

Hebrews 4:14-5:14 (NRSV)

Jesus Our Great High Priest

4:14 Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

5:1 Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; ³ and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴ And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, *“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”*; ⁶ as he says also in another place, *“You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.”* ⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹ and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰ having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

¹¹ About this we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

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10 Questions for Small Groups

1. Which themes about Jesus' supremacy has the author already introduced and explored? (Brief recap of chaps 1-4)
2. Which theme now takes over in this passage and why does the author spend so much time developing it?
3. What "confession" (v. 14) is the author urging them to hold on to at all costs?
4. What are some essential criteria needed to qualify as a high priest (4:14-5:4)?
5. How does the author show that Jesus met all these criteria from the OT scriptures and his own life and ministry (5:5-10).
6. The author charges them with becoming "dull" in their understanding and not moving beyond the "basics" (5:11-14). He also likens them to babies who need a diet of milk not solid food (ouch!). What does he mean by this tough-talk?
7. How does his challenge for believers to mature in their thinking still apply to us today?
8. What does he give as a mark of Christian maturity here?
9. What do we learn about God's character from *this* passage?
10. What message of comfort does Christ as our great high priest offer us?