

## Prayer

Dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We call on You to empower us to do great acts of power within this world. Not so that we can become puffed up with pride at our achievements, but so that Your Kingdom may come in our midst, and the Gospel heard by people who need its liberty and power to save. Break new ground in evangelism, amongst us we pray! AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Waste

We offer prayers today concerning the difficult issue of nuclear waste. Nuclear energy has the potential to provide the world's energy requirements at the cost of extraordinarily toxic waste; the processing of which raises strong opinions amongst many. Seek the Lord's mind and will on this matter and pray. Listen to what the Lord says about this difficult issue.

## Meditation

The things of God are immeasurable and inestimable:

Your love is more precious to us than any gift we can receive;  
Your grace is more awesome than any experience we may have;  
Your faithfulness is more consistent than the seasons of the earth;  
Your promises are more assured than any due processes of law;  
Your support is more steadfast than the foundations of a tower;  
Your healing is more complete than the circle of the globe;  
Your salvation is more secure than the safest of homes;  
Your future is more certain than the science of an atomic clock;

And if we have problems, then it is us who must change.

## Bible Study - Hebrews 5:5-10

<sup>5</sup> Therefore Christ did not take glory for Himself when He became a High Priest, but the glory belonged to the One who said to Him, 'You are my Son, today I have become Your Father'; <sup>6</sup> as it says also in another place, 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.' <sup>7</sup> During the days of Jesus' earthly life, He offered up prayers and requests with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His fears. <sup>8</sup> Although He was a Son, He learned about obedience from what He suffered; <sup>9</sup> and once He was made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him, <sup>10</sup> having been designated by God to be a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

## Review

In these few verses, Hebrews begins to tell us something about the nature of Jesus as our High Priest. In the previous verses we were told about how a Jewish High Priest represented people to God, and God to people (5:1-4), but this passage begins a major discussion in Hebrews about the priesthood of Christ which starts here, then disappears for a couple of chapters, and then concludes in chapter 7. Hebrews tells us that Jesus is our one and only High Priest, who serves us in a better and more complete way than any previous priest in Judaism, and his work is on-going and all-sufficient for our salvation! In this passage, we are introduced to the idea, developed in chapter 7, that Jesus is divinely appointed by God, and he fully represents us to God and God to us. An illustration is made of the High Priest Melchizedek (5:6,10, and chapter 7), an Old Testament figure who appears in Genesis 14, and with whom we are largely unfamiliar; so we will have to make sure that we know something about who he is!

Hebrews tells us firstly that Jesus our High Priest is divinely appointed. It is most important to say 'Christ did not take glory for Himself' (5:5), because if He had done, His authority would have been more like that of a despot! No, Hebrews quotes Psalm 2:7 in which God gives authority to 'His Anointed', and declares Him to be His Son. This Psalm arose at a time when a king of Israel was thought of as the Lord's anointed, but after Jerusalem was destroyed in 586BC, there were no kings left of David's line and these words came to express a hope for God's anointed Messiah. Hebrews links this with the other famous Messianic quote from the Psalms (Psalm 110:4), another well used text in which God addresses His Messiah and appoints Him as a 'priest according to the order of Melchizedek'.

Although strange to us, the mention of Melchizedek was understood in the first century by Jews and Christians alike. He appears in Genesis 14, receiving gifts from Abraham after he had won a famous military victory to save his nephew Lot (and family). The important thing about Melchizedek was that he was unique, and appeared in Israelite History before there even was an Israel! He was therefore regarded as having a unique and special calling from God, and was therefore a forerunner of the Messiah and also of Christ. He was the perfect Old Testament example of a priest who was unique and specially appointed by God! The letter of Hebrews tells us this so that we may understand that God was capable of appointing whatever priests he wanted, quite apart from the traditional Jewish priests. He had the authority to appoint Jesus to be our sole High Priest!

The rest of this passage talks about Jesus' suffering whilst on earth, so that we might know that Jesus, whilst being our great High Priest, is also capable of understanding the darkest hours of our humanity. Verses 7 and 8 talk of the terrible time when Jesus prayed in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, fearing what was to come because of his natural human apprehension at what lay ahead. But Jesus reached a place where His fears were taken away; 'He learned obedience from what He suffered' (5:8), and he was therefore able to rise and face his final hours. Then, his being made 'perfect' (5:9) refers to his suffering and death on the Cross, which was the unique work done by Jesus in order to bring us salvation! So from Gethsemane to the Cross, Jesus walked a path which enabled Him to represent our humanity to God as our appointed High Priest!

This is a classic paragraph from Hebrews and one which is remembered by most people who read Hebrews. Amongst the many descriptions of Jesus in the New Testament, it graphically reminds us both of Jesus' humility, and also His power to save.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What does it mean for you to know that you have a 'High Priest' who represents you to God?
2. What does it mean for you to know that you have a 'High Priest' who represents God to you?
3. Do you find it easy to think of Jesus as both fully human and also fully divine?

## Discipleship

It is truly wonderful to be able to turn to Jesus and know that He has an understanding of our humanity and can represent this to the Father. When we feel at our weakest, Jesus knows the power of the tempter, for example. It is because of this that He is able to help us, but we do need to keep the channels of communication clear. Some of God's people find it hard to hear His voice because they are not used to it. Our privilege is to speak to our Lord and get to know how He speaks to us.

## Final Prayer

Father in heaven, often have we found that the world cannot give us peace, but make us feel that You are able to give peace. Let us know the truth of Your promise that the whole world will not be able to take away our peace. AMEN *(Soren Kirkegaard)*