



## CHRIST THE ETERNAL

### SALVATION. Hebrews 5:4-10

**Who is Jesus?** That seems like a simple question that any Christian ought to be able to easily answer. But when we start to try to describe just who Jesus is, it can get complicated fast. We all know the simple answer – Jesus is God.

Or I could say that Jesus is the pre-existent Christ present at creation, the eternal Word through whom God is reconciling all things to Godself. Like I said, it can get complicated.

Another way to try to understand Jesus is by comparing Him to something else. That's what's going on here. The passage we just read is one small portion of a much larger argument in the letter to the Hebrews, from an author trying to answer this central question of Jesus' identity.

In Old Testament times the high priest was ordained or appointed to represent the people in one area only – to assist the people in spiritual matters, those relating to God. He was a specialist in representing humanity to God. He was not a politician or a social worker – His goal was to bring people closer to God. He had to be a person in faithful service to God who could make atonement for the sins of the people; one who would offer gifts and sacrifices; someone who could deal gently, have compassion and treat all the people with kindness. This shows the priest must be able to empathize with those who were ignorant and going astray.

As part of the old covenant, God appointed Aaron, the brother of Moses and only members of his family to be priests. These were from the tribe of Levi. The high priest served as an intermediary between the people and God. The priest was a person set apart from the community to go to God to intercede for them.

Yet Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi but from the tribe of Judah, so His qualification differed from that of Aaron. His qualification came in being called by God the Father – the same One who appointed Aaron into the priesthood.

Now we heard read an interesting name – we are told that Jesus was a priest in the order of Melchizedek. (**MEL-KEE-ZUH-DEK**) If you don't know much about Melchizedek, you're not alone. This is one of those bits of the Bible I'm pretty sure no one understands completely.

He lived many centuries before Aaron and is described as “without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling **the Son of God**. In other words his ancestry is entirely unknown.

Now here is the story to help understand him better. He is first mentioned in the book of Genesis when Abraham gave him a tithe of the spoils of war. The tale is told of two kings and two cities. King Bera was king of the city of Sodom which was filled with idolatry and godlessness, King Melchizedek was the King of Salem (now known as Jerusalem) and he was the embodiment of true belief in God who is over all, the Creator and Sustainer of Heaven and Earth.

Melchizedek's presence within Scripture demonstrates the unity of the Bible as well as the significance of Jesus. In Genesis 14 he is introduced as a king and Scripture's first priest.

We read his name again in Psalms 110, about a 1000 years later when David gives a stunning prophecy of the Messiah as a priest akin to Melchizedek.

And more than 1000 years after that, the writer of Hebrews explains that Melchizedek foreshadows Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and His priestly ministry.

Yet, Melchizedek had no connection with Levi, the priesthood in Israel, nor Aaron, the founder of priests. So how was he a priest? **Because God said so.**

And that is exactly how Jesus is Priest. The words "in the order of Melchizedek don't describe a lineage of priests, they mean in the same manner – **because God said so.**

There are only two Biblical figures in this category – Melchizedek – the type and Christ – (the antitype) the fulfilment of the foreshadowed person. And the priesthood of Jesus is eternal. Now why has Jesus the authority to serve in the role of the high priest?

Because Jesus is more than the High Priest – He Himself is also God. So, in the middle of describing Jesus as a high priest, the author quotes from Psalm 2, the verse spoken from the heavens at Jesus' baptism. "You are My Son, today I have become Your Father."

Instead of just choosing someone to be a mediator, God has personally come to live among us in the **incarnation.**

We tend to throw that word around a lot when we are talking about Jesus. It's a great word. It's so...fleshy. Meaty, even, like the Spanish word for meat, *carne*. That's pretty much what it means. God in the flesh. Jesus is God with skin on.

Jesus completed His qualification course for becoming the eternal High Priest through the discipline of suffering. Jesus did what no Old Testament priest could ever do – He provided eternal salvation.

For any of us to have access to God there must be a mediator, a go-between, someone to speak on our behalf to Him. And Jesus is our mediator. As both God and human, He is the go-between, the mediator that we all need.

In His life on earth Jesus was not shielded from suffering. His sufferings were real and intense, enduring more than any of us will ever endure in our lifetime. Jesus was tested and became triumphant because in the testing, **He learned obedience.**

Throughout His life on earth we read of Jesus' making prayers and petitions – it was His life's habit – at every turning point, in His day to day living, He prayed. We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet He did not sin.”

Because of Jesus, God understands whatever it is that you're going through. Whether it is an ongoing addiction, stressful situation, physical or mental health issue, sickness, death – in bad and good times we need a God who understands, a God who has come and lived in our world, lived our experience.

God doesn't do incarnation halfway. For God to experience human life, for us to have a God who understands, that requires suffering. That requires a God who died, like we will do. Only One who has gone through everything that we could go through can be the source of eternal salvation. For Jesus to be our high priest and represent us, He had to go through our sufferings.

**If you had a treasure of infinite value – nothing lacking that is truly valuable and if you had the guarantee that you could go on enjoying its infinite resources forever and even with no end and no diminishment – would you want to grab it with both hands and never let go?**

Christ has become the source of eternal salvation because He is the infinitely valuable Son of God and because His care and advocacy is never-ending.

Do you have this eternal salvation? Not everyone does – it is only to those who obey Him. Are you obeying Christ? Or are you living in disobedience to His will?

If you are not walking in obedience to Jesus, then I call you to repent and to stop putting your hope in the promises of sin and to start putting it in the promises of God. He is the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, that is, to all who hope in His promises and live like it.

**That's who Jesus is. That's who God is. And that's good news.**

## **Opening story: The Three sieves.**

Janice came rushing into her grandma's house – Gran, Gran, there's something I'm dying to tell you.

Wait a moment, her grandma broke in with a wise smile. Whatever it is you want to tell me, have you shaken it through the three sieves?

Three sieves? Janice asked, puzzled.

Yes, my love. Three sieves. Let's see whether your story will go through the three sieves. The first sieve is the truth.

Have you thought about whether what you are going to tell me is true?

Well, hesitated Janice. I heard it from someone else, so I'm not absolutely sure.

Right, said Gran. That was an honest answer. So, let's try it through the second sieve. This is the sieve of goodness. Since what you are going to tell me is not necessarily true, then is it at least something good?

Janice lowered her eyes. Well no, she admitted, not really. In fact, quite the opposite.

Well, the wise grandma continued. Let's use the third sieve and see whether what you are going to tell me, even if neither true nor good, is at least necessary.

Well, not exactly necessary. Janie sank into a thoughtful silence.

So, Gran said, giving Janice an understanding hug. Since what you were going to tell me is neither true, nor good, nor necessary, I suggest that we bury it deep in the ground of forgetfulness, where it won't cause any heartache to anyone ever again.