

Hebrews Chapter 5

Theme: Christ as Our Perfect High Priest

Introduction:

Hebrews 5 continues the discussion of Jesus' superiority as our High Priest. The chapter first outlines the qualifications and functions of a high priest under the Old Covenant and then contrasts this with Jesus' unique priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. The author ends the chapter with a warning about spiritual immaturity.

Section 1: The Qualifications of a High Priest (Hebrews 5:1–4):

1 For every high priest taken from among men is appointed in matters pertaining to God for the people, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he is also clothed with weakness.

3 Because of this, he must make an offering for his own sins as well as for the people.

4 No one takes this honor on himself; instead, a person is called by God, just as Aaron was.

Key Greek Words and Phrases:

- **Archierus (ἀρχιερεύς)** – "high priest": one who mediates between God and man.
- **Kathistatai (καθίσταται)** – "is appointed": to set, establish, or assign by authority.
- **Metriopathein (μετριοπαθέω)** – "deal gently": to show moderate emotions, to empathize.
- **ProspHEREIN (προσφέρειν)** – "to offer": referring to priestly sacrificial offerings.

Exegesis and Theological Insights:

The author reminds the audience that a high priest had to be human to sympathize with human weaknesses. Under the Old Covenant, priests came from the tribe of Levi, specifically the line of Aaron (Exodus 28:1). They were called and appointed, not self-chosen. The high priest offered sacrifices for both others and himself because he was also a sinner.

Application:

Christians should understand that Jesus' priesthood meets all these qualifications—yet surpasses them. Christian leaders today should model their ministry on this humility and divine calling.

Section 2: Christ Appointed as High Priest (Hebrews 5:5–10):

5 In the same way, Christ did not exalt himself to become a high priest, but God who said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father,"

6 also says in another place,

"You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

7 During his earthly life, he offered prayers and appeals with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

8 Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

9 After he was perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,

10 and he was declared by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Old Testament References:

- Psalm 2:7 – "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."
- Psalm 110:4 – "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Key Greek Words and Phrases:

- **Doxazō** (δοξάζω) – "exalt/glorify": to be honored or glorified, used here to deny self-glorification.
- **Eulabeia** (εὐλάβεια) – "reverence": godly fear, respect for God.
- **Teleioō** (τελειόω) – "perfected": to be made complete, here meaning fully qualified as Savior.
- **Aitios** (αἴτιος) – "source": cause or origin.

Exegesis and Theological Insights:

Jesus did not presume the priesthood—it was **appointed** by God, fulfilling both Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4. The "order of Melchizedek" indicates a priesthood **not based on lineage** (as with Levi) but on divine commission. Jesus' suffering, particularly seen in Gethsemane and the Cross, involved real emotional agony, showing His full humanity. His obedience through suffering equipped Him to be the perfect mediator.

"Perfected" here does not imply moral imperfection, but **functional readiness**—He became qualified through experience.

Application:

Jesus' example of suffering obedience encourages believers in trials. Salvation is not earned, but it results in obedience (v. 9). Christians can trust in Jesus as both compassionate and sovereign High Priest.

Section 3: A Warning Against Spiritual Immaturity (Hebrews 5:11–14):

11 We have a great deal to say about this, and it is difficult to explain, since you have become too lazy to understand.

12 Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of

God's revelation again. You need milk, not solid food.

13 Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant.

14 But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.

Key Greek Words and Phrases:

- **Nōthros (νωθρός)** – "lazy/dull": sluggish, spiritually apathetic.
- **Gala (γάλα)** – "milk": elementary doctrines.
- **Stereá trophē (στερεὰ τροφή)** – "solid food": deeper theological understanding.
- **Teleios (τέλειος)** – "mature": spiritually grown and complete.
- **Gymnazō (γυμνάζω)** – "trained": disciplined or exercised through practice.
- **Diakrisis (διάκρισις)** – "discernment": ability to distinguish right from wrong.

Exegesis and Theological Insights:

The author rebukes his readers for failing to mature spiritually. The problem is not intellectual difficulty, but a lack of **spiritual diligence**. "Milk" refers to the basics of the faith; "solid food" refers to deeper truths. Maturity involves consistent spiritual practice, especially in discerning good from evil—a hallmark of Christian growth.

Application:

Believers are called to grow in spiritual understanding. This involves time in Scripture, doctrine, community, and practice. Immaturity stunts ministry impact, while maturity equips believers to **teach others** and stand firm.

Summary and Life Application:

Main Points

1. The high priest must be divinely appointed and compassionate.
2. Jesus is the perfect high priest—appointed by God, fully human, obedient through suffering.
3. Spiritual maturity is expected and necessary for fruitful Christian living.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. How does Jesus' divine appointment as high priest encourage your faith today?
2. What can we learn from Jesus' suffering and obedience?
3. Are you growing toward maturity in your understanding of Scripture and righteousness?
4. What steps can you take to move from "milk" to "solid food"?