

5. Jesus the Source of Eternal Salvation and the High Priest Designated by God (Hebrews 5)

Up to this point, the writer of Hebrews has established two points stated as eternal principles, beyond contesting by his readers. The first in Heb 2:3 expresses the greatness of our salvation, "3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him." The second eternal principle in Heb 4:14-16 expresses the greatness of Jesus as our high priest:

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

It is in the context of these enduring principles that God designates this great and eternal salvation and this great and eternal high priest.

High Priests Selected from among Men (Hebrews 5:1-3)

Heb 5:1-3

5:1 Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them 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.

Every high priest comes from among men and represents them in matters related to God. They offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. Because these high priests come from among men, they are able to deal gently with the sinful and the weak. They themselves are subject to the same weakness as the weaknesses of those whom they serve. Thus, a high priest offers sacrifices for his own sins and the sins of the people. This is how it is with high priests, and the Hebrews would have readily understood it.

High Priests Called by God (Hebrews 5:4-6)

Heb 5:4-6

4 No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So Christ also did not take upon 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."*

Hebrews 5:4 states another principle: "No one takes this honor upon himself." The corollary to this is that "he must be called by God." God appointed Christ as son and as a priest forever. The prophecies by David in Psalm 2:7 and 110:4 establish the priesthood of Christ in the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7 and 8 will return to this subject in detail, establishing the superiority of Jesus as the high priest. Just as Christ could not appoint himself high priest, man cannot appoint himself high priest. Therefore, there are no high priests in the world today, save Christ Jesus, the Lord.

Jesus as the Source of Eternal Salvation and as the High Priest (Hebrews 5:7-10)

Heb 5:7-10

7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a son, 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.

It was not without price that Jesus became the source of eternal salvation and was designated high priest by God. His reverent submission to death made him free of death and made him perfect. Paul spoke of this same submission in Phil 2:6-11:

6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death —
even death on a cross!
9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

If Christ had to submit and learn obedience, how much more so should we submit and learn obedience? The Lord becomes the eternal source of salvation to those who **obey him**; and at the same time our high priest in the order of Melchizedek. These truths become the premises upon which the rest of Hebrews depends. However, among the Hebrew Christians, there were problems that interfered with their understanding these principles.

The Need for Elementary Truths of God to be Taught Again (Hebrew 5:11-14)

Heb 5:11-14

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 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.

A problem for the Hebrew Christians was that they were slow to learn. What the writer is teaching, they have heard before. In fact, they had been Christians long enough that they ought to be teaching others. They should have moved on to the solid food of God's word, but they still need milk. The end of the matter is that they have not trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. This failure makes it hard for the writer to explain the subject at hand: the Lord is the eternal source of salvation to those who **obey him**; and at the same time **our high priest** in the order of Melchizedek.