

**STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS**  
**A Study of Hebrews 5:1-14**  
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**Introduction – Review**

- The apostle Paul is believed to be the author of the epistle to the Hebrews (**GC 347, 411, 413, 420-421**).
- Timothy was a close ministry associate of Paul, and is mentioned by name in the epistle (**Heb. 13:23**), similar to other epistles written by Paul (**2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2; 1:18; 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:1; Philemon 1:1**).
- Produced prior to Jerusalem’s destruction in AD 70, this epistle was written to Jewish Christians, and might have also been used as an evangelistic tool to reach the Jewish people with the Gospel message.
- One of the central themes in the book of Hebrews is the “**Jesus is better than . . .**” theme.
- **Heb. 1:1-14** describes how Christ is better than angelic beings; in like manner, **Heb. 2:1-18** also implies that Christ, the second Adam, is better than the first Adam and every other human being; following suit, **Heb. 3:1-19** describes that Jesus is better than Moses; He has built a better spiritual house (the Church), and offers a better rest than the earthy Canaan of the OT – an eternal rest of salvation in heaven! **Heb. 4:1-16** exhorts believers to enter into this better rest, i.e. the rest of salvation and the weekly Sabbath rest, while looking forward to the perpetual rest of eternal life in the heavenly Canaan.

**Hebrews 5 – Reflections on Hebrews 5:1-4**

- Every OT high priest was ordained by God to minister to fellow human beings by offering sacrifices for sin.
- OT high priests could have compassion on fellow, sinful, erring human beings, as they themselves were also sinful human beings who were subject to the very same fallen human weaknesses; as a result, they not only offered sacrifices for the sins of others, but also offered sacrifices for their own sins.
- These OT high priests were also expected to reflect a godly humility, not serving in that position for any personal honor, gain, or glory; they were only to serve as high priest because God called them and chose them to serve, just as He chose Aaron and his earthly lineage to serve in the high priestly capacity.
- Overall, OT high priests were expected to do this work to honor and serve God, thus respecting God’s calling upon their lives; again, they were not to do this work for personal glory or gain in any way.

**Hebrews 5 – Reflections on Hebrews 5:5-11**

- In like manner, Christ does not serve as High Priest to glorify or bring honor upon Himself, but because God the Father has placed a special calling upon Him as the Son of God; Christ serves in this position to honor and glorify the Father, as well as to provide grace, mercy, and salvation to fallen human beings.
- As One chosen for a special work by the Father, Christ is not a high priest after the human pattern of the Levitical priesthood, as He was not from the biological tribe of Levi; He is actually a high priest after the order of Melchisedec (Melchizedek, which, in Biblical Hebrew means, “king of peace/righteousness”).
- The order of Melchisedec describes the wonderful reality that Christ was specifically chosen by God for a special, unique calling – the redemptive work of serving as High Priest and Intercessor for humanity.
- Christ is qualified to serve in this position because He has experienced human nature; He suffered as One who was severely tempted, and yet remained faithful and obedient through all of His sufferings.
- Christ’s perfect faithfulness in humanity also makes Him the Author of eternal salvation for all those who obey Him; after the Melchisedec order, Christ has been chosen to accomplish a special work of salvation.
- Citing that his fellow Jewish believers had become spiritually dull, Paul discerned that they needed to be reminded of “Melchisedec,” which required a detailed explanation, to serve as a reminder to them.

**Hebrews 5 – Reflections on Hebrews 5:12-14**

- Paul also told his fellow Hebrew Christians that, while they should be teachers of the Gospel because of their familiarity with the OT Hebrew economy and its insights into redemptive principles, they are in need of being taught and reminded of the basic principles of the Gospel message and the work of Christ.

- These professed teachers claim to both want and teach spiritual meat (i.e. the deeper spiritual principles of the faith that more mature Christians are able to comprehend and teach to others).
- Yet, Paul observed that they are really in need of spiritual milk (i.e. the more basic spiritual principles that those who are new to the Christian faith must learn); those who use spiritual milk are not quite ready to teach the principles of Christian righteousness in a skillful manner, for they are still spiritual infants.
- However, those Christians who are ready to understand and comprehend spiritual meat are believers who have become spiritually mature, because they are able to readily discern between good and evil.

#### Quotations on the Order of Melchisedec

- “The religion of those that crucified Christ was a pretense. The supposed holy vestments of the priests covered hearts that were full of corruption, malignity, and crime. They interpreted gain to be godliness. The priests were appointed, not by God, but by an unbelieving government. The position of priest was bought and sold like goods of merchandise. Thus it was that Caiaphas obtained the office. He was not a priest after the order of Melchisedec, by God’s appointment. He was bought and sold to work wickedness. He never knew what it was to be obedient to God.” (E.G. White, *Bible Commentary*, 5:1105)
- “The high priest was designed in an especial manner to represent Christ, who was to become a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec This order of priesthood was not to pass to another, or be superseded by another.” (E.G. White, *Review and Herald*, Dec. 17, 1872, par. 12).
- “In eloquent strains they [the people on Palm Sunday] repeat the prophecies concerning Christ: Adam will tell you, It is the seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent’s head . . . Ask Abraham, he will tell you, It is ‘Melchizedek King of Salem,’ King of Peace. Genesis 14:18.” (E.G. White, *Desire of Ages*, page 578)
- The above quotations suggest that the “Order of Melchisedec” conveys the idea that God’s servants are specifically chosen by Him through a divine calling upon a person’s life, not necessarily through a person’s hereditary lineage; unlike the Levitical order of the OT priesthood (which was based on biological lineage from the tribe of Levi), the Melchisedec Order is based upon how God would call specifically chosen individuals to do a special work for Him; Christ’s priesthood was based on this new order, given that, as a human being, He did not descend from the biological tribe of Levi.

#### Summary of Hebrews 5:1-14

- The earthly high priests of OT times regularly offered sacrifices for themselves and fellow human beings, as both were sinful and needed forgiveness for their sins; they were also not to serve for selfish reasons, but in order to honor and glorify God as an instrument of ministry to fellow human beings.
- Christ is fully qualified to serve as our High Priest because of His sufferings in human nature; because He remained faithful and obedient to God through these sufferings, this success further qualifies Him to extend continual grace, mercy, and salvation to responsive human beings in the plan of redemption.
- God called Christ for this special high priestly work after the Order of Melchisedec; in OT times, the man named Melchisedec (who was a real person) was a type of Christ, chosen by God to be His mouthpiece and minister during the time when Abraham lived (**Gen. 14:18; Psa. 110:4**).
- In like manner, Christ is our great High Priest after the same manner of Melchisedec; He was not chosen for this work according to His biological pedigree (unlike the OT Levites), but because of His desire to do God’s will and His willingness to glorify God as an instrument of salvation for human beings.
- Consistent with the “**Jesus is better than . . .**” theme of Hebrews, **Hebrews 5:1-14** reveals that Jesus has a better priesthood! As good as the order of the Levitical priesthood was during OT times, Christ has an even better priesthood from an even better order – the Order of Melchisedec – which means that He has been chosen by God to be Savior, High Priest, and Intercessor for human beings in the plan of salvation.