here is clear. Babies need milk because a baby cannot eat vegetables and fruit and meat. But eventually, that baby can.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I am the oldest of five kids. I remember when my brothers and sisters tried 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.

I think the comparison to Christians is very similar. 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. I've been using our Facebook Live time on Wednesday nights to talk about the most basic Christian beliefs – because of our diverse audience.

At some point, a new believer is spoon-fed solid food and then later a new believer should feed himself.

**APPLICATION:** Look in verse 12: *By this time you ought to be teachers...* The words of Hebrews assume that new believers eventually become teachers. Really, a church as old as ours and with Christians as mature as we are 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.

Warren Wiersbe, a Christian commentator, points out marks of spiritual immaturity:

- Dullness toward the Word.
- Inability to share. By this, he means the inability to help others grow.
- A baby food diet.

For those who've been here intentionally to learn, 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 also spent quite a bit of time reviewing Baptist distinctives such as the Priesthood of All Believers, Believers' Baptism by Immersion, and so on.

If someone were to ask you what it means to be a Christian, could you give an answer or would you stutter and stammer, not knowing what to say?

If not, then someone has failed - your teachers, preachers, or you.

If someone were to ask you basic questions about the Christian faith, could you answer them?

If not, then someone has failed - your teachers, preachers, or you.

Can you tell me the basics of the life of Jesus Christ? I certainly hope so.

If not, then someone has failed - your teachers, preachers, or you.

**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.

***So why have I delved into all this?*** Because the teaching from Hebrews is clear: Christians are to mature and produce fruit. I’m not a guilt preacher, but I do want you to think. There may be numerous reasons why a person does not produce fruit, but let’s not look at others. Let’s look at ourselves.

Are you growing and producing the fruit of being a Christian? Jesus Christ’s work for us should move us toward maturity.

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