

Go Deeper **Hebrews 5:11-14**

Introduction

In Hebrews 5 the author contrasts the ministries of the Jewish High Priest and the ministries of Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest. Both are human; selected from among men (v.1a; 4). Both are appointed to represent people before God (v.1b). Both participated in the offering of prayers and sacrifices (1c); both were supposed to ideally demonstrate compassion (v.2a); both experienced the limitations or weakness brought on by being human (vv.2b-3).

But only the Lord Jesus Christ is called God's Son (v.5).

Only Jesus was given an everlasting priesthood (v.6a).

Only Jesus was made a priest after the order of Melchizedek (vv.6b;9-10).

Only Jesus cried out to God with tears to the one who could deliver him out of death (vv.7-8).

Not from death—but out of death—that is bring Jesus back to life. No other High Priest died and came back to life and could serve as High Priest in Heaven now! Since Jesus has a greater ordination (v.1; 4-6); greater sympathy (vv.2-3; 7-8); and offers a greater sacrifice (v.3; 9-14); the author desperately wants to launch into a full rich in-depth Bible Study of Jesus as our High Priest in Heaven. There's just one problem:

The Hebrew Christians were slow learners (v.11). They should have been teachers but need to be taught (v.12a). Baby believers require baby food (vv.12b-13). Mature believers can easily digest solid food (v.14). The writer of Hebrews (possibly Paul?) has brought to the reader's attention the catastrophe of unbelief (chapter 3:7-19); and the consequences of unbelief (chapter 4:1-10) and the cure for unbelief (chapter 4:11-16). The cure for unbelief is a full comprehension of the person and work of Jesus Christ. But now comes this warning!

The Dangers Of Not Listening (v.11)

Hebrews 5:11 (NKJV)¹¹ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

The KJV reads; "Of whom we have many things to say, and 'hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing'. Of whom is a reference to v.10; 'called by God as High Priest' (Jesus) 'according to the order of Melchizedek'.

The expression 'hard to be uttered' translated 'hard to explain' translates one Greek word; *dysrmeneutos* (*only here in the Greek NT*). The prefix 'dys' means difficult (we have words like dysfunctional!). The rest of the word is related to the verb *hermeneuo*—'explain' or interpret (*cf hermeneutics*).

What is hard to explain? And why is it hard to explain?

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The Hebrew Christians were having a hard time understanding the nature of Jesus and the subject of the atonement. Atonement is a thing of death but the priesthood life. Atonement is once for all finished; the priesthood continues. Atonement was accomplished on earth; the priesthood carries on in heaven. Atonement is for the sinner; and the priesthood for the saint.

Paul (or whoever wrote this epistle) understood that Melchisekek is a picture of the ministry of Jesus. Melchisedek was without father or mother in the priestly sense—that means his priesthood was different from Aaron’s which depended on descent and genealogy and lasted for a definite period. Jesus Christ is our Eternal Priest. His priesthood begins and ends with Himself.

The writer desperately wants to get to chapters 7-10 and expound in great detail the meaning of Genesis chapter 14:18-20.

But he can’t. He senses the reader doesn’t get what he’s saying. The entire Old Testament seems to be one long commentary on God’s desire to be heard and the people’s refusal to listen!

The Lord God is not a bad teacher. The writer of Hebrews is not a bad teacher. But sometimes there are people who are bad teachers.

Sometimes the problem is a teacher unfamiliar or unprepared. Sometimes the problem is the subject matter. Some subjects are fraught with difficulty.

The writer of Hebrews could have blamed himself (herself?). But the writer goes with God’s testimony. “Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the Lord your God” (Deut. 8:20).

“If you will not listen to the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the command of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers” (1 Samuel 12:15).

“So I will choose their punishments and will bring on them what they dread because I called, but no one answered; I spoke, but they did not listen” (Isa. 66:4).

Pause for a moment. The Bible teaches that God speaks and expects to be heard. We all fail to listen and obey God and deserve to be punished. But some of us don’t really believe that.

Jesus said, “Hearing you will not hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed” (Matt. 13:14-15). The text reads literally “with their ears heavily they have heard”. Ears plugged—eyes covered.

Do you listen carefully when the Bible is being taught?

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The Lord gives us the ability to listen and obey Him by His Holy Spirit—when we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior. The Lord promises to bless us now—and later if we listen and obey!

In order to go deeper try listening!

Deuteronomy 11:13-15; “It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. He will give grass in your fields for your cattle and you will eat and be satisfied.”

Luke 11:28: “Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.”

Proverbs 1:33; “But he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil.”

The Dangers of Not Teaching (vv.12-13)

¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

The Bible does contain a warning; “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1).

James considered himself a teacher. But the Bible gives plenty of encouragement for those who are called by God to be teachers.

Pause for just a moment. Has God called you to teach the Bible? Some of you ought to be teachers.

The Greek reads literally *dis ton chronon—because of the time!* Some Bible teachers have suggested we read ‘for the time being’—but true meaning seems obvious—by this time (RSV; NASB; NIV) ‘after such a long time as Christians’ you ought to be teachers.

The first principles are a reference to the elementary principles or essential principles of historical Biblical Christianity the writer will reference in chapter 6:1-2). The first principles of the oracles of God are a reference to the ‘basics’. Ancient Greek writers use the expression to reference the elements or the rudiments of learning or letters. We use the term “ABC’S”. The writer is speaking of the basics, or the elementary details (NASB; the elements of the beginning).

Learning the foundations of Christianity is wonderful! But why would you refuse to go deeper?

In order to go deeper, try teaching.

Go Deeper

Hebrews 5:11-14

Are you a believer in Christ? Or are you an unbeliever?

Sow a thought reap an action.
Sow an action reap a habit.
Sow a habit reap a character.
Sow a character reap a destiny.

¹³For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

The word of righteousness is a reference to the Word of God. Unskilled means inexperienced.

The writer once again highlights the Believers relationship to the Word of God. Spiritual maturity does not simply consist in the knowledge of the Word of God—but in the absorption and application of that Word in the believer's life.

Milk is easily absorbed. Solid food requires health and maturity.

The alarms have already sounded by the author of Hebrews. The Hebrew Christians have drifted from the Word of God (2:1-3); doubted the Word (chapters 3-4); and now have become dull toward the Word. They failed to hear the Word—in faith—perhaps their was some listening—but not the kind of hearing that lead to obedience (see v.14). Instead of going forward (6:1) they were going backwards.

The writer calls them babes. Babies are cute. But adults who are infantilized are met with fear or suspicion or pity! Babies are designed to grow up! But how do you tell the spiritually immature who have not grasped the basic doctrines of Christ and grace about the glorious ministry of Jesus in heaven?

How do you convince people committed to turning back to mere ritual, priests and sacrifices about Jesus? In the last generation Jesus walked among them. Only a few brief years had gone by. Jesus died on the Cross. Jesus put away sin. Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus sat on the right hand of Majesty. But now these people needed milk. The apostles were with them; speaking to them! These apostles were filled with wisdom and power and energy and faith.

They weren't lazy! The disciples of Jesus were strong men and women ready to sacrifice themselves, experience hatred, punishment, persecution, imprisonment. But these people were hard of hearing. Lazy—sluggish—dull.

How is it possible having heard about Jesus you return to a life of indifference, apathy, doubt or even unbelief?

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We want milk. Warm milk. Soothing milk. Comforting milk. Got milk?

A babe doesn't walk or talk or exercise or serve. A babe's job is to be cute—and rely on everyone else to take care of him or her. No one is bitter or resentful towards a baby—who requires constant attention—and care food and sleep. Decent people care for children.

The Dangers of Remaining Immature (v.14)

¹⁴But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Full grown isn't limited to height and weight.

The mature, those of full age are those who have their spiritual senses exercised—they are able to digest and assimilate solid food!

In the real world in which we live we have taste; and hearing; sight and smell. In the spiritual realm we are told; “If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” or “taste and see that the Lord is good”. “Hear and your soul shall live”. He that has ears to hear let him hear. “Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.” Having the eyes of your heart enlightened. The Holy Spirit says of Christ; “He shall be of quick scent in the fear of the Jehovah” (Isaiah 11:3)—quick scent—a living fragrance—it is as if Jesus wears a kind of Cologne we would call—“it smells like the fragrance of one who fears the Lord Jehovah”—not terror but a kind of reverence and awe.

People who cultivate their senses—seeing hearing tasting smelling—experience greater appreciation. But there is another sense—feeling—concerning King Josiah—the Lord said “He sent the gracious message “because your heart was tender”. We are told to be tender-hearted—again we are cautioned against wounding the conscience—or offending the weak conscience. We are not to be “past feeling” (insensitive)—but rather allow ourselves to be touched—able to touch (feel).

The writer uses the simple test of discern good and evil. At the most basic level—we must be able to recognize good and evil—embrace what is good and shun what is evil. We might think of this as choosing good—and refusing evil.

Haven't you discovered that life—is a labyrinth—full of dark places and constant turns?

Can you tell the difference between true voices and false voices? Are you able to tell the wisdom of God from the wisdom of men? Why in the world is the Bible full of warnings about false teachers and false doctrine and false gospels?

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The writer isn't simply warning people who have forgotten or abandoned the basic teachings of Christianity. He is not simply speaking to the person who cannot articulate the doctrines of grace, or righteousness by faith, or justification or sanctification. He is speaking of the person who has grown cold or indifferent or apathetic towards these things—by lack of use.

The mature exercise discernment concerning what is good and evil.
The immature fail to exercise spiritual discernment or spiritual discipline.

Babies eat baby food. Solid food are for the mature.

Where are you in your spiritual growth and maturity? Still bottle feeding?

Instead of going forward the Hebrew Christians were going backward! Instead of going deeper the Hebrew Christians remained in the shallow end of the pool marked discipleship.

How do we go deeper?

Listen.

Teach.

Grow up.

Growing in grace and the knowledge of the truth requires growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

The Believer need not remain a babe for long. We need milk for a little while—and strong healthy nourishment for the long run. Solid food brings maturity.

The babe in Christ must be told and soon about stronger things; repentance from sin, a genuine walk with Christ. Obedience to Christ. Discipleship in Christ. The recognition of gifts and the exercise of gifts. Life in Christ. What it means to carry others—instead of being carried by others. We press forward. We grow up.

Are you looking for a painless way to grow up? You may as well give up right now. There is no such thing as a painless way to grow! George MacDonald wrote; “All growth that is not towards God is growing in decay.”

Conclusion

Go deeper. In 1 Kings 9:61; “Let your heart be perfect”. 2 Chron.16:9; “Jehovah shows Himself strong to those who have a perfect heart. Perfect doesn't mean free from all sin—but whole well complete. Jesus has the perfect character; perfect knowledge; he is the perfect sacrifice; Jesus exercises perfect obedience; and Jesus gives the perfect gift—‘ I give them eternal life’ (John 10:28).

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Do you want to go deeper? Grow deeper. Grow up. Ephesians 4:15; “. . . but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

We must grow up in Christ—but we must go out from the world of selfishness and sin. Growth is the evidence of life.

Genesis 12:1; “Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your kindred And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you.”

Grow up. Go out—get up—

Genesis 13:3,4; “And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, before Bethel and Ai, (4) to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord.”

This is the place where Abram heard from God—built a place of worship—and called on the name of the Lord—Abram prayed!

Go deeper in your faith.

Go deeper in your holiness towards God.

Go deeper in your love for God and each other.

Go deeper in the knowledge of Jesus and in the will of God.

“Progress in the Christian life is exactly equal to the growing knowledge we gain of the Triune God in personal experience” (A.W. Tozer).

Paul wrote (Colossians 1:9); “for this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”.

C.S. Lewis; “Mere change is not growth. Growth is the synthesis of change and continuity, and where there is no continuity there is no growth.”