

Hebrews 5:5-7 "Christ As Priest After The Order Of Melchizedek"

Hebrews 5:5-7 ⁵ So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"; ⁶ just as He says also in another *passage*, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." ⁷ In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.

In this section of our text we have been dealing with the priesthood of Israel and how that relates to our High Priest, Jesus Christ. We need to keep in mind to whom this letter is addressed and that is the Hebrews, which speaks of primarily Jewish believers in Christ, but must include all believers who are encouraged to study both Old and New Testaments.

Because the Jewish believers had left the ways of Judaism as they embraced their Jewish Messiah, this created some problems for them. 1) Their Jewish non-believing brethren would accuse them of worshipping a false god.

2) They may very well had longings to keep some of their customs and traditions handed down to them from Moses and later from many of the Pharisees. This could have tempted some of them to return to the old ways of the old covenant.

Arthur W. Pink brings this out in his commentary when he says, "The central design of the Holy Spirit in this epistle needs to be kept steadily before the mind of the reader: that design was to prove the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. The center and glory of Judaism was the divinely appointed priesthood: what, then, had Christianity to offer at this point?

..... The unbelieving Jews would be apt to say to their Christian brethren, 'your new religion is deficient in the very first {requirement} of a religion, you have no high priest. How are your sins to be pardoned, when you have none to offer {atonement} for you? How are your wants to be supplied, when you have none to make intercession for you to God? The answer to this {dispute} is to be found in the {writer's} words 'We have a High Priest' (4:14)"

And not unlike the appointment of the High Priest in Israel by God Himself, our High Priest was hand chosen of the Father on our behalf. And this is where we ended last week.

HEB 5:5 "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 begotten you... (which is a quote from Psalm 2:7.)

6 And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4)

Our High Priest is one who represents us before the Father because He was the Father's choice. And just as the Priests who were descendants of Aaron, we have a priest who also belonged to an order similar to the order of Aaron but not exactly like it.

It's interesting that we too have a requirement to have a High Priest represent us before the Father and logically one could conclude that if Jesus were to represent us as High Priest then He too must be a descendant of Aaron of the tribe of Levi.

And yet what do we find? Jesus is not of the tribe of Levi, in the line of Aaron. In fact if you go the Gospel of Matthew you find the genealogy of Jesus and what we're told in Mat.1:1 is that Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham.

You go down a little further and you find that another person was also in the line which led up to Christ and that is a man by the name of Salmon. But few know who Salmon is, but I'll bet you know the name of his wife.

Rahab. Rahab was the woman who was a prostitute in the city of Jericho. One of Jesus' ancestors who is named by the Holy Spirit in the gospel of Matthew was a prostitute. Interesting that Jesus had a soft spot in His heart for some women He reached out to with grace and mercy who were also prostitutes. They did not remain such, but repented and followed Christ.

But back to Rahab. JOS 2:1 "Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there."

Rahab hid the spies because she knew that their God was with them and was very powerful. She made a deal with the spies. You can stay here and I'll hide you but when you come to take the city I want my family and myself to be spared.

Here was their response.

JOS 2:17-19 "The men said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us 18 unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. 19 If anyone goes outside your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head; we will not be responsible. As for anyone who is in the house with you, his blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on him."

The color scarlet is the color of blood and this was to symbolize that Rahab and her family would be passed over if they stayed in the house protected by the scarlet. If you see the similarity to the Passover, where the blood was put over the front of the house so that the angel of death spared all who were in the house, it's not a coincidence that Rahab and her family were given these instructions by Jews who knew how they were once spared in a similar way.

But what do we do with Jesus who is not of the line of Aaron which was a requirement if one was to be priest in Israel? How can this be? The answer is very simple. Jesus never intended to be a priest in Israel. During His earthly ministry He was never addressed as Good Priest, but rather Good teacher, or Rabbi.

The priesthood of Aaron was a temporary priesthood which foreshadowed the true High Priest who was to come and be a priest forever. The priesthood of Aaron had no further significance when the true Priest came into this world to represent us before the Father.

The priesthood of Aaron was always meant to speak of a better priesthood and therefore a better and eternal covenant, the new covenant found not in the blood of animals, but in the blood of Messiah, Jesus. He is a Priest whose order was different from Aaron's and yet similar in the sense that, as in the Levitical line of priests, the High Priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, was also responsible to bring a sacrifice into God's presence, the atonement for the people.

This new priesthood of Christ's was in a class all by itself. And yet we're told that the priesthood of Jesus is after the order, not of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek. Now, who in the world

is Melchizedek? And why is Jesus associated with that particular priesthood?

Well, first you'll notice that in verse 6 our writer, speaking of Jesus, says, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek." This is a quote from Psalm 110:4. You see the O.T. scriptures spoke of our Messiah as belonging to a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.

This Psalm was always recognized in Israel as a psalm about their Messiah. Here's how it reads starting in verse one.

PSA 110:1-4 "The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." 2 The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. 3 Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth. 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

The Lord said to my Lord, David says. The Lord Jehovah said to David's Lord, who is designated as the One who sits at the Lord's right hand, who has a mighty scepter which speaks of one who is a King. This King will also be a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.

Psalm 110 can be speaking of no one else but Jesus Christ. He is our High Priest forever representing us before the Father. But what about Melchizedek? We know very little about Melchizedek. In fact he is only mentioned once in the book of Genesis and once in Psalm 110. And then in the N.T. he's mentioned 8 times and they're all right here in Hebrews and in almost every instance it's a reference to Psalm 110.

But the one reference we have in Genesis is a meeting Abram had with Melchizedek after Abram went out to do battle against the 3 kings who allied themselves with King Kedorlaomer. Abram's nephew was now residing in Sodom and the King of Sodom together with 4 other kings were at war with these four kings.

Abram knew the battle could go badly and his nephew could be killed. And so Abram took his men and helped the 5 kings defeat the 4 kings.

GEN 14:16-19 "He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the

other people. 17 After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth."

That's all we know about Melchizedek. He was a priest of God Most High and he was the King of Salem. But there are some things we can gather from this passage. The name Melchizedek can be translated King of Right or Righteousness. This King of Righteousness was the King of Salem which is translated Peace. King of Peace. By the way, Salem was the name of the city which was later known as Jerusalem.

And so this King of Righteousness was also the King of Peace and in this city he was the Priest chosen by God. We are not told of Melchizedek's beginning or his end. And by implication it would seem he had no beginning and had no end. And no one else succeeded Melchizedek in this priesthood.

Now the comparison should be obvious. King of Peace and King of Righteousness residing in the capital city of the Promised Land as Priest of God Most High whose office was timeless and yet an office reserved only for this one.

Now we need to be careful not to arrive at the conclusion that Melchizedek was something greater than human. In fact, as we saw last week a priest who represents men must be human himself. Melchizedek was no phantom and by definition he could not have been the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. And that simply means Jesus appearing in the O.T. to men before He was born into the world.

There were occasions in the O.T. where He did appear to men and these are known as Theophanies or Christophanies. The fourth person appearing in the flames of the furnace with Shadrach, Meshac, and Abednego would be one example.

But Melchizedek was a real man, who was a real King and a real priest. In fact, not even Jesus Christ was of the order of Melchizedek. And the reason for this is that the Priesthood of Melchizedek was still earthly.

We read in the NIV HEB 5:6 "And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, *in* the order of Melchizedek." Now this is a

little misleading because the original Hebrew in Psalm 110 and the original Greek in Heb.5:6 is better translated, "You are a priest forever, *according* to the order of Melchizedek."

The KJV makes it a little more clear when it says, "*after* the order of Melchizedek." There is an infinite difference between being of the order of Melchizedek, which means being of the same exact order, and being a priest after the order, or according to, the order of Melchizedek.

What the writer of Hebrews is implying is that the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which is unique to only one person in all of history, is a type of the priesthood of Christ which is unique to Jesus only.

Arthur W. Pink puts it this way. "The Holy Spirit has not said, 'Christ is a High Priest of the order of Melchizedek', but, after the order of Melchizedek. The difference between the two expressions is real and radical. The word "of" would have necessarily limited His priesthood to a certain order.....

..... For when we say, as we must, that Phineas and Eli were 'high priests of the order of Aaron', we mean that they had the very same priesthood that Aaron had. But it is not so with Christ. His priesthood is not restricted to any human order, for no mere man could possibly sustain or perform the work which pertains to Christ's priesthood."

What's interesting about this passage in Hebrews about the priesthood of Melchizedek is what the writer doesn't expound on as we look to the Genesis passage.

GEN 14:18-18 "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth."

We may not be able to take this too far but it's worth noting that nowhere in the Bible is Melchizedek seen offering a blood sacrifice, instead he brings out bread and wine. Those are the very elements Jesus used to describe His own sacrifice for the penalty of our sin. Those elements represent His body and blood shed on our behalf.

And in a sense Melchizedek is seen speaking of the new covenant which Jesus wanted us to remember in the bread and wine which our Lord instituted on the night He was betrayed when He and His disciples took supper together.

Another interesting note we must not forget is that it would seem, at this time in history, of all the people in the earth, only Abram followed after God. He was the son of Terah, a pagan who lived in the land of Ur of the Chaldees. For all intents and purposes it looked like all of the world was pagan with the exception of Abram. And yet God had other people who followed Him and in this case Melchizedek was a priest of God in the city of Salem, which assumes he served as priest to people who also followed God.

But this mysterious Melchizedek, who doesn't seem to have a beginning or end is not what the writer of Hebrews wants us to concentrate on. Rather our infinite Savior is where we must look. The comparison of the priesthood of men and what that accomplished is in stark contrast to what Jesus accomplished for us.

By the way, when we get to chapter 7 we're going to delve into this aspect of Melchizedek as to whether or not he was actually a human being with no beginning or end, as the writer of Hebrews makes mention that he had neither father nor mother.

But as we come back to our text we are reminded that only as Jesus became man could He assume this priesthood on behalf of men to represent men before the Father, which is why verses 7-9 are so important. You see, like Melchizedek, Jesus was no phantom, He in fact was now the Incarnate Christ, God become flesh.

HEB 5:7-9 "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."

These 3 verses speak of the earthly ministry of Christ and His priesthood. The NIV begins verse 7 "During the days of Jesus' life on earth". The more literal translation is, "In the days of His flesh". Clearly, Jesus' humanity is quite real. And yet as a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek His divinity or Godhood cannot be questioned.

But let's spend a few moments on the days of His flesh. We see a real man who spent time with the Father in prayer. In verse 7 we're told that He offered up both prayers and petitions with loud

crying and tears to Him who is able to save Him from death, and who was heard because of His piety.

It may be hard for you and I to imagine the Son of God crying with tears before the Father. But this again reminds us of Jesus, the man, who was sharing in our humanity. The same man who wept over the grave of Lazarus and who grieved over Jerusalem.

MAT 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

There is an obvious connection in Heb.5:7 to the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus cried out to the Father and was in deep despair to the point of sweating drops of blood. But His crying out was not a crying out with no hope. He knew that the Father was able to save Him from death and He knew the Father heard Him because of His love and reverence for Him.

The familiar scene is found in MAT 26:39 "Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Jesus the Son of man, did not look forward to death any more than any other human being. But He doesn't pray with the idea of avoiding what He was sent to do. The Son of God did not come into this world to back out of His promise to humanity or the Father. He couldn't. But in the weakness of His flesh, and by this I don't mean the weakness of sinful flesh because He was sinless, but in His weakened human condition at this point, He understands the ramifications of what He is about to undergo.

And yet even in this state He is willing to trust the Father to be with Him throughout this ordeal knowing that the Father will be faithful to His promises to the Son to deliver Him from death. With death staring Him in the face He only wants to do the Father's will.

By the way it was not dying on a Roman cross that Jesus feared as much as what He would soon experience at the hands of the Father. That doesn't mean Jesus didn't recoil at the idea of dying since death is no more natural for the Son of man than it is for you and me.

A.W.Pink makes this comment: "Christ prayed not to be delivered from dying, but from death. When death as the penal visitation of God's anger upon Him for our sin was presented to His view, He had deep and dreadful apprehension of the utter inability of frail human nature bearing up under it, and prevailing against it. He was conscious of His need for Divine help and support, to enable Him to endure the incalculable load which was upon Him.....

..... Therefore, it was His duty, as perfect yet dependent man, to pray that He might not be overwhelmed and overborne. His confidence was in Him that is able. He declared, 'For the Lord God will help Me, therefore I shall not be confounded.' (Isa.50:7)

I've said this before. Death is not a natural part of life. Death invaded life because of sin and robbed men of what was originally intended to be life with God . No, more than this, Jesus feared the turning of the Father's back on Him. And you'll remember on the cross when Jesus cried out, "Father why have you forsaken Me." The wrath of God was poured out on Jesus as He took and bore our penalty.

ISA 53:4-6,10 "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 10 Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand."

Jesus feared the ultimate penalty which you and I would have to suffer if we had to pay for our own sin and that is having the Father turn His back from us as we suffer His wrath. Jesus Christ bore that penalty for us and yet He did it knowing that the Father would not abandon Him to the grave which is an expression of total rejection.

No, He was able to save Him from death and would in fact give Him the victory over the grave as the Son of God defeated sin and death as He rose bodily from the dead. His victory now becomes ours as we place our faith in Him and His work done on our behalf.

By the way, Jesus was not a mere uninvolved participant as He was forsaken of all, even the Father, as He became our sacrifice. Keep in mind that He is our High Priest. Only the High Priest is able to bring the sacrifice to the Father. Even as our Lord was being delivered up as our sacrifice, He was actively involved as our Priest at the same time.

The priest offered up the sacrifice, but here Jesus is both the High Priest representing us before the Father and the perfect sacrifice at the same time. Picture if you will the priesthood in Israel. The High Priest had to enter into the holy of holies cleansed and spotless with a sacrifice for himself. But He had to also offer a spotless sacrifice with no blemish for the people.

Jesus had no sin and was already spotless, able to represent us as the perfect High Priest, and the sacrifice He came into the Holy of Holies with was also His spotless self and He offered it up to the Father for you and me.

We'll see this later on in this letter but it's worth noting the active participation of Jesus, even on the cross, acting as our High Priest.

HEB 9:11-12 "When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption."

His priesthood could not have become active after His resurrection. His priesthood had to be active during His crucifixion as well as after His death as He then came into the presence of the Father with His own sacrifice. It was after His resurrection that we clearly see the Father's acceptance of this sacrifice, but it was Jesus as High Priest that enabled Him to participate in offering up the sacrifice and being the sacrifice at the same time.

The Father accepted it and was well pleased and now places that righteous sacrifice to our account and says, 'you who have embraced, by faith, My Son, your High Priest and sacrifice, are now spotless before Me because of His Righteousness. You have now been declared, not guilty.' The guilt fell on Him who went before us and came out of the grave victorious. And in Him we are more than conquerors.

HEB 3:1 "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess."

HEB 4:14-15 "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."

We're not done with the theme of our High Priest because the writer of Hebrews is not done with this wondrous teaching. But may we be able to take bite size portions of this truth and apply it personally to our lives in a way where we can trust in our High Priest who constantly makes intercession for us today.

I'll close today with the words Paul penned by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in ROM 8:33-37 "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died -more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." (Psalm 44:22) 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

This is the Prophet, Priest and King we serve. Our Almighty God and Savior Jesus Christ who deserves our full allegiance and love and obedience unto His honor and glory as He enables us, by His Holy Spirit, to walk after Him in His power for His purposes. May we, like Christ say, 'not my will Father, but Yours be done in me.'