

**Heb. 5:1 ¶ For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:**

**Heb. 5:2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.**

The writer begins this chapter by telling us that God had designated the high priest to act on behalf of the people before God in the matter of offering gifts and sacrifices. The high priest was to be a man of God's choice, not the people's. I think of gifts as being sacrificial offerings of love and devotion to God, and sacrifices as referencing those necessary to maintain fellowship with God in seeking forgiveness and maintaining a status of "clean" as stipulated by the law. As a man, the high priest could identify with the different weaknesses of men and respond with compassion because he also has personal experience with human weakness. Fully aware of that truth, he was to deal gently with those who came to confess their sins and seek forgiveness.

**Heb. 5:3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.**

Even though the high priest was designated by God to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people, he was not exempt from the need to offer gifts and sacrifices for himself.

**Heb. 5:4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.**

This verse emphasizes what I stated above: The high priest was to be a man of God's choice—not the people's. The writer then names Aaron, the first high priest, as the obvious example of this truth. It is clearly stated in scripture that only those descended from Aaron were qualified to serve in that capacity.

*Ex. 29:29-30* And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons' after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them. *And* that son that is priest in his stead shall put them on seven days, when he cometh into the tabernacle of the congregation to minister in the holy *place*.

In fact, if the people receiving this letter thought about it, they would recognize that those serving as high priest in those times (if written before 70AD) were not authorized designees before God; they were appointed by the Roman authorities.

(7/09) Since they were being tempted to go back into Judaism, I would assume the temple to still be functioning when this letter was written.

We are also told that to serve as high priest was an honor, a position of high esteem.

**Heb. 5:5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.**

I don't think we in the church understand how hard it was for these professing Christians to break away from the religious practices that were part and parcel of their Jewishness. Only those today who convert to Christianity from other religions that have been an integral part of their heritage can halfway relate to those to whom this letter is directed. They were ingrained with the need for a high priest to intercede on their behalf before God; the thought of boldly

approaching God as an individual was a huge adjustment to their thinking. I think that is why the writer is taking such pains to introduce Christ as our High Priest who has abolished the need for an earthly high priest.

The writer is careful to note that just as Aaron, Christ was appointed to serve as our High Priest by God, His Father.

**Heb. 5:6 As he saith also in another *place*, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.**

At this point the writer explains that Jesus is not a high priest as established by God through the Levites as descending from Aaron. Jesus is a priest of the same order or in succession to Melchisedec.

The Jewish audience of this letter would recognize this person from the Torah. Not much is said about him. Abram is met by Melchisedec upon his return from rescuing Lot as recorded in Genesis 14.

Gen. 14:14-10 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained *servants*, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued *them* unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which *is* on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that *were* with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which *is* the king's dale. **And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.**

The only other place he is mentioned in the Old Testament is the verse in Psalm that is quoted by the writer in this verse.

Psa. 110:4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

I will defer further comment on this intriguing person until we get to chapter 7.

The writer seems to be pointing out that in contrast to the position of high priest as descended through Aaron, Jesus' position as High Priest will continue forever.

**Heb. 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;**

"Who" = Christ

"in the days of his flesh" = In His days as a man on earth

I liked the CJB translation of verse 7:

During Yeshua's life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions, crying aloud and shedding tears, to the One who had the power to deliver him from death; and he was heard because of his godliness.

I admit that my mind immediately went to the Lord's prayer in Gethsemane as I read this verse. I knew that the Lord was most anguished over the coming separation from His Father, but I always assumed that the whole experience was included—separation from the Father, becoming sin, physical suffering and death. Kenneth Wuest enlightened my understanding in his word studies.

“The implication is clear that He prayed to be saved from death. There are two words in Greek which mean “from,” *apo* which means “from the edge of,” and *ek* which means “out from within.” The second is used here. The Messiah prayed to be saved out from within death. Had the inspired writer used *apo*, he would have reported our Lord as praying to be saved from dying a physical death. At no time in His life did He pray that prayer. The cup for Him in Gethsemane included two things, that He was to be made sin, and that the fellowship between Father and Son would be broken. Our Lord fully expected to be raised out from among the dead. Hence there was no need of such a petition. Furthermore, if He had prayed for escape from physical death, His prayer was not answered. And the writer to the Hebrews says that this prayer spoken of in 5:7 was answered, which shows that escape from physical death was not in the writer's mind.”

**Heb. 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;**

I often have to remind myself that Jesus' experience in the flesh was similar to every other man in that He grew and learned from His experiences. As discussed previously, He emptied Himself or denied Himself all the privileges of His position as the Son of God and lived with human limitations. When I looked at the Greek for *learned*, it made reference to understanding. Jesus came to understand through experience as a man what it meant to be submissive and obedient through pain and suffering.

**Heb. 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;**

It was Jesus' experience as a man that perfected or completed His preparation to qualify as the sacrifice for the sin of man and to serve as our High Priest. Having proven Himself to be without sin (cf 4:15), He became the author, the causer, the source of eternal salvation to all that obey Him.

I can hear the screaming now—but salvation is by grace through faith. That is true, but it is also true that obedience gives evidence of our faith. Placing one's faith in Jesus cannot be separated from acknowledging Him as Lord. To acknowledge Him as Lord is to recognize His authority. To truly recognize His authority is to submit to Him in obedience. You just can't separate obedience from salvation. The book of James focuses on this truth.

James 2:17-26 Even so **faith, if it hath not works, is dead**, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead**? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had

offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and **by works was faith made perfect**? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead** also.

**Heb. 5:10 ¶ Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.**

**Heb. 5:11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.**

“dull” = lazy, slothful

Again the writer states that Jesus is a high priest of the same type as Melchisedec. This teaching about Melchisedec is one that the writer has much to give instruction about; but he realizes that until the heart is ready to receive the instruction, it will be hard to explain and teach. This is evidenced by the very need for this letter to be written. They are still needing encouragement to hold fast to living by grace according to the teachings of Jesus and rejecting those that are luring them back to living according to the law, a system of works.

Again, I sort of understand their dilemma. They were used to the rituals and practices associated with Judaism. To accept the teachings of Jesus did not eliminate obedience to God’s law, in fact, it required that one live according to the heart and intent of the law. It also, however, required that you accept Jesus as the only acceptable sacrifice for your sin and accept that He abolished the need for the sacrificial system—He was the fulfillment of all that system represented. They had been ingrained with the teaching that obedience to the letter of the law and participation in the required sacrifices allowed one to maintain fellowship with God. Choosing to follow Jesus called for radical change in their thoughts and way of life and caused division between friends and family. It was tempting to want to compromise and have it both ways. Jesus was very clear in His teaching that this was not possible.

Luke 12:51-53 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

Luke 14:26-27 If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

**Heb. 5:12** For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

**Heb. 5:13** For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

**Heb. 5:14** 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.

These were interesting verses. It is clear that in the writer's opinion enough time had passed for these Jewish "believers" to have grown much more spiritually than they had. In fact, he expected them to be qualified to teach others who were new in the faith. Instead, he finds that they are in need of instruction in the spiritual basics "again." This wording implies previous instruction in these matters concerning the "oracles of God." The Greek for *oracles* is a reference to "utterances," in other words, the Word of God, the scripture. The writer refers to learning the spiritual basics as comparable to a baby drinking milk. Those at this level are not ready to digest strong meat, or the more difficult teachings in scripture. Verse 14 definitely implies that the ability to digest "meat" comes from spending time in God's word and applying it to your life as you are called upon to discern between good and evil in the choices you make. In the Greek *good* makes reference to that which is "beautiful, valuable, virtuous, honest, fair, better, and worthy"; *evil* makes reference to that which is "worthless, depraved, injurious, bad, harmful and wicked." To be able to apply the principles of the Word to one's life, he/she must spend time in the Word. The more one practices applying the principles of God's Word, the more one grows spiritually and develops a heart that is prepared / conditioned to receive the harder teachings of scripture.

David Guzik ([www.studylight.org](http://www.studylight.org)) added an interesting thought on our spiritual "senses."

It can be said that all five human senses have their spiritual counterparts.

- We have a spiritual sense of taste: If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2:3). Taste and see that the LORD is good! (Psalm 34:8)
- We have a spiritual sense of hearing: Hear and your soul shall live (Isaiah 55:3). He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 2:7).
- We have a spiritual sense of sight: Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law (Psalm 119:18). The eyes of your understanding (heart) being enlightened (Ephesians 1:18).
- We have a spiritual sense of smell: He shall be of quick scent in the fear of the LORD (Isaiah 11:3, RV margin). I am full, having received from . . . you, a sweet-smelling aroma (Philippians 4:18).
- We have a spiritual sense of touch or feeling: Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD (2 Kings 22:19). The hardening of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness (Ephesians 4:18-19).