

8. Read Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:1-4. Who is Melchizedek?

DAY 4: HEBREWS 5:7-8—THE QUALIFICATIONS OF JESUS

9. What did Jesus do during His life on earth that was like the ministry of the high priest?
10. When was verse 7 fulfilled in Jesus' life as recorded in the Gospels (Luke 22:41-44)?

DAY 5: HEBREWS 5:9-10—THE DESIGNATION OF JESUS

11. The words *perfect* and *mature*, which often have the same meaning in Scripture, can be defined as *complete beyond improvement, fully developed*. Explain how *perfect* or *mature* is used in each of the following verses:
- Romans 12:2
 - Ephesians 4:13
 - Hebrews 6:1
12. a. Read John 3:1-8, 16-17; 1 Peter 1:18-21. Explain how Jesus "*became the source of eternal salvation*" (Hebrews 5:9).
- b. How does your belief in Jesus as "*the source of eternal salvation*" affect your relationships with people who do not yet know Him as their Savior?

DAY 6: PARTICIPATE IN CLASS

APPLY what you have learned. Jesus has been "*appointed to act on behalf of [us] in relation to God*" (5:1). Is there any aspect of life that does not matter to God? Our physical and our spiritual needs are important to Him. "*Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*" (Matthew 6:26, 33). Everything that matters to us matters to Him! And, because He understands and cares, we are encouraged to boldly approach Him to ask for help.

DAY 7: A GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Hebrews 4:14–5:10

The Old Testament presents the Messiah as King and Priest, but in the New Testament, only the book of Hebrews develops the priestly doctrine of God's Son, serving His people at the Father's throne.

WE APPROACH GOD THROUGH CHRIST The author now enlarges on the theme of Jesus as the High Priest. "*Great*" describes Christ's priestly office to assert His superiority as the High Priest over all the high priests of Israel, including Aaron.

Once a year, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place to offer sacrifices for his own sin and the sins of the people. Our great High Priest has proceeded through the heavens into God's presence. He has done in reality what the earthly high priest did symbolically. Using Jesus, His human name, binds Him to us and reminds us of His earthly life, His suffering, and His death. The phrase "*the Son of God*" also expresses His deity. The writer repeats the warning to hold tightly to faith.

In 4:15, the author offers a powerful encouragement for holding fast: "*We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.*" On the contrary, He sympathizes with the limitations of mankind. When He "*passed through the heavens*" (Hebrews 4:14), transcending all that is native to man, He did not discard His sympathetic heart. Now God has identified with humanity in a more individual, intimate way. He is the believer's High Priest and Mediator who sympathizes with their weaknesses. He knows how to help them because He shared their experiences, with one exception—He is without sin.

Jesus' resistance to temptations to sin required strength of will and dependence on His Father. Like us, He faced the power of evil. Being tempted and yet sinless, He became a High Priest who both understands and is qualified to help. His victory has far surpassed any experience of endurance we might have encountered and gives us hope to overcome as He did.

Because of our High Priest, believers can "*with confidence draw near to the throne of grace*" (4:16). The throne of grace is that place of God where Jesus "*sits*" exalted at the Father's right hand. In earlier days, people drew near to God only through a High Priest who served here on earth. Now, He may be approached through the heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ. The word *throne* is appropriate to the idea of *grace*, for there the King-Priest dispenses His unmerited favor on those who deserve judgment.

Verse 4:16 states, "*that we may receive mercy and find grace.*" *Mercy* is God's compassion on the guilty; *grace* is God's unearned provision for the helpless. It is implied that the believer's approach will be made in contrition and faith.

THINK ABOUT how Jesus is our only source of help because He resisted the strongest pressures Satan could bring to bear against Him (2:18). The only way we will overcome is by His help, and to receive it, we must admit we need it. God wants us to come to Him for strength to withstand every temptation, whether "large" or "small," for in God's eyes there are no "small sins": "*One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much*" (Luke 16:10). Because sin comes so naturally and easily for us, we need help each and every day.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A HIGH PRIEST The writer approaches Jesus' qualifications to serve as our high priest by pointing to what is true of "*every high priest*" (5:1). Three qualifications are necessary for the office: the high priest must share the same nature as those he represents before God; he must be appointed by God; he must be compassionate toward sinners. The priest's responsibility was to represent the people before God. In His humanity, Jesus was qualified to do this.



God alone could appoint a high priest to the task. Influenced by the beauty of the priestly garments and the awe surrounding the priest's duties, ambitious men could have sought

the position, but God appointed a representative whose “*honor*” would be found in the humility of service. He performed a holy task for God and the people.

THINK ABOUT how God chose the high priest and called Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and through prayer, the early church selected the first deacons. The pattern should hold true today. Those whom God has chosen to oversee His work seldom set out to be leaders; they simply obey God’s direction for their lives and do the work He puts before them. One mark of Christian leaders is that they bring people closer to Christ, not to themselves. Paul said, “*What we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake*” (2 Corinthians 4:5).

CHRIST’S QUALIFICATIONS AS HIGH PRIEST Again, Psalm 2:7 is used to praise the Lord’s superiority. In Hebrews 5:5 the quote shows that Jesus’ work as our representative is the service of the Son of God, not mere man. Jesus and His work are far superior to the splendor of the Aaronic priesthood. The quotation in verse 6, from Psalm 110:4, applies specifically to the priesthood. “*The order of Melchizedek*” does not mean a *series of priests* stemming from Melchizedek but rather the *kind*. Melchizedek was unique; no father, mother, or sons are mentioned in Scripture. He was not of Aaron’s line. He did not inherit his priesthood, nor did he transfer it to others. In these ways, Christ’s priesthood was like Melchizedek’s rather than like Aaron’s.

Using Psalms 2 and 110, Jesus the Messiah is proven to be both King and Priest. His appointment as priest rises out of the eternal and superior order of Melchizedek. In verse 7, the phrase “*Jesus offered up prayers and supplications*” uses language that refers to the priest offering sacrifices for the people, providing evidence that Jesus acted as a priest long before He ascended into heaven.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus struggled to submit to death and separation from God as a substitute for sinful humanity. He walked the path of obedience and, by the sufferings that came His way, learned just what obedience involves under the conditions of human life on earth. He suffered, learned, and was “*made perfect*,” thus revealing the Father’s “full” character. The word *perfect* gives the idea of *complete*. In other words, God’s saving purposes have been perfectly fulfilled, or completed, through the suffering of Jesus Christ.

Christ satisfies the conditions of the high priesthood, and His priesthood goes far beyond that of the Levitical system. He did not enter a temple or tabernacle; He entered into the presence of God Himself, where He represents us at the throne of grace. For Christ to be only a prophet and king was not enough, for prophets proclaim and kings rule, but a priest brings the sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. When Jesus was on the Cross and said, “*It is finished*,” He completed the offering and became the sacrifice, “*the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*” (Hebrews 5:9).

PERSONALIZE this lesson. This week’s study emphasized that Christ, our High Priest, represents us before His Father by identifying with us in temptation and suffering. God’s holy Son sympathizes with our weaknesses! Are you tempted? Suffering? Feeling weak? How does knowing that Jesus understands and sympathizes with you help? Remember that you can “*with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, [and] receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need*” (4:16). Take time this week to pour out your heart to Jesus. Ask for His mercy. Then rest silently in His presence for a few minutes, knowing that He is meeting you with grace.

REVIEW: THE WORD AMONG US

13. Tell how this lesson provided information that is interesting or important to you.