

HEBREWS – LEVITICUS
“High Priest – Holy Savior”
Hebrews 5:1-10
May 28, 2023

Hebrews 5:1-10

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;

⁶ as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. ¹

“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Heb 5:1–10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The position and role of the high priest in the Old Testament structure given to the Israelites was unique, vital, and characterized by God's specific guidelines. Pastor Mike addressed this last week as we looked at the second half of chapter four in this book.

To understand that Jesus is our High Priest is essential for us, but perhaps more so for those whom this book gains its title. The Hebrew Christians had lifetimes of training and Torah teaching deeply seated within their hearts, minds, and souls. As they sought to be obedient to the law of God, declaring through their words and actions that God is one and he is redeemer, rescuer, provider, healer, and ultimately the great I AM, it was right and good.

To have the culmination of all the prophecies of old stand before them in human flesh, as they knew Christ to be, could be nothing but overwhelming. Even just a few years following the crucifixion of Christ on the cross, the resurrection three days later, then the ascension as described in the book of Acts and more importantly, in the presence of people they actually knew personally, if not themselves in the crowd when it occurred, made this claim of Sonship and divinity of the one who was and is fully God and fully man, more than amazing.

Therefore, from our perspective today, with what has been deemed twenty-twenty hindsight, we may wonder how these people who claimed Jesus as Lord be struggling to not abandon the teachings of the gospel, the message of grace, the fullness of the truth, and the revelation of the Spirit through the Word to go backward into their familiar, family-approved, religiously affirmed ways of Old Testament law?

Fear leads to interesting results.

Thus, the author of this letter through the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, gives instruction, clarity, affirmation of who Christ is, and why the Jewish "old paths" were good, but temporal.

And for the Gentiles, like most of us here today, reading this, we may even struggle to understand why this matters? For most today, when we hear the word priest related to Christianity, images of men in black robes and vestments with white collars come to mind.

But that would not be what is spoken of here.

I am thankful Mike gave us a clear understanding of the high priestly role last Sunday. We continue today to seek to know even more regarding Christ's role as our high priest.

THE SELECTION OF THE HIGH PRIEST

History matters, especially to people groups who value oral tradition, family tree genealogy, cultural uniqueness, and religious purity. For the faithful Jews this was and remains true.

Thus, when we look at the first verse in today's section of scripture, we see a declaration regarding the selection of the high priest. The one who would stand as representative of the people before God.

Israel could trace a succession of high priests back to the brother of Moses, Aaron.²

Even today, we are often taught of firsts. We know who the first US President was, the first man on the moon, the first person to run a four-minute mile, the first artificial satellite launched into orbit, the first black US President, the first female Prime Minister of the UK, and so on. Firsts are important, if not fodder for trivia night.

For the Jewish people, Aaron was a first. He was the first high priest of the people. The author of Hebrews even references Aaron in this role in verse 4.

² Mohler, R. Albert. *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews: Christ-Centered Exposition* (Nashville, TN: Holman, 2017), 70.

Yet, there is a descriptor here that gives context regarding Aaron's position as high priest. He did not ascend to the office by political maneuvering, popularity, or positioning himself before the crowd. Verse one states "For every high priest chosen among men is appointed..."

He was appointed.

But, who appointed him?

Who chose him?

Was there a ballot initiative with nominations, debates, selections, and votes? Was this a democratic process? Was this a congregational act?

No.

And boy does this rub many wrong when it comes to our understanding of human fairness, democratic process, and individual rights.

Aaron was appointed...selected...chosen...called to this role by God.

No vote. No interview.

And, yet it was good. It was right. It was holy.

The sovereign God – the king – ascribed this role for Aaron and placed him there.

And the same is true for Jesus.

This was declared in the psalms.

Psalm 110:4

The LORD has sworn

and will not change his mind,

**“You are a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek.”³**

We’ll talk about Melchizedek in a moment.

Here’s where your brain may hurt, but the author makes it clear and our understanding of biblical truth is apparent – the Father appointed the Son as the Great High Priest, the final high priest, the royal, eternal, high priest.

Israel as a nation did not struggle with the concept of a sovereign. In fact, the rebellion against the good kings is so cemented in our collective psyche that we have issues with surrendering to this, but not so for the Israelites.

The first king of Israel was not really Saul, but is the one who remains king of Israel, king of all creation, king of kings and lord of lords. The ultimate sovereign is God himself.

And thus, the view of appointment of Aaron as high priest was seen as sovereign right and sovereignly right from God himself.

Regarding Christ as high priest, God (the same God) demonstrated his sovereignty, using angels and other agents as the declarers of this role.⁴

THE SOLIDARITY OF THE HIGH PRIEST

Theologian R. Kent Hughes uses the term “solidarity” to describe the high priest’s position among the people. Not only is Christ the ultimate, superior, and final high priest selected by the Father, he is also superior in his solidarity with his people.⁵

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ps 110:4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ Mohler, 70.

⁵ Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 142.

What does this word solidarity mean in this regard? It means that in the high priest's representation of the people before God, he was with them, understood them.

Every high priest since Aaron stood in the place of the people, offering sacrifices to the Lord, over and over again, following sacrifices for his own sins.

In Jesus's case, the one who needed to offer no sacrifice for self, for he was sinless, he participated fully in the human story, taking on flesh to experience in full the human condition. This was made clear in Gethsemane where his agony was on display. Jesus placed the exercise of his omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence under the direction of the Father when he came to earth in the Incarnation.⁶

So, truly He gets us, but not simply in the form a marketing campaign makes it, but in the truth of who Christ is as Son of God and Son of man. Our high priest not only "gets us" but stands with us in the midst of all that impacts, affects, overwhelms, and convicts us.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE HIGH PRIEST

The Word speaks...

Hebrews 5:5-10

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

**"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you";**

⁶ as he says also in another place,

**"You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek."**

⁶ Hughes, 143.

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. ⁷

The sacrifices offered by the high priest were to cover and provide payment due for the sins of the people. The structure of the sacrifices, the order of the sacrifices, the way, the why, the how of the sacrifices were not random. The people and especially the priests were instructed in how this was occur.

The sacrifices offered by the priests of old were made complete in Christ. For while Aaron and the priestly lineage was god-ordained and holy and right, the priestly lineage of Jesus was not Aaronic for as the psalmist alluded to and the writer of Hebrews declared under God's inspiration, Jesus was of the order of Melchizedek.

Who is Melchizedek?

He was the king of Salem (the place later to be called Jerusalem) and according to Genesis 14 he was a priest of the Most High God. He appears on the scene in the biblical narrative for just a moment and disappears as quickly. He was a real man, but his place in God's story is mysterious as he interacts with Abraham following the man of God's defeat of Chedorlaomer and his allies. Melchizedek appears, presents bread and wine to Abraham and his weary men, demonstrating friendship and care. He blesses Abraham in the name of El Elyon (God Most High) and praises God for giving Abraham victory. That's it until David penned Psalm 110 where he speaks of Melchizedek as a type of Christ – a man of righteousness and peace. Then, here we

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 5:5–10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

have the Hebrew writer referencing Psalm 110 and speaking of Christ as a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Meaning that Christ as priest superseded even the Israelite order of high priest begun by God in Aaron and that Christ goes even back to Melchizedek...and truthfully, further back into eternity past. Some speculate that Melchizedek was an appearance of a pre-incarnate Christ. Perhaps? Point taken that the mysterious priest appears with no descriptor of lineage, of beginning, of genealogy and thus represents the eternal.

There is more to say about this order of Melchizedek, but simply to start, the point is that Jesus Christ is not simply another in a long line of Levitical priests from Aaron's lineage (especially since Jesus is from the tribe of Judah and not Levi) but that Jesus is our ultimate, final, eternal, high priest before the father.

And as the Great High Priest, he was selected by God, stands in solidarity with humanity, and offered the final, ultimate once-for-all, and all-encompassing sacrifice for you, for me, for every person here and every person to ever be.

Hebrews 5:9-10

⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. ⁸

That is our high priest...our redeemer...our Christ...our Savior, the prophet, priest, and king.

And as he was selected and called...so too are you. Called to salvation. Called to service. Called to sacrifice.

⁸ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Heb 5:9–10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.