

Looking Unto Jesus

Vision Baptist College

Looking Unto Jesus

Studies in Hebrews

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Chapter Five – Christ’s Priesthood

Memory Verse – Hebrews 5:13

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

Introduction

In the end of chapter four the writer introduced the subject of the high priest and began to contrast the earthly priest with the High Priest from Heaven, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. This discussion will continue in detail through chapter ten. In this chapter God will explain that Christ is not a Levitical priest as he does not descend from Aaron. Christ is a priest “after the order of Melchisedec, a very mysterious Old Testament character. As the writer begins to explain who Melchisedec is, he also explains that his readers were not mature enough to understand the discussion. He then begins to exhort them to grow up so they could better comprehend spiritual truth.

I The Earthly Priest (vs. 1 – 4)

A He was chosen by God (v. 4; Exodus 28)

The high priest was taken from men, but called of God. A man could not desire the office of a priest, as one might desire the office of a bishop (or pastor) today. The ministers in the Tabernacle and later, the Temple, all had to come from the tribe of Levi, and the priests specifically came from the family of Aaron.

B He offered gifts and sacrifices

The priests that descended from the family of Aaron were given the responsibility of offering gifts and sacrifices on behalf of the people because they could not enter directly into the presence of God themselves. These priests also had to offer sacrifices for their own sin as they themselves were as guilty as the people were. (See Hebrews 9:7; Leviticus 16) One of the great differences between the earthly high priest and Christ is the fact that Christ was without sin.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

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*Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?
(John 8:46)*

*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the
righteousness of God in him. (2Corinthians 5:21)*

The earthly high priest could fully identify with men because he was a man. However, he could not identify with God because he was not God. Christ, however is both man and God. He could identify with both man and God, and could thereby bridge the gap between them.

It is also important to remember that because of Christ's sacrifice, believers today are all priests, and all have access to God, and can come into His presence anytime they want to. Believers today do not offer bloody sacrifices as the earthly high priest did, but they can offer "the sacrifice of praise" (Hebrews 13:15), and should also offer themselves as "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1)

Note the word, "ignorant" in verse 2. This probably has to do with the sins of ignorance mentioned in Leviticus 4 and 5; and in Numbers 15. These were sins that were committed without intention, and even sometimes, without knowledge or awareness. We commit sins all of the time, and sometimes we are unaware of them. We are oftentimes blind to our own sin, and even when we are made aware of a sin, our inner lawyer will attempt to defend it; but God sees through it all.

II The Heavenly Priest (vs. 5 - 10)

A He was also chosen by God

Note the reference to Psalm 2:7 in verse 5, "*Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.*" Remember that this is not a reference to His birth, but to His resurrection. (See Acts 13:33)

B He "learned" obedience through suffering

C He is the author of eternal salvation

Salvation is eternal:

*And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man
pluck them out of my hand. (John 10:28)*

It is important to note that Jesus is not only our Priest, but He is also a prophet, and the King of Kings. He holds all three offices - prophet, priest, and king - at the same time. In the Old Testament, the priest represent man to God; the prophet spoke on behalf of God to men; and the king was God's representative to the nation. They all had different responsibilities, and rarely did one enter into the realm of the other. Jesus, however, is all three, and so much more.

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Notice in verse 5, the phrase, “thou art a priest forever”. Christ’s priesthood is eternal. The Old Testament priests ceased to be priests when they died, but Christ “ever liveth”.

*"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing **he ever liveth to make intercession for them.**" (Hebrews 7:25)*

Note in verse 7, there is a reference to the Lord Jesus praying “with strong crying and tears” in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Scripture records three times that Jesus cried:

1 He cried at the death of Lazarus (John 11:35)

Here Jesus cried because the people He loved were mourning. He felt their pain and experienced their suffering. He didn’t cry because of Lazarus’ death, because He was about to raise him from the dead.

2 He cried over Jerusalem.

"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." (Matthew 9:36)

In my opinion, this verse is one of the strongest arguments against hyper-Calvinism. Why would Jesus weep over a people that He predestined to Hell.

3 He cried in the Garden (Matthew 26:36 – 46; Mark 14:32 – 42; Luke 22:39 – 46)

There has been a lot of discussion by theologians as to why Jesus was crying in the Garden, and what was meant when He asked the Father to “remove the cup” from Him. I believe that Jesus was dreading the whole experience that He knew was coming, which included the physical suffering before and during the crucifixion, and, more importantly, the burden of the sins of the entire world placed squarely on His shoulders. The worst part for Him, however, must have been when the Father who is “*of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*” turned His face away from His son.

"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34)

The omniscient Son of God knew in the Garden what was ahead of Him, and His omnipotence could have prevented it; but His love, compassion, and mercy for us compelled Him to go through with it. However, in His humanity, He dreaded the whole experience.

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"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

III The Mysterious Priest (vs. 6; 10; 11 – 14)

The man introduced here is mentioned only in two other places in the Bible besides Hebrews. (See Genesis 14:18 – 20; Psalm 110:4)

Melchisedec is a very mysterious Old Testament character that abruptly appears on the pages of Scripture and leaves just as quickly, and without much explanation. Some believe that Melchisedec is a Chrystophany (an pre-incarnate or post resurrection appearance of Christ). He is definitely a type of Christ. Much more will be said about Melchisedec in chapter 7.

Paul explains here that he wants to teach more about this Melchisedec, but the people were too spiritually immature to understand. He will then pause from the discussion of Melchisedec in order to admonish the readers to grow up. He will continue the discussion about him in chapter seven.

*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:
(1Peter 2:2)*

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. (1Corinthians 3:1-2)

An adult may like a glass of milk every now and then, but a babe cannot eat meat, and neither can an immature Christian understand and use the deeper doctrines of the scripture. One of the signs of spiritual immaturity is carnality. We have a lot of babies running around the churches today. We need to grow up!

Note verse 14:

"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5:14)

In the phrase "senses exercised", the word, "senses" (αἰσθητήριον – *aisthētērion*, means the faculty of the mind for perceiving, understanding, and judging. The word, "exercised" (γυμνάζω *gymnazō*), means to exercise, practice, or train.

This verse is teaching us that the meat of God's Word is for those who have carefully put into practice what they have already learned and have grown in their ability to discern.