

Sent: Wednesday, 26 October 2016 1440  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Hebrews 5

"And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him, the source of eternal life--designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek!" Our memory verse for Lesson #6 from Hebrews 5:9--setting the tone for last nite's lesson, and lessons to come!

Hagner writes: "Until one gains an adequate sense of the overwhelming majesty of the thrice-holy God and simultaneously a true sense of one's sinfulness and unworthiness (as Isaiah did, in Isa. 6:1-5), one is not in a position to understand or appreciate the importance of priests and their work! One of the reasons that the Old Testament is indispensable to understanding the New Testament is exactly here, since, on the one hand, it provides us with a sense of the sovereignty, majesty, and power of God, and, on the other hand, it confronts us with the reality of human failures and needs. In light of these two points, the importance of sacrifices and priests readily emerges!"

In Hebrews 5, he writes, we "begin to approach the main argument of the book--the interpretation of Christ's work on the cross by analogy with Old Testament sacrifices of which it is the climatic fulfillment! Through the cross of Christ, the sin of the human race is forgiven and the holiness of God is upheld. Indeed, only through the cross could this have been accomplished! It was the work of the high priests in the Old Testament and the work of the unique High Priest of the New Testament that effected the forgiveness of sins!"

The position of high priest was established by God to represent man "in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. 5:1). However, we have to go back to Exodus 28 where God instructed Moses to bring Aaron and his sons (and their descendants from the tribe of Levi) to "minister as priests to Me!" They were selected by God and could not appoint themselves! They were provided an elaborate list of clearly defined duties for worship and sacrifice in the tabernacle--detailed in the books of Exodus and Leviticus--all "foreshadowing" the work Jesus fulfilled by His sacrificial death on the cross!

However, the writer of Hebrews (quoting from the Psalms) declares that Jesus Christ is not only the Son of God, seated on the throne at the right hand of the Father, but also that He has been appointed by God as "a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek!"

Interestingly, not Aaron! In fact, before the time of Moses and Aaron! In addition, a priesthood not Levitical in nature!

Melchizedek mysteriously shows up in Genesis 14 to greet and bless Abram (not yet Abraham!) after a victorious battle. Though lacking "biographical and genealogical particulars," his name means "righteous king" and he is identified as the king of Salem (meaning "king of peace") and a "priest of God Most High"--whose superior status as king-priest is recognized by Abram by his acceptance of Melchizedek's blessing and by his offering to him of a tithe! His name later shows up again in Psalm 110, and later by the writer of Hebrews, as the one and only one who could fit the person of Christ! Jesus Christ is a High Priest forever according to the order of

Melchizedek! The One who has become, "the source of our salvation," when He offered up Himself, "once for all," as the supreme sacrifice for sin!

We are challenged, "Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession..., and draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:14-16)  
Done that lately?

Well, we are not done, and the writer of Hebrews is not done with the message "concerning Him"--about whom he has "much to say"! (Heb. 5:11). But he now pauses since his readers' "spiritual lethargy and slow response to gospel teaching prevented additional teaching at this time--a reminder that failure to appropriate the truth of the gospel produces stagnation in spiritual advancement and the inability to assimilate additional teaching" (in the words of John MacArthur).

Therefore, we will "press on" to next week's lesson, in Hebrews 6, where we find some of the strongest, and most disturbing, warnings in Scripture about the danger and implications of apostasy, but also some great assurances about the eternal security of the believer!

Have a great week, men!

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