

Hebrews 5

V 1. According to Leviticus 21, to become a priest you had to have been born into the tribe of Levi, not be disabled, his wife had to have been a virgin, and not a widow or a divorcee. The High Priest was an inherited role, starting with Aaron and passed down the generations. I'm guessing that at some point, the genealogical line hit the buffers. What happened then we don't know but by the time it came to Jesus's time, the title changed from High Priest to Chief Priest and the role given to two people, Annas and Caiaphas. His main job is to offer sacrifices and gifts as an atonement for sin. This was done on a daily basis for those who sinned unwittingly (Leviticus chapter 4) and annually for the sins of the nation, (Leviticus 16:5-10). Firstly Aaron had to wash, dress in holy clothes and then offer up a bull as a sacrifice to cover his sin and then begin the ritual sacrifices to cover the nation's sin.

V2. The High Priest is no holier than the sinners he's sacrificing for, which means he can empathise with the sinner, but -

V3. This means he needs to sacrifice for himself first.

V4. The job of High Priest is not one you apply for, it's a calling from God.

So now we understand the role of the High Priest. He was like a picture of the role and purpose of Jesus, that's Jesus, the man on Earth and how He dealt with our sins.

V5 -6. So what does Vs 5-6 tell us about why Jesus took on this role as High Priest?

Hebrews have done it again, quoted half a passage. Psalm 2:7-9. Jesus's sonship is a decree by God as part of His plan to give Jesus the whole Earth. That will happen, Revelation 20:7-10. Define the word begotten in the context of Psalm 2. Jesus was going to transform between a spiritual being into a man whose mother was to be Mary and whose father was God. Jesus, though a man, was still very much God's son.

God appointed Jesus High Priest, but not as a priest like Aaron and his successors. Jesus wasn't even born a Levite which was the first requirement to be a priest. Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3 prove that both Joseph and Mary were from the tribe of Judah. That's why Hebrews writer uses Melchizedek as the best illustration of Jesus's role as High Priest. We find him in just 2 verses in Genesis 14:18-20. We're told that Melchizedek was a King as well a High Priest. King of Salem. Where is Salem? Not sure, maybe Jerusalem. What we do know is that he in his role as High Priest brought to Abraham a meal of bread and wine and Abraham gave him a tithe or one tenth of the spoils of his raid. This is the only time that bread and wine are used together in a religious ceremony in the Old Testament. Yet, this was a signature dish of Jesus, not just at the last supper but several unrecorded times during His ministry. It was when Jesus broke bread and poured wine, that Cleopas and his mate recognised Jesus, (Luke 24:30-31). Something else we know about Melchizedek is that he was not from the tribe of Levi; Levi wasn't even born. So, back to topic. Jesus is the Son of God and the High Priest.

V7. Take the first half of this verse. Luke 22:41-44. Hebrews seems to greatly emphasise Jesus's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, over and above Luke's account. The Disciples had no idea, we look back in hindsight, but Jesus knew exactly what fate lay ahead of Him. He prayed to the one who could have saved Him from death, (Matthew 26:53), and God heard His prayer. Can you summarise Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane?

He didn't pray for strength to endure the physical pain and spiritual pain. He instead prayed for obedience.

V8. Hebrews 5:8 Amplified Version [8] Although He was a Son [who had never been disobedient to the Father], He learned [active, special] obedience through what He suffered.

As God's son, living in Heaven, there's no reason why Jesus might disobey His father. Heaven is like a bubble. Down here on Earth, facing the cross, abandonment by the Father and 3 days in Hades, He had a massive incentive to disobey His father. By overcoming that He learned and experienced obedience.

V9. That obedience qualified Jesus to be the source of your salvation NIV or author NKJV. But you need to play your part, which is?

V10. Jesus is called High Priest, Melchizedecian rather than Aaronian. What's the difference? Sacrifice. Melchizedek didn't sacrifice, Aaron continually sacrificed.

What lessons have you learnt so far? How can you apply them to your understanding of the role of Jesus in the redemption of the individual believer and His Church?

V11. The writer throws in a quick insult to his readers, saying they're a bit thick. Hopefully that doesn't apply to members of the Bible Discussion Group. Bearing in mind his target audience (believing Hebrews / Jews) why do you think he might have made that accusation? In what ways might it apply to the wider audience?

V12. The writer is frustrated at the lack of progress by the Hebrews in trying to understand the first principles of the oracles of God (NKJV) elementary truths of God's word (NIV). God's word at this point is the Old Testament. The Jews had a reasonably good knowledge of Bible stories and Psalms so he's not had to retell them, rather, it's the application of those stories and Psalms to the contemporary Christian life and walk with God.

V13-14. The writer talks about knowing righteousness and the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Has what you've read so far, helped that process, or do you think it's instinctive within you?