

# Jesus is Our High Priest

Hebrews 5



The writer to the Hebrews has established that Jesus is superior to the central figures of the Older Covenant. With the growing pressure from the Jews for all Jewish Christians to abandon Christ and return to Judaism, the writer to the Hebrews (Jews) now seeks to show how Christ is not only superior to the High Priest, but He is in fact *the* true High Priest.

Judaism's claim to be the true religious path to God was reinforced by their claims to have the backing of the patriarchs (Abraham, Moses, Joshua), the temple, the covenantal sacrifices, and the God ordained priesthood. Based on some of these things they were urging Jewish Christians to return to Judaism.

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The writer to the Hebrews pleads with his readers to cling to Christ and to never stop trusting Him (Heb. 4:14). In our comfortable western lifestyles, the appeal to “trust” Christ means something other than what this appeal meant. For the original readers to “trust Christ” meant that they had to withstand the temptations that came from persecution, economic hardship, social isolation, and suspicion from their countrymen and kinfolk, to abandon Christ.

1. How does the writer to the Hebrews (4:15) encourage his readers to hang on?

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What we can find really encouraging is that even though many of these Jewish Christians had been tempted to falter and lapse back into Judaism momentarily, God was still showing them mercy! (Hebrews 4:16) This should give us tremendous hope since God deeply understands our weaknesses, and still shows us His mercy and grace. This is amazing, as John Newton once wrote, that God is still prepared to forgive us despite our failings. It is also a clue as to how we should treat those around us who let *us* down.



## What a Priest Is

Hebrews 5 begins by defining what a priest is.

2. According to the definition given in Hebrews 5:1, what is a priest?

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3. Under the Older Covenant only certain men were eligible for the priesthood (Hebrews 5:4). What do the following references imply about the priesthood under the Newer Covenant? 1Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6

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Under the Older Covenant, priests had to be (i) Hebrew, (ii) from the tribe of Levi, and then (iii) from the clan of Aaron. From this small pool of priests, a High Priest was selected to make the annual Atonement sacrifice.



The writer to the Hebrews assumes that his readers understand what the Day of Atonement (referred to by Jews as “Yom Kippur”) refers to.

4. Note Leviticus 16:6-10. What symbolism (more correctly, “typology”) can you observe in this passage?

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It's this sacrificial ceremony which paints the backdrop for the first part of Hebrews 5. But unlike earthly High Priests, Christ did not put His name forward for consideration as selection as a High Priest. He was directly chosen by God (Hebrews 5:5).



5. What does this verse (Heb. 5:5) also mean –
- (a) God created Christ then one day promoted Him to be His Son
  - (b) Christ was eternally co-equal with God but when He was born in Bethlehem He became the Son of God
  - (c) Christ has always been the Son in an eternal relationship (“Today”) with the Father
  - (d) Christ was always the Son of God but when He was incarnated in Bethlehem He was *revealed* as the Son of God
  - (e) Both (c) and (d)

## Melchizedek

Christ is classified as a priest after the order of Melchizedek. He is first mentioned in Genesis 14. He is referred to in Psalm 110, then most frequently in Hebrews 5-7.

6. In what ways is Christ our High Priest?

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Thank God that we have direct access to the Father because of Christ's exclusive Priesthood (1Tim. 2:5). We will see over the next few studies how this Divine Priesthood has a dramatic impact on the Christian life.

*Amen.*