



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

HEBREWS Lesson 5

In our chapter this week, the writer of Hebrews continues with the theme of the priesthood. Last week his goal seemed to be to encourage his readers with the knowledge that Christ is our High Priest, and now he continues to develop that thought by offering instruction about the qualifications for that office. We already know that Christ is superior in that position, but now the writer offers his arguments on what makes this true.

Simon J. Kistemaker wrote, "The term 'priest' occurs 31 times in the New Testament, 14 of which appear in Hebrews. The word 'high priest' is featured 123 times in the Gospels, Acts, and Hebrews. The expression does not occur in the Epistles and Revelation. In Hebrews it is used 18 times. In short, it is the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews who develops the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ." I pray the Holy Spirit helps each of us grasp the full meaning and significance of this important doctrine, since it is so crucial to our Christian faith.

First Day

1. Read Hebrews 5:1-14. What facts do you find? Ask yourself the six basic observation questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Are there any repeated words, thoughts, or phrases?
2. How would you summarize this chapter? What would you choose as the key verse?
3. What would you say is the author's tone as he writes this chapter? Do you see it change anywhere in the chapter?

4. Try to look up and define any words that you are unfamiliar with.
5. How does this chapter tie in with the previous one?
6. Upon first reading, do you find any application for yourself? Anything jump out at you?

We'll look at this chapter more closely tomorrow, but for now, meditate on the glorious fact that the priesthood of Jesus Christ will last forever. He is the author of our eternal salvation! That's a huge "Reason to Rejoice"!

Memory Verse of the Week: "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." Hebrews 5:9

Second Day

Review your memory verse. Would you consider yourself one who "obeys" Him?

1. Read Hebrews 5:1-10, focusing on verses 1-4. What is the main point of this section?
2. Where is the high priest chosen from? Who chooses him?
3. What was the main task of the high priest?

Why did the Jews need a priest? After the fall of Adam and Eve, a gap was created between God and man (Genesis 3). From that point on, a bridge was needed to allow sinful man to approach a holy God. God raised up a group of people called priests to function as the go-between, so to speak. The priests represented the people before God, presenting sacrifices on behalf of the people (Exodus 28:38-44; Leviticus 1-6). On the other hand, they represented God before the people too. They helped the people learn and apply God's truth (Deut. 17:9, 19:17) and pronounced God's blessings on people (Number 6:23-26). They helped people really understand how God was working in their lives.

Within the priesthood, there was a man known as the high priest. He would enter the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle where God dwelt among His people, on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). He would offer sacrifices to maintain the people's relationship with God.

According to the law of Moses, only Aaron and his descendants were allowed to serve at the altar (Exodus 28-29, Leviticus 8-10, and Numbers 16-18.) A high priest was appointed by God; he did not appoint himself. This office was based on a divine calling (Hebrews 5:4). The priest was the link between man and God. His function was to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people, which had to be offered in the right place by the right person to be acceptable to God. That person had to be human. Sounds silly, but very important. Because his job involved representing people, he had to be a human being. It couldn't be an animal; it couldn't be an angel. God the Father couldn't even do it. This shows us again why Jesus had to be able to fully identify with mankind. Wiersbe said, "The very existence of a priesthood and a system of sacrifices gave evidence that man is estranged from God. It was an act of grace on God's part that He instituted the whole Levitical system. Today, the system is fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ. He is both the sacrifice and the High Priest who ministers to God's people on the basis of His once-for-all offering on the cross." According to our book of Hebrews, this entire system was set up to help us understand the work of Jesus, who ultimately bridged that gap between us and God.

4. According to verse 2, why should the High Priest never lose patience with the sinner? What does he share with the people?

5. The writer clearly points out the weakness of the High Priest, as we also see in Leviticus 9:7 and 16:6, 15-16. Although this high priest is being paralleled to the priesthood of Jesus Christ, how is this specific comparison not equal? (Hebrews 7:27)

On the annual Day of Atonement, the High Priest Aaron entered into the Most Holy Place and performed the following duties, as described in Leviticus 16:

1. Offered a bull for his own sin offering to atone for his own sin and the sins of his household.
2. Entered the Most Holy Place with incense
3. Sprinkled the blood of the bull on the atonement cover of the ark
4. Cast lots over two live goats brought by the people
5. Killed one of the goats for a sin offering for the nation, and sprinkle its blood inside the Most Holy Place
6. Placed his hands on the head of the live goat and confessed the sins of the people
7. Sent the live goat away into the wilderness

This all seems a bit foreign to us, doesn't it? Although the role of the High Priest seemed to be solely ritualistic, Ray Stedman makes an interesting point. He said, "We tend to think of the Levitical priests as engaged only in rituals and sacrifices which were often virtually meaningless to the people. But if we read Leviticus and Deuteronomy carefully, we will see that such priests served in the place of modern psychologists and psychiatrists today. In explaining to the people the purpose of each offering, they would be dealing with problems of fear, insecurity, anxiety, guilt, and shame. Thus they performed an extremely important role in the nation's life." (Perhaps similar to pastors or counselors?) Next to the civil leader, the High Priest held the highest office in the land.

I think it's important to recognize that the high priest identified with the people in their state of sinfulness. After all, they were human too. They had to reflect a balanced and real attitude towards sin. They had to have an accurate view of sin and God in order to represent that to the people. For example, they couldn't withhold reconciliation because of their own judgmental heart, etc. They had to honestly and correctly represent people to God, and God to the people. In the same way, you and I must always take a look at our own heart and conscience before we counsel, advise, or confront others.

6. Read Matthew 7:1-5. What does Jesus have to say about this principle? What exactly does He mean?

7. Have you ever had someone try to remove your speck while totally missing their own plank? How did it make you feel? Were you able to receive the exhortation or correction? Why or why not?

8. Are you trying to point out anyone's "speck" right now? Have you looked for the plank that may be in your own eye, heart, or life? Let the Holy Spirit deal with your heart for awhile on this one ...

The high priest was human, chosen from men to minister for men. The position could not be bought, sold, or earned, but was appointed by God. Although the high priest was called by God, Christ's ordination and authority was greater, as we'll see in our section tomorrow. Continue to ask the Spirit to search your heart, making sure you are cleansed and forgiven of your sins today. He desires us to be holy and pure before Him.

Third Day

Spend some time on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 5:1-10. Beginning in verse 5, the writer compares Christ's priesthood to Aarons. Although Aaron was called by God, what was different about Christ's calling, according to verses 6 and 7? (John 8:54)

The writer quotes from Psalm 2:7 once again in verse 5. It was first quoted in Hebrews 1:5 to prove that Jesus was superior to angels because He is the Son of God. Now the writer is quoting it again to show that Jesus is the Son of God, yet

He is also called and ordained by God to serve as our High Priest. (In Hebrews 4:14, the writer combines the theme of Jesus as the Son of God and our High Priest as well.) The writer is trying to show his readers that Jesus Christ fulfilled all the conditions of the priesthood. He was one of them, fully human. He was appointed by God, chosen for this task. And he will soon describe how Jesus went through bitter and painful experiences as a man, which enabled Him to understand weakness and temptation so He can fully sympathize with us.

2. The writer quotes Psalm 2:7 and immediately links it with Psalm 110:4, quoting the psalmist in verse 6. What does he say?

3. According to verse 6, how long will Jesus' priesthood remain? How is that different than Aaron? Why is that so significant for you and me?

Forever is an exciting word. You know what it means? Yes, you're right. Forever! The writer says that Jesus' Priesthood is "forever" at least 6 times in the book of Hebrews. That's one of the things that make His priesthood unique. While all the other high priests died and had to turn the office over to their successors, Christ will reign as our High Priest forever and ever.

Another thing that makes this priesthood unique from that of Aaron's is that it is from a different order. While the others are from Aaron's order, Christ is from the order of Melchizedek. Who is that?? Melchizedek is an interesting character in Scripture and is only mentioned in two places in the Old Testament: Genesis 14:17-24 and Psalm 110:4. His name means "King of Righteousness," and he was also the "King of Salem." He was both a priest and a king. Hebrews 7 discusses Melchizedek much deeper, so we will wait until then to look at him in depth. But you may be wondering why being of his "order" makes Jesus able to be a high priest forever. The Old Testament does not record Melchizedek's death at all (Hebrews 7:1-3), so they see his reign as forever. Ultimately, we know he did die because he was a man, but no record is given. Melchizedek becomes a "picture" of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is a high priest forever. We'll talk more about this in chapter 7. And another important difference is that God appointed Jesus as High Priest prior to His coming to earth. His priesthood is eternal, meaning His priesthood began before His earthly life.

In verses 7-8, the writer continues to discuss the qualifications of the high priest. Our Lord's ministry here on earth prepared Him for this high priestly ministry.

4. Read Hebrews 5:7-8. Also, read Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, and Luke 22:40-46. What incident is the writer of Hebrews describing? What details do you find in the Gospels?

Why did Jesus, the Son of God, have to "learn" obedience? If He is perfect, how could He have to learn anything? Remember that here on earth Jesus lived by faith in the Father's will. He didn't need to "learn" anything. But as the Son of God in human flesh, He had to experience what man would experience so He could be our High Priest forever and sympathize with us. He was completely identifying with mankind.

As Jesus was praying in the Garden, many think He was simply burdened by the physical suffering of the Cross ahead. It was much more than that. Jesus was about to be "made" sin and separated from His Father (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24). He bore on His shoulders the sins of the whole world -- past, present, and future. Can you try to imagine the guiltiest, most shameful feelings you've ever had? Feelings of despair over something you've done or someone you've hurt; feelings that wrench your gut. Imagine Jesus feeling that feeling for every single sin ever committed. Imagine the pain, agony, and heaviness that was weighing on His shoulders, alone. The only time He asked His friends for help and prayer, they fell asleep against a tree. His cry on the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" reflects His complete separation from God.

Of the Garden experience, Stedman writes, "Each of Jesus' three prayers questioned the necessity for this experience and, each is addressed to the 'One who could spare Him from death.' Luke tells us before the third prayer an angel was sent to strengthen Him. His cry to the Father was one of such desperate need that the Father answered Him first by strengthening Him through an angel. But when the angel had finished, the third most terrible experience began. The author implies that Jesus faced the emotional misery which sin produces: its shame, guilt, and despair. He felt the iron bands of sin's enslaving power. He was oppressed by a sense of hopelessness, total discouragement, and utter defeat. He is anticipating

the moment on the cross when He would be forsaken by the Father, since He then would be bearing the sin of the whole world as though it were His own. The very thought of it crushed His heart as in a winepress. No sinner on earth has ever felt the stain and shame of sin as He did. He understood exactly the same feelings we have (in much lesser degree) when we are angry with ourselves and so filled with shame and self-loathing that we cannot believe that God can do anything but hate us for our evil. Jesus knows what that is like. He went the whole way and took the full brunt. We will never pass through a Gethsemane experience as torturous as He did. He saw our sins as His own, and thus fulfilled beyond any other priest's experience the ability to deal gently with other's sins since He was so fully aware of the sense of personal defilement sin leaves."

5. After reading the paragraph above, write your thoughts and/or emotions. (Are you developing a better understanding of the importance of His role as High Priest?)
 6. In verse 7, the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus' prayers were heard. But He was still crucified. What, then, was He praying for? (Read Acts 13:30-37)

Wiersbe said it really clearly: "Since He did die on the cross, this could not have been what He was praying about; for if the Father answered, the Son would not have been crucified. He did not pray to be saved *from* death, but *out of* death; and God answered His prayer by raising Him from the dead!" (Acts 2:24)

7. In verse 7, the phrase "because of His godly fear" is better translated "reverent submission." How was Jesus submissive to the Father's will?
 8. Jesus lived according to God's will, in all ways. How about you? Whose will do you seek after, yours or the Lord's? Is your life characterized by a "true and reverent submission" to the Father's will?

9. How is it possible to pray and seek God's will, yet still miss the boat? (Read James 4:3, Psalm 66:18, Jeremiah 17:9 for examples.)

10. Are you expecting to hear God's voice and direction in some area you're praying about, yet aren't obeying His Word? Allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Are you willing to be honest with Him, and yourself?

See you tomorrow, ladies!

Fourth Day

Work on the memory verse. Repeat it to someone today.

We will continue to explore the theme of the priesthood of Christ. It's interesting to note that the theme of Jesus' kingship isn't really discussed much, but the writer of Hebrews gives His priesthood special attention because His purpose is to show Jesus as our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5-6). The writer is an expert of the Scriptures and the only New Testament writer that explains this doctrine. Paul touches on it in Romans 8:34 and 1 Timothy 2:5-6. While Peter and John refer to believers as part of a "royal priesthood," they don't talk about the priesthood of Christ. This fact makes the book of Hebrews a very important one!

1. Read Hebrews 5:1-10. Take a look at verses 9-10. What thought is he repeating from 2:10?

The phrase "been perfected" means to be "made complete." Because He is the sinless Son of God and offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice, He is the author of "eternal salvation." Because of His sufferings on earth, He can be our Heavenly High Priest forever. Kistemaker wrote, "Jesus, made perfect through suffering, leads many sons to glory. Perfection, therefore, must be seen as a completion of the task Jesus had to perform."

2. According to verse 9, who is this "eternal salvation" promised to?

I love what F. F. Bruce wrote, except that it's also sort of scary. When describing the concept of obedience, he said, "The salvation which Jesus has procured, is granted 'unto all them that obey Him!' There is something appropriate in the fact that the salvation which was procured by the obedience of the Redeemer should be made available to the obedience of the redeemed."

3. Read that quote again. Can you explain what he means in your own words?
4. The phrase "all who obey Him" is also translated as "all who trust Him." Obviously, this means much more than lip service. Read Romans 10:8-13. Are you in this category? If the answer is yes, are you living a life of trust and obedience? How important is obedience?
5. Read Hebrews 5:11-14. What is the writer's main point? Why do you think he adds this exhortation or admonition?

The writer seems to have a pastor's heart for his readers, caring deeply about their spiritual state. He has already expressed his fear of them going back to their old ways of legalism and rebellion, as did the children of Israel. He warned them about losing out on the spiritual rest that had been promised to them, and now he confronts them on their spiritual immaturity. He seems to want to explain more, but takes a "time-out" to rebuke them, then jumps back to the point later on in chapter 7.

6. According to verse 11, what kind of "hearers" are they?

In Hebrews 6:12, the word "dull" is translated as slothful, referring to a state of spiritual apathy and laziness.

7. How do you think people can become "dull" hearers? How can drifting, doubt, or laziness play a part?

8. Are you "dull" to spiritual things right now? What should you do?
9. According to verse 12, what did the writer think they should be able to do? Why?

As believers mature, they should be able to share spiritual truths with others. We don't have to be formal "Bible teachers" per sey, but able to share His truth at some level. But due to their laziness, they were still acting like newborns in the faith.

10. Okay, here we go. Let's take a look at ourselves. Are you able to share His truth with others, or have you stayed at the newborn stage of your faith? If you have known Christ for awhile, have you grown in the wisdom and knowledge of Him?

We're going to finish up this section tomorrow, although some of us may rather stop right now! It's a difficult section to examine ourselves with. Be ready to dig!

Fifth Day

Write out your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 5:11-14 again. Explain the writer's comparison between milk and solid food.
2. How does only living on "milk" keep you "unskilled" in the Scriptures? What does that practically mean?

The solid food, or "meat" of the Scripture, is harder to sink your teeth into. The writer believes that the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ is "meat" that they don't seem to be ready for.

3. In your own studies, do you often stay away from the harder doctrines, or the "meat," so to speak? Do you dwell on the things that are easier to understand? Are you in danger of becoming dull or staying a newborn?

In verse 14, the writer says that as we grow in the Word, we will learn to use it in our daily life. We will mature, use discernment, and grow in Godliness. The solid food of the Word will teach us to live righteous lives as we apply His Word to our everyday situations. But it's not just about reading it, it's about deciding to apply and obey it. Begin daily by reading the Word and asking yourself: What does it mean? Is there something He's saying that I'm not obeying? Is there some activity or attitude that He wants me to get rid of? Is there an action He wants me to do, or an area He wants me to step out in faith? Are there promises He wants me to cling to? Are there areas of unforgiveness, bitterness, or anger He wants me to confess and deal with? Does He want to take me deeper in my understanding of grace and mercy? Does He want me to get a better understanding of how much He loves me? The list of what we learn from the Word goes on and on.

4. Stedman said, "We need to act on knowledge before any benefit is received." What do you think he means in the context of this section?
5. Are there any changes you need to make in your own studies and knowledge of the Word to prevent you from becoming a dull hearer? Did the Lord show you anything else about yourself through this section?

**Don't just know "about" Jesus, get to know Jesus Himself!
He is revealed through His Word!**

