

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 11 July 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Eternal Salvation through an Eternal Priest

Hebrews 5:5-14

Seven hundred years before Christ came to earth, Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah that was to come. Isaiah made *many* prophesies of the Messiah; but perhaps the most remarkable prophecy of all is **Isaiah 53**. In **Isaiah 53**, we find the portrait of a Messiah who would become the perfect Sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Isaiah wrote that Jehovah's Servant would be "*wounded for our transgressions,*" and "*bruised for our iniquities.*" Because Jehovah's Servant would become the perfect *Sacrifice* for sins, He would, therefore, also be able to be our perfect *High Priest*—the One who, on our behalf, would offer up to God the perfect *Sacrifice of Himself!* At the end of **Isaiah 53**, we are told that the Messiah would "*bare the sin of many,*" and make "*intercession for the transgressors.*"

Not only did Isaiah prophecy that the Messiah would "*pour out his soul unto death*": he also prophesied that He would not *stay* dead. In **Isaiah 53:10**, Isaiah says that after Messiah's soul would be made an offering for sin, He would "*prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*"

How could the Messiah *die*, yet *prolong* His days, and continue to carry out the LORD's will prosperously? Simple. He wouldn't stay dead: He would rise again! He would make the "*pleasure of the LORD*" to prosper by being the eternal, ever-living High Priest of God's people.

The suffering Servant of **Isaiah 53** can be none other than Jesus of Nazareth. Any true child of God understands this. Yet, the people to whom Paul wrote his letter to the **Hebrews** needed to be reminded of this truth. Some of them were not true Christians, even though they professed to be. Others were truly saved, but were spiritually weak and weary. To the false Christians, and to truly-saved-but-weary Christians alike, Paul is pointing out some profound truths about who Jesus is. He is showing them that Christ is superior to everything and everyone that they, as Jews, had been taught to revere.

Thus far in his letter, Paul has pointed out that Jesus is superior to the **prophets**; that He is superior to the **angels**; that He is superior to **Moses**; and that He is superior to **Aaron**, and to the **Aaronic priesthood**. In the passage that we will be looking at this morning, Paul is continuing to expand on the fact that Christ is our great High Priest, and that He is thus superior to Aaron, and to the priesthood. The title of this message is *Eternal Salvation through an Eternal Priest*.

Read Hebrews 5:5-10.

I. An eternal salvation demands an eternal priest (vv. 5-10).

In our passage, Paul is continuing to show his readers that Jesus Christ is our great High Priest. Now, to the Jewish mind, this poses a problem. How could Jesus be a high priest, when He was not of the priestly line? Only the descendants of Levi, and of Aaron, were permitted to be priests. Jesus, on the other hand, was of the tribe of Judah. How, then, could

He be our High Priest? Paul will soon be answering this question head-on. In the meantime, he has some more to say about Jesus' qualifications as our High Priest.

First of all, Jesus is qualified to be High Priest because **He was called of God to the position of High Priest. (Read verses 5-6 again.)**

Paul makes it very clear that Christ did *not* glorify Himself to be made a High Priest; rather, He was *called of God* to this position. Yet, how could Jesus be called of God to be High Priest, when He was not a descendant of Aaron? Only descendants of Aaron could be priests!

To answer this question, Paul appeals to the highest possible authority: he quotes God the Father Himself! **(Read verse 6 again.)** In this verse, Paul is quoting an Old Testament passage. Let's look at the Old Testament reference that Paul is quoting.

Read Psalm 2:1-8.

Remember when Paul quoted from this passage back in **Hebrews 1**? Well, he is now quoting it again. He's reminding us that God the Father has openly "**declared**" Christ to be His Son--and, thus, the King. He is also reminding us of *when* the Father made this declaration. The words "***This day have I begotten thee***" do not mean that Christ was created at some point in time, or that He had a beginning. Rather, it means that there was a *day* when God's Son was openly *declared and proven* to be the Son of God with power.

There were several occasions during Christ's earthly ministry when the Father audibly spoke from heaven to affirm that Jesus is His only beloved Son. However, it was by the *resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead* that Christ was declared to be the Son of God "**with power**"!

Read Romans 1:1-4.

In this Scripture, Paul says that the Messiah was "**declared to be the Son of God**"--just as David said in **Psalm 2**. This doesn't mean that Jesus "became" the Son of God at some point in time. He had always been the Son of God! This simply means that He was *openly declared* to be the Son of God. How was this declaration made? By the resurrection! The resurrection was the "proof of the pudding" that Jesus is the Son of God!

That's pretty powerful evidence, wouldn't you say? **You can't get around the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!** The evidence is irrefutable, and infallible. **William Ramsay**, a famous English historian and archaeologist of the late 19th century, is an example of a man who discovered the irrefutable evidence of Christ's resurrection. In his schooling, he had been taught the Higher Criticism of the German Tübingen school; and as such, he rejected that the Bible is God's Word. He believed that most of the books of the New Testament were written by fraudsters in the mid-second century; and he especially sneered at the epistles of Paul, and the books of **Luke** and **Acts**. In fact, he set out on a mission to disprove the authenticity of the New Testament. He personally went to Greece and Turkey, and investigated the lands in which Paul and Luke travelled. What he found shocked him to the core; and, in turn, *he* shocked the academic world with his conclusions, which were completely the reverse of everything that he had said before. Having come from a family of lawyers, he was honest enough to investigate things methodically, and objectively; and what

he found was that everything that Luke recorded was dead-on accurate. He concluded that “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historic sense... In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.”¹ Ramsay investigated the question “Who moved the stone?”; and he concluded that Christ’s resurrection is one of the most verifiable events of history!

Paul has shown that Jesus Christ is the King, because He is the Son of God. His resurrection from the dead proves who He is. However, how can He be King *and* High Priest? In Old Testament Israel, the **offices of King and Priest were not allowed to be combined**. The king was not to intrude into the high priest’s office, and the high priest was not to make himself king. How, then, can Paul prove that Jesus is able to be both King *and* High Priest? It’s simple: he is going to show us that “it is written” in the Scriptures! (**Read Hebrews 5:6 again.**)

Here in **verse 6**, Paul is quoting from the **Psalms**. Let’s look at the psalm that he is quoting.

Read Psalm 110:1-4.

In this psalm, Jehovah (“the LORD”) is speaking to Adonai (“my Lord”). God is speaking to God! And what is He saying? Jehovah (who is God) is granting the Lord (who is also God) the authority to sit on the throne of His kingdom. Clearly, this is God the Father speaking to God the Son, and granting Him authority to be both King *and* Messiah.

Paul has already shown us how the Father *openly declared* Jesus to be His Son (and the King), by His resurrection from the dead. However, here in **Psalm 110**, we find that Jehovah has *also* declared His Son to be “***a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.***” Jesus is both **King and Priest!**

This portrait of the Messiah as both King *and* Priest can be found throughout the Old Testament. **Zechariah 6:13** says that the Messiah shall “***rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne.***” Clearly, the King and High Priest are the same Person! Yet, many Jews could not wrap their heads around this truth. In fact, in order to solve this mystery, some of them concluded that there must be *two* “Messiahs”—a kingly “Messiah” (the Son of David), and a priestly “Messiah” (a son of Aaron)! Now, in reality, the only Messiah that most Jewish people were interested in was the “Kingly Messiah”—the One who would defeat their enemies, and set up the Kingdom, and bring peace and prosperity to Israel. Nonetheless, they were looking for two Messiahs. To this day, many unbelieving Jews, in their refusal to believe that Jesus is their Messiah, still hold to a “two-fold Messiah” idea.

Can you see what Paul was up against? Evidently, at least some of Paul’s Jewish readers were confused, and secretly sceptical, as to how Jesus could be both King and High Priest. To those who doubted, these four short verses in **Psalm 110** should have removed all questions! According to these verses, Israel’s King and High Priest are the same Person! The fact that Jesus was not from the priestly tribe of Levi is no problem at all, because the Messiah wasn’t *supposed* to be a priest after the order of Aaron. According to **Psalm 110**, the Messiah is a priest after His *own* order—the order of Melchisedec. **As we shall see, Christ is the only**

¹ Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (United States: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972), pp. 72-73.

One who belongs to this order! He is the only one who *could* belong to this order: and here's why.

Read Genesis 14:1-2, 13-24.

Who is this mysterious “Melchisedec”? Who is this *“priest of the most high God,”* who suddenly appeared to Abraham from out of nowhere? It was Christ, the Son of God! Abraham recognised Him as God, and gave Him his tithe as a token of his worship. This is what we call a “Theophany”—an appearance of God Himself in human form. Particularly, this is the *second* Member of the Trinity--Christ, the Son of God. This *was not* a mortal, sinful man who appeared to Abram. This was not some local priest of the true God, who happened to be in the area. (As far as we know from Scripture, Abraham and his family and servants were the *only* believers in the true God living in Canaan!) This “Melchisedec” was not merely a man who was a type of Christ; He was Christ Himself! This man who appeared to Abram was the Son of God, in bodily form! *Christ* is *“the priest of the most high God”*; and He was *already* High Priest centuries before He came to earth to be born as a Man!

Jesus Christ is the one and only High Priest of God's people. Though He was not a descendant of the priestly line of Aaron, He performed the duties of the High Priest perfectly and *finally*. This is something that none of the Aaronic priests could ever do, because they were all sinners. Though Jesus is not a descendant of Aaron, He is qualified to be the Priest of the most high God because He belongs to a different priestly order altogether--the order of Melchisedec. The order of Melchisedec is an order to which *only* Christ belongs; and it is an *eternal* order. Remember what we read in **Psalm 110:4**? We read that the Lord is *“a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”*

Only the Son of God could belong the “priesthood of Melchisedec,” because He is the only One who can actually take away our sins. The “order of Melchisedec” is the only one of its kind, because it is occupied by the only begotten Son of God! By the way, the name “Melchisedec” means “My king is righteous.” What a fitting name for the King who imparts imputed righteousness to those who believe on Him!

This isn't something that Paul was “making up,” folks. It was written down in **Psalm 110**, for all to see! One thousand years before Christ came to earth, the LORD announced that He has called His Son to be a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec! Jesus Christ was, truly, *“called of God”* to His position of High Priest. No man called Him: God called Him.

Now, how else is Jesus qualified to be our High Priest? He is qualified because **through His sufferings, He became the Captain of our Salvation.** (Read verses 7-10 again.)

Last week, as we read the last few verses of **Hebrews 4**, we saw that Christ is qualified to be our High Priest because He is able to be touched with the *“feeling of our infirmities.”* Simply put, He knows what it feels like to face temptation. At no time in Christ's ministry did He feel those human frailties more intensely than in the hours before His crucifixion. I believe that is what Paul is referring to here in **verse 7.** (Read again.)

Read Matthew 26:36-42.

The fact that Jesus is God does not change the fact that He is also fully Man. He knew what was coming; and His soul was in agony. We can't even begin to imagine the intense suffering that our Saviour went through. Jesus wasn't exaggerating when He said that His soul was "*exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.*" Luke tells us in his Gospel that Christ was in such turmoil, that His sweat was like "*great drops of blood.*" It is a scientifically known (though extremely rare) condition that when one is going through extreme mental and emotional trauma, blood capillaries can burst, get into the sweat glands, and produce a mixture of blood and sweat! Yet, it wasn't the horrific *physical* pain of crucifixion that Christ was asking the Father to "pass from" Him; rather, it was the agony of being *separated from His Father* during those hours when the sins of the world would be placed upon His shoulders.

It is no wonder that Christ, as a Man, asked for this cup of suffering to pass from Him! Yet, we must not think for one minute that Jesus had any *selfish or sinful* motive in asking for this thing. He was *not* resisting His Father's will in any way. Remember, Jesus ended His prayer with the words, "*Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*" Christ was totally submissive to the will of His Father; and *because* He was totally submissive to His Father's will, the Father heard His prayer, and answered it. That is why Paul says that Jesus "*was heard in that he feared.*" The word "*feared*" doesn't mean that Jesus was *afraid* of going to the cross; it means "fear" as in "godly fear," or "humble submission."

Folks, Christ's experiences as a Man were not one bit "easier" than ours are. Though Jesus is God, not once did He use His divine power to make life "easier" for Himself. He willingly fasted for forty days, as his Father had commanded Him to do. He refused to by-pass the suffering of the cross, and to come immediately into His possession of the kingdoms of this world, by simply bowing down to Satan. He refused to call down the legions of angels to rescue Him from the soldiers in Gethsemane, or from the murderous mob in Jerusalem, or from the agony of the cross. At every turn, He submitted to His Father's will.

You see, Jesus knows what it is like to experience what *we* wrongly call an "unanswered prayer." Jesus prayed that His cup would pass from Him; and what happened? It *did not* pass from Him. Yet, because He submissively prayed that His *Father's* will be done, His prayer was answered. He prayed that *His Father's* will be done—and it *was* done!

Christian, when *you* pray for something, do you pray with a heart of full surrender to God's will, no matter what God's answer may be? If this be the way that you pray, then God *will* hear you, and your prayer *will* be answered—regardless of whether God answers "yes" or "no" to your request. God will be pleased by your prayer, because you are asking it according to His will. **First John 5:14** says, "*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*"

Now, let's get back to our Saviour. What is the result of all the suffering that He endured? Well, as we see in **verse 8**, He "*learned obedience*" by the things that He suffered. Does this mean that Jesus was *disobedient*, and that He had to learn how to *be* obedient through suffering? Not on your life! That is how *we* "learn" obedience"! Because we are sinners who are inclined to go our own way, we must often "learn" obedience by suffering the unpleasant consequences of our sin.

However, this is *not* the way that Jesus “learned obedience.” Jesus “learned obedience” in that He became *acquainted* with the *human experience* of obedience. As *God*, He had always submitted to His Father in eternity past; but now, *as a Man*, He had to “learn” the test of obedience. Because He obeyed the Father perfectly in all things (all the way to the death of the cross), He was “***made perfect.***” This means that He was made “complete” (or, “fully equipped”) to be the “***author of eternal salvation.***”

Because our *Eternal* High Priest was “***obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,***” He was able to be the Author of an *eternal* salvation. It is not a half-baked salvation. It is not a “maybe” salvation, depending on whether you do “your part, too.” No, it is a perfect, eternal salvation, which was procured through a perfect, eternal High Priest.

Now, to whom is this salvation available? Let’s read **verse 9** again. (**Read verse 9.**) Paul says that this “***eternal salvation***” is available to “***those that obey him.***” This *does not* mean that salvation is through good works. (If this were so, we would be “co-author” of our own salvation!) Obedience is not *the means* of your salvation; rather, it is the *evidence* that your life has been changed through the saving power of Jesus Christ. Those who are saved now have both the desire and the ability to obey God, because Christ has given them a new nature.

Paul is sending a clear message to those who were thinking of turning away from Christ. The message to the unsaved is that they had better examine whether they truly belonged to God. He was also sending a message to true Christians who, though they hadn’t turned away from Christ, may have been “hiding their light under a bushel,” for fear of persecution. To those Christians who might have been weak and weary, Paul now gives an admonition. It is this:

II. **Being an heir of salvation demands responsibility (vv. 11-14).**

(**Read verses 11-14.**) At this point, Paul is hesitating, because he fears that his readers were too spiritually immature to be able to “digest” what he was about to say about this “Melchisedec priesthood” teaching. The problem was not that these believers had only recently been saved, and that they hadn’t had enough time to grow in the Word of God. Many of them had been saved so long, that they should have been in a position to teach *others* the Word of God. Yet, they weren’t. They were still in need of being “spoon fed” the Word.

Brethren, the greatest tragedy of our times is not the brazen wickedness and godlessness of the world. (The world is the world. It has *always* been opposed to Christ!) The true tragedy of our age (at least, in our Western world) is that many churches are filled with baby Christians! Many churches are filled with people who have been saved for years, but who still don’t have much spiritual discernment. They are still “babes,” because they are settled down into a place of fleshly ease and comfort. They refuse to delve deeply into the Word of God; consequently, they don’t know how to live. They are content for a pastor to “spoon feed” them God’s Word for 45 minutes per week; and even then, they are ready to “spit out” anything they don’t like to hear. They are governed by their feelings, instead of by the Word of God.

Folks, we need to grow up! It’s time to move past the “ABC’s” of the faith. It’s time to move past the milk, and to move on to the meat. Christ is coming back, and the days are getting darker. While many Christians allow the Bible to gather dust on their nightstands, evil forces are preparing to take our Bibles out of our hands, just as they did in the Dark Ages. How will

we be able to hide it in our hearts when *that* day comes? While we waste our time on worthless frivolities, lost souls are slipping closer to the mouth of hell. **It's time to grow up!**

By the way, spiritual maturity—the “*strong meat*” that Paul talks about—doesn't necessarily come only after one has been saved for a great number of years. **It depends on your level of submission to God.** A perfect example of this can be found in an old Baptist preacher named **Michael Sattler**. **Michael Sattler** was born near Freiburg, Germany, in 1490. As a young man, he entered a monastery, where he acquired some learning of the classical languages. He was moderately educated; yet, he didn't know the Bible. However, while he was in the monastery, he did the unthinkable: he began to study the epistles of Paul! Not surprisingly, he ended up receiving Christ as his Saviour, and leaving the Roman Catholic Church.

Sattler left the monastery in 1525; and shortly thereafter, another not-so-surprising thing happened. Through his study of the Bible, he became Baptist by conviction (what was called an “Anabaptist” in those days), and received scriptural baptism. Not only that, but he soon got married. He then began to preach the Gospel fearlessly. He travelled from city to city, and took the Gospel to people's doors. (As you can see, door-knocking was *not* a recent invention!) In city after city, Sattler was expelled by the Catholic authorities, and was constantly running for his life. The Baptists met for church in forests, caves, or wherever else they could avoid arrest. In such places, Sattler preached for about two years. Finally, though, in early spring of 1527—scarcely two years after his salvation—he was caught and arrested.

At first, the magistrates were in favour of drowning him immediately; but because they wanted there to be some semblance of justice, they brought him to trial. However, this back-fired on them. In a quiet, yet fearless manner, Sattler slaughtered his learned opponents with Scripture. The authorities were now beside themselves with fury; and the magistrates sentenced him to death. However, they weren't content to kill him merely by drowning, as they did with so many other Anabaptists. In the marketplace, they cut out a piece of his tongue; and two times, they tore pieces of flesh from his body with red-hot tongs. They then forged him to a cart, and carried him to the execution site, while they applied the red-hot tongs to his flesh five more times.

He was tied to a ladder with ropes, and was pushed into the fire; and while he was burning, he admonished the people, the mayor, and the judges to repent and be converted. He prayed, “Almighty, eternal God, Thou art the Way and the Truth. Because I have not been shown to be in error, I will, with thy help, to this day testify to the truth, and seal it with my blood.” As soon as his ropes were burned, he lifted the two forefingers of his hands as a sign to the other believers who were about to be burned that a martyr's death was bearable.

Eight days later, his wife, who also refused to recant, was put to death by drowning. Their lives were taken; but their testimony had a huge impact in central Europe. Many more people were saved because of Sattler. All this was accomplished through a man who had been saved, and had been studying the Bible, for scarcely more than *two years!*

Brethren, it's time to grow up! We have an eternal High Priest, who has procured an eternal salvation with His own blood. Is it not the least we can do to serve Him with our whole heart? Is it not the least we can do to love and read His Word, and to share it with others?

Conclusion: Perhaps there might be someone here who has never experienced the new birth that Michael Sattler experienced. Perhaps you cannot fathom giving up your life for the sake of God's Word, because God's Word has never changed your life. Maybe you claim to be a Christian, yet all this talk about Jesus' being our High Priest is strange and confusing to you. Yet, you sense that you need whatever it is that the High Priest, Jesus Christ, has done for you. If so, please do not hesitate to ask! We would love to show you from God's Word how you can be saved. Perhaps you are saved, but there is something that you need to get right with the Lord. If so, why not do it now, during this invitation time?