

SERMON GUIDE

Hebrews: Jesus the Final and Perfect High Priest

Hebrews 5:4-10



SERMON NOTES

The overarching theme of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus is greater than all that has come before Him. All that God gave before Him in the prophets, the Law, and the sacrificial system was all meant to point to Him. And to this Jewish audience particularly, he is saying, therefore, don't go back to the old system. Indeed, there's nothing to go back to. So, in one sentence, Hebrews is saying, "Jesus is greater, stay with Jesus." If you get that, you'll understand the book.

As the book has moved us along we've seen that Jesus is the greater and perfect revelation of God, Jesus is the greater and perfect Law giver – the greater Moses, Jesus is the greater and perfect one to lead us into the Promised Land – the greater Joshua. And last week, we were introduced to the next comparison. Jesus is the greater and perfect High Priest – the greater Aaron.

As we were introduced to that, we were given yet another command or warning in Hebrews 4:14-16. The emphasis last week on why you should hold fast (stay with Jesus, don't go back) is that this High Priest is able to sympathize with you and bring you into the presence of a holy God without fear of judgment.

This is important because the original audience was being persecuted. They were suffering for confessing Christ. Their temptation was: if you just go back to the old ways, the old system of Law and Sacrifice, and Priesthood, all of this suffering will end. You can get your life back. But to do that would be to deny that Jesus is the Christ.

So, over and over in the book, we see these warnings about falling away. And this is why. These Jews who had confessed Christ as the Messiah they had been waiting on were being mercilessly tempted to throw in the towel and deny Christ.

The writer's presentation of Jesus as the final and perfect High Priest who can sympathize with them, who knows their pain, who suffered as a man just like they are suffering, who can bring them into the presence of a holy God without fear of judgment, is to encourage them to stay with Jesus. Now, in our

passage, he's going to give some evidence to support his claim that Jesus is the final and perfect High Priest and that there's nothing to go back to.

What we'll see today is this: Hold fast to Jesus because He is the perfect and final High Priest, appointed by the Father to be everything we need Him to be.

Upon a cursory reading of this text, you might have some big questions.

- Today, I have begotten you
- Melchizedek
- Saved from death/heard
- Learned obedience/Made perfect
- To those who obey Him

We'll answer all of those questions as we go, but don't be distracted by them. These verses have some challenges for us, but not necessarily because they are deep or confusing. Our challenge is in the context. The writer is assuming that the readers know certain things and are making certain connections. Things that you may not know, not because you're a bad Bible student, but because you're not a first-century Jew. We will clear that up when we come to it. Let's walk through the text one point at a time.

1. Jesus was appointed by the Father to be our High Priest.

VS 4-5a – And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest

This is one of the qualifications of being High Priest. It was a divinely appointed office. Someone could not aspire to or earn their way into the priesthood. Under the old covenant, you had to be from Aaron's family line to be a priest. The writer is validating Jesus' credentials as High Priest by saying, "He didn't make Himself the High Priest; God did." This is important because the Jews were fully aware of their need for a priest. We have a problem that they didn't. Last week we were told that we could come boldly. Not because God is such a pushover but because of our High Priest. Jews being tempted to return were being told, "There's no priest for you back there."

2. Jesus was appointed by the Father to be a greater High Priest than all that came before Him. VS 5b-6 – but was appointed by him who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”

Quotes two psalms, first, Ps. 2 - what's interesting about this citation is it's about the appointment of the Messiah King not a priest. The last half of the verse from Ps. 110 tells us why - Melchizedek was a King-Priest. Jesus was from Judah, the line of kings, not Aaron. He should have been qualified as King but disqualified as priest, yet His priesthood line precedes Aaron. Melchizedek, not Aaron - preceded, will outlast, and Kingly

3. This greater High Priest can sympathize with us.

VS 7a – In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears

He has met the first qualification - being called by God, now onto the second - being called from among men. Look back at 5:1-2 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. He knows what it is to hurt. He knows what it is to cry out to the Father. He is uniquely qualified to be everything we need: a High Priest appointed by and therefore approved by God and one who was made like us in every way, yet without sin. So He can sympathize with us and deal with us gently.

The reason that Jesus is in such close solidarity with us is that the difficult path we are on is not unique to us. He has journeyed on it himself. It is not only that Jesus can relieve us from our troubles, like a doctor prescribing medicine, it is also that, before any relief comes, he is with us in our troubles, like a doctor who has endured the same disease. Jesus is not Zeus. He was a sinless man, not a sinless Superman. [...] He came as a normal man to normal men. He knows what it is to be thirsty, hungry, despised, rejected, scorned, shamed, embarrassed, abandoned, misunderstood, falsely accused, suffocated, tortured, and killed. He knows what it is to be lonely. His friends abandoned him when he needed them most. Our tendency is to feel intuitively that the more difficult life gets, the more alone we are. As we sink further into pain, we sink further into felt isolation. The Bible corrects us. Our pain

never outstrips what he himself shares in. We are never alone. That sorrow that feels so isolating, so unique, was endured by him in the past and is now shouldered by him in the present.

4. This greater High Priest was saved from death, demonstrating the Father's approval of Him.

VS 7b – to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

The significance of this High Priest being saved from death is that it shows His sinlessness and the Father's approval of Him - again lending to Him being the final and perfect High Priest. But how was He saved from death? We know that He died.

5. This greater High Priest suffered to accomplish perfect obedience for us.

VS 8-9a – Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect,

How can the perfect God incarnate learn obedience or be made perfect?

- Fully God, fully man. Laid down (Php. 2). Learned to crawl, walk, talk, read, write...
- Luke 2 "grew in knowledge and stature"
- Same way someone grows in wisdom
- How did He learn it? Through suffering – just like He's asking you to do now.
- Made perfect for the role of High Priest, not moral purity.

6. This greater High Priest became the perfect High Priest to eternally save His people.

VS 9b – he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

Eternal salvation – as opposed to the temporary covering of sins that the animal sacrifices represented, we'll get more into that in the coming chapters, but His High Priestly work is greater because it is eternal because He is eternal.

Obey? I thought it was grace?

- Allergic to obedience. 2 Thess. 1:8 says that God will deal out retribution to those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel.

- Yet, we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, so how do we square all of this?

Look back at 4:6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience Why were these Israelites not allowed into the Promised Land? Because of their disobedience. Now, look at 3:19. We see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. Which is it? Were they left out of the Promised Land because of their disobedience or because of their unbelief? Yes. Their disobedience was their unbelief.

On the one hand, believing is obeying, but the other thing to remember is that it's also true that those who have been saved by grace through faith will walk in obedience to Christ in general, not perfectly but as a practice. The Bible is clear on this. Our eternal salvation is absolutely by grace alone through faith alone. To refuse to trust Christ is to refuse to obey Christ.

VS 10 – being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The writer is bookending this section. He started out saying that Jesus was appointed by God to a greater priesthood, and he finished by saying the same.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is the only way.

You might not be in the exact same circumstances as the original audience, but every one of us are tempted to come to God, or walk with God after having come to Him, on our own terms. The writer to the Hebrews is saying, “You can’t get to God by going back to Judaism. There’s only one way because there’s only one High Priest and that’s Jesus.” To you this passage says, you can’t get to God by your own route either. Maybe you’ve said or thought some of these things before:

- a. “I just couldn’t worship a God who [fill in the blank with something in the Bible you don’t like or disagree with].”
- b. Or “I like to think of God as [fill in the blank].”
- c. Or “The God I worship [again fill in the blank].”

God is holy. Holy enough that even coming near to Him without a High Priest to stand between you and Him will kill you. He loves you. There's no conflict between Him and Christ. Don't misunderstand and think that God is some transcendent dictator and Jesus comes in to kind of smooth things over. Jesus is our High Priest, but He is our High Priest because God appointed Him as one that we might be able to draw near to Him because He, even in His holiness, loves sinners. But you can't come another way.

Enter and enjoy the rest that the High Priest provides.

There is an old hymn written in 1863 that I'd like to read to you:

Before the throne of God above, I have a strong, a perfect plea,
A great High Priest whose name is "Love," Whoever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands. My name is written on His heart;
I know that while in heav'n He stands no tongue can bid me thence depart.
When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look and see Him there Who made an end to all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died, my sinful soul is counted free;
For God, the Just, is satisfied to look on him and pardon me.
Behold him there! the risen Lamb, my perfect, spotless Righteousness
the great unchangeable I AM, the King of glory and of grace!
One with Himself I cannot die, My soul is purchased by His blood;
My life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ, my Saviour and my God

A few weeks ago Erik preached about striving to enter God's rest by faith. So I would just ask you this morning – you who follow Christ, who consider yourselves Christians – are you resting from your works? Are you resting in the grace of God for your salvation and security? When you stumble, what does that look like? A long sequence of beating yourself up and punishing yourself trying to atone for your sins? Or do you go to your High Priest, your intermediary, confess your sins, ask for strength to change, and leave the sins and the guilt there with Him? God has not offered you salvation

begrudgingly but abundantly. He has not only given you a pardon, new life, and adoption into His family but also a perfect High Priest to ensure that all of the benefits of that salvation are eternally secure and constantly applied to you as you walk with Him. Are you resting in that? Here's how you know the answer. If your repentance looks like going to Jesus with your sins and leaving without them, with newfound strength and determination to please Him the next time the temptation comes, then you are living in that rest. Otherwise, you need to strive to enter it. How do you do that? By faith. Choose to believe 1 John 1:9. Choose to believe Heb. 7:25. Choose to believe Psalm 103:13 and keep choosing to believe it over and over again. The fight is not for your behavior. The fight is not for your feelings. The fight, the striving, is always for your faith.

We all need a High Priest to reconcile us to God and to keep us there. Jesus is the only one qualified to fill that role and He fills it perfectly. He offers eternal salvation to all of us today if we will obey Him, and the command He calls us to obey is repent and place all our trust in Him.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?



- **REVIEW**
 - Read **Hebrews 5:4-10** and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
 - Additional Scripture:
 - Hebrews 1:2
 - Romans 1:3
 - Hebrews 4:6

- Hebrews 3:19
- Acts 2:27
- 2 Thessalonians 1:8
- John 6:28-29
- John 3:36
- 1 John 3:9

- **REFLECT**

- What does it mean when the Father says to the Son “Today I have begotten you”?
- What does it mean that the Son learned obedience?
- What does it mean that Christ was made perfect?
- How does Jesus meet all of your needs as a High Priest?

- **RESPOND**

- Why do we trust the promises of God?
- Have you been tempted to find your own way to God or to have a relationship with him on your own terms?
- Read the hymn “Before the Throne of God”. Does this hymn describe your experience with God when dealing with your sin? In what ways do you relate to it?

- **MEDITATE**

- Hebrews 5:9-10 – And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

- **MEMORIZE**

- Isaiah 45:23 – By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.’



- **FOLLOW:** How will you follow Jesus this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **FISH:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.
 - Staff - **Laurie Dicicco**
 - Ministry - **Kids Ministry Director**
 - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for our short-term teams**
 - Asian Pacific Rim Team #2 departing August 16

- Central Asia Team #2 departing on September 27
- **Pray for the lost.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>