

## Study #5: Why We Need a High Priest

Once before Hebrews mentioned Jesus as our great High Priest (2:17). Now we turn to his priesthood for most of the next five chapters. Obviously, the author of Hebrews thinks Jesus' priesthood is important for us to understand, but it's not familiar territory, especially for those of us raised Protestant.

This first section seems to come in response to a section on the biting, probing nature of the Word of God. For going through such an examination, we need priestly help!

*Read Hebrews 4:14-5:10*

1. According to 5:1-2, what does a high priest do? What problems in human life does he address?
2. 4:14 says that our great high priest has "gone through the heavens." What does this mean? (Read 2 Cor 12:2 and 1 Kings 8:27 to gain some idea how ancient Israelites thought about the structure of the heavens.)
3. What does the image of the "throne of grace" (4:16) suggest to you? How does this fit with Jesus' having "gone through the heavens?"
4. In summary, where is Jesus now? What is he doing?
5. What life experiences does Jesus have to make him a super-effective High Priest? (See 4:15, 5:2, 5:7-8.)
6. What does it mean that he "learned obedience" and was "made perfect?" If he was the Son of God, why did he need to learn and grow?
7. N.T. Wright compares this to a friend of his who took over the family business but who learned it from the bottom up. Why is that kind of learning important for a boss? Why was it necessary for Jesus?
8. Hebrews makes the point that Jesus did not appoint himself, but was named Messiah and priest by God himself. (5:5-6) What would be the implications of this for Jewish Christians working out their new relation to the Temple?
9. In summary, what kind of high priest is Jesus? Why do we need him?

## Hebrews 4:14-5:10 New International Version

### Jesus the Great High Priest

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven,<sup>[a]</sup> 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 empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are —yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

5 Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. 3 This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. 4 And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

5 In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

“You are my Son; today I have become your Father.”<sup>[b]</sup>

6 And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”<sup>[c]</sup>

7 During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

### Footnotes

Hebrews 4:14 Greek has gone through the heavens

Hebrews 5:5 Psalm 2:7

Hebrews 5:6 Psalm 110:4