

Our Heavenly High Priest

Hebrews 5 / Lesson for Sunday, November 28, 2021

TEACHER NOTE: We will teach another lesson on Hebrews 5:12-14

INTRODUCTION:

- Who can remember the theme of Hebrews? *Jesus is better!*
- As we have worked through the first four chapters, we have seen the author contrast the role and work of Jesus with the prophets, angels and Moses.
- In chapter 5, Jesus is seen as better than Aaron the high priest. The author is making his point clear to all: Jesus is better! Read Hebrews 8:6 and point out the phrases: “a more excellent, a better covenant, and better promises.”
- For the Christian, Jesus is better than anything or anyone that this world may offer. The problem for many of us is that we often take Jesus for granted. We get used to Jesus.
- In chapter 5, we see how Jesus is a better High Priest and the difference that ought to make in our lives.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. The Pattern of the Earthly Priesthood According to Aaron (vs. 1-5)
 - a. The significance of Aaron to Israelite worship cannot be overestimated. He represented sinners before a Holy God. In these introductory verses, the author outlines three qualities of the earthly priest.
 - b. First, the earthly priest accepted a profound appointment (vs. 1a, 5).
 - i. Aaron was “taken” from among others and “ordained” to perform functions “pertaining to God.” Hence, he was “called of God.”
 - ii. The man chosen was to be a man who could adequately represent all other men. In other words, he would possess the nature of whom he represented.
 - iii. The author uses the Greek term translated “ordained.” It denotes an “appointment.” Aaron did not inform Moses he wanted to be a priest. God called Aaron to be priest (Ex. 28:1-3).
 - c. Second, the earthly priest accomplished a particular assignment (vv. 1b, 3b).
 - i. The priest’s duties included offering “both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”
 - ii. The priest’s assignment was to offer sacrifice to satisfy the demands of God’s justice.
 - d. Third, the earthly priest applied a personal approach (vv. 2-3a).
 - i. Not just any man could stand in the gap for other men. He had to possess the ability to sympathize with all other men. If not, how could he have “compassion” on them?
 - ii. The author used a Greek word translated “compassion” which was not the normal word for sympathy. Rather the word he used literally means “measured suffering.”
 - iii. His point is that the priest possesses a balanced sense of sympathy for those with whom he identifies.
 - iv. In addition, the priest must be completely involved in the human situation. He was “compassed with infirmity.” The priest could identify with the people because he himself was a sinner as well.
2. The Preeminence of the Heavenly Priesthood According to Christ (vs. 6-14)
 - a. The earthly priesthood, which began with Aaron, served God’s people well. However, there is a superior priesthood which belongs to the people in this dispensation.
 - b. The author compares and contrasts the earthly priesthood of Aaron with the heavenly priesthood of Christ (vs. 5a) and lists three attributes of the heavenly priesthood.
 - c. First, observe Christ’s selection (vs. 5-6, 10).

- i. Christ was “called of God” (v. 10). Jesus Christ, God’s only begotten Son, was chosen in eternity and sent in time to be Great High Priest on behalf of all who believe in Him.
 - ii. Additionally, Christ is priest not after the Aaronic priesthood; rather He is High Priest “after the order of Melchizedek” (cf. Gen. 14:18-21).
 - iii. Melchizedek is the first priest mentioned in Scripture, and like Jesus, he was not from the lineage of Aaron. He preceded Aaron’s line. Just like with Jesus, God called Melchizedek to be high priest.
 - d. Second, observe Christ’s suffering (vs. 7-9a).
 - i. The author speaks openly of the “days of His flesh,” obviously alluding to His earthly life.
 - ii. Christ identified with us in our humanity because He was fully human Himself. He was able to not only understand us but to feel with us and for us. Hence, He suffered like us though we never have nor ever will suffer like Him!
 - iii. The author recalls a particularly dark moment in our Lord’s journey as He prayed “with strong crying and tears,” which is possibly a reference to His time in Gethsemane before His arrest.
 - iv. Then the author takes us to Calvary when he says Jesus “learned obedience” by the things which He suffered (v. 8).
 - v. Even more, He was “made perfect” (v. 9). Was Jesus not already perfect in every way? Of course. However, His purpose was incomplete at that time.
 - vi. Jesus was thoroughly equipped for His heavenly role as our Intercessor (7:25). When the believer prays, Jesus may say to the Father, “I know what he (or she) is going through. I’ve been there Myself!” He understands like no other.
 - e. Third, observe Christ’s salvation (vs. 9b).
 - i. Aaron could offer no deliverance to the people from their sins. He only offered sacrifice for their sins.
 - ii. However, Christ is the “author” of our salvation. He is the One Who saves us. Christ accomplished a feat no earthly priest given time nor eternity could accomplish—He provided full and free salvation from sin.
 - iii. Even more, not only is the salvation Christ accomplished complete, it is also ceaseless; that is, Christ provided “eternal salvation.”
 - iv. He offers neither a temporary fix nor even a lifetime guarantee. Rather Jesus provides salvation with no time expiration!

APPLICATION:

- As we begin to grasp the “better” Jesus, it ought to cause us to respond! Verses 11-14 outline a proper response: We ought to push on in our faith for spiritual maturity, to make the most of Jesus in our lives!
- We will have a lesson next week on these specific verses, but it’s not too early to consider the application to this wonderful chapter.
- In the intro to today’s lesson we pointed out the tendency for us to take Jesus and His work for us for granted.
 - Discuss: What does it look like in our lives when we take Jesus for granted?
 - Discuss: How does this happen in our lives?
- What difference should today’s lesson make in our lives?