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THE LOOKOUT

OCTOBER 2021

Unit: HEBREWS (Part 2)
Theme: HIGH PRIEST

Overview: Sooner or later in life we need someone to represent us. When purchasing a home, we might need a Realtor. When executing a will, we might need a lawyer. When making arrangements for a funeral, we might need a funeral director. The Bible calls the representative between God and people a priest. In this unit students will learn of the character, calling, office, covenant, and sacrifice of Jesus our high priest.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 10, 2021

LESSON AIM: **Follow God's plan by submitting to the One he chose as High Priest.**

UNIT: Hebrews (Part 2)

THEME: High Priest

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 5:1-10; 6:13-20

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Exodus 29:1-9; Psalm 110

DESIGNATED BY GOD TO BE HIGH PRIEST

BY MARK SCOTT

The Old Testament depicts at least three major streams that come together in the Messiah. The Messiah would be a kingly figure, a prophetic figure, and a priestly figure. Hebrews primarily zeroes in on the priestly figure (though the kingly emphasis will be evident in this lesson as well by virtue of some of the citations from the Old Testament).

The Chosen is a multi-season television drama about Jesus Christ and those chosen to follow him. But the New Testament doesn't just tell of people who are chosen to meet the Messiah. God himself chose Jesus to be our High Priest.

Called by God*Hebrews 5:1-6*

No one can simply decide they want to be a priest, let alone the high priest. God alone can do this. That was true from the time of Aaron (Moses' brother). Not even Jesus just showed up and expected to serve in that office. He needed to be designated by God—and he was.

After the warning about disbelief and not entering God's rest (Hebrews 4), the writer developed further the calling of Jesus as high priest. In the Old Testament, those who served God's people as high priest were chosen from the people, acted on behalf of the people, and offered sacrifices for the people. Three words describe this designation: *selected* (to take by the hand), *appointed* (made to stand and be recognized), and *called* (marked out or named). Calling the priests from the people made sense because the high priest could *deal gently* (to act in moderation) with the *ignorant* (those not knowing) and those *going astray* (deceived). But there was an enormous difference between the average high priest and Jesus. The high priest had to offer sacrifices for his own sins. Jesus had no such need in his calling as high priest.

Jesus did not *take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest* (that is, he did not exalt himself). He relied on the Father's calling. The writer places two very royal psalms side by side to make his point. Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 lend support to God's designation of Jesus as the high priest. Jesus is uniquely God's Son—in fact, he is similar to that strange kingly priest named Melchizedek, who is mentioned three times in our lesson text and later is identified as having no beginning of days or end of life (Hebrews 7:3).

Forged by Suffering*Hebrews 5:7-10*

Forged can mean "falsified," but in this heading it means "pressed" or "hammered out." Another thing designating Jesus as the high priest was how he allowed suffering to forge or refine him. Like other priests, Jesus bore the burdens of the people to God and spoke to the people about God. While in his incarnate state, Jesus *offered up prayers and petitions* to his Father. The default setting is to think that this refers to Gethsemane, where Jesus' sweat became as blood (Luke 22:44). But in light of the language reminiscent of Psalm 22, it most likely referred to his salvific experience on the cross. (After all, at least half of the seven famous statements from the cross are prayers.) Jesus' prayer was heard because of his reverent (godly) *submission*.

Even though he was God's Son, Jesus had to learn *obedience* in the kiln of suffering. Once the suffering was complete (Luke 23:46 and John 19:30), Jesus became the *source of eternal salvation for all who obey him*. The cross always precedes the crown. The recipients of this treatise would also endure suffering. They would be tempted to not mature and ultimately to cave in regarding the faith (Hebrews 5:11–6:12). Jesus' suffering would encourage them not to give up.

Confirmed by an Oath*Hebrews 6:13-20*

After a section about maturity and not falling away, the writer returned to his argument about Jesus being the high priest *in the order of Melchizedek*. It boils down to God keeping his word. God had made a promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:5-6; 17:1-8, 15-19). He swore to keep it based on his own character (i.e., he *swore by himself*). After all, *it is impossible for God to lie*. This oath idea is repeated five times in this section of Scripture. God's character was on the line with this promise.

But God's purpose was also on the line. God made Jesus' high priesthood so sure so that believers could *take hold of* (grasp) *the hope* that leads to eternal life. Hope is metaphorically described as *an anchor*. And hope entered the Holy of Holies through the person of Jesus—a theme that will be explained later in the letter. Called, forged, and confirmed—that's Jesus' high priestly designation. ■

APPLICATION

PLAYING HURT

BY DAVID FAUST

Cal Ripken Jr. played in every Baltimore Orioles game from May 30, 1982, to September 19, 1998—a record 2,632 consecutive Major League Baseball games. During that span of 17 seasons, Ripken kept playing short-stop or third base despite sprained ankles, a hyper-extended elbow, and a twisted knee caused by a pile of players during an on-field brawl. Before the 1996 All-Star Game, an American League teammate slipped on a platform used for a photo shoot and accidentally slammed his forearm into Ripken’s nose while trying to catch his balance. Ripken’s broken nose was reset in time for him to play seven innings, and he was back in the Orioles’ starting lineup after the All-Star break. In 1997 he played for six weeks with a herniated disc in his back. Doctors said the pain would be intense but playing wouldn’t cause permanent damage, so Ripken stayed in the lineup and the Orioles won their division that year.

Ripken showed up and did his job day after day, season after season. Fans nicknamed him “The Iron Man.” Baseball experts believe his consecutive games record will never be matched. One sportswriter observed, “His Hall-of-Fame career is a testament to the grueling demands of baseball greatness, the subtle rhythm and constant fire required to compete.”

Perseverance Through Pain

Successful athletes keep playing in spite of minor aches and many battle their way back to health after suffering major injuries. Likewise, serving the Lord requires perseverance through pain. The apostle Paul compared Christ followers to athletes in strict training, runners who refuse to quit till they finish the race, and boxers who take punches and keep swinging till the fight is over (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7). Paul knew what it felt like to be “hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

Bible verses like these challenge the immature part of my soul that rebels against discomfort. I want life to be easy, but it’s not. I would rather avoid painful situations, but I can’t. I want ministry to be fun, but often it’s not. I hope to make it through each day with minimum aggravation, but that’s not realistic.

Caring, Correcting, Comforting . . .

Bearing one another’s burdens often means leaning into stressful situations. If you’re a church leader, your job is a complex combination of caring, comforting, correcting, confronting, and challenging. If you try to heal the wounded, instruct the seeker, and motivate the complacent, you can’t dodge all conflict and criticism, and you won’t enjoy the luxury of sitting on the bench until game conditions are perfect and you feel 100 percent.

Reflecting back on his long career, Ripken said, “I always felt that I still had a contribution to make even when I was 90 percent, or 80 percent. I pushed myself, and sometimes I had some of my better games when I was under the weather.”

Christ our High Priest “learned obedience from what he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8).

The late Wayne Smith, longtime minister at Southland Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky, preached a sermon called “Playing Hurt.” He declared, “You either play hurt or you don’t play at all.”

Jesus played hurt, and because he did, victory and celebration are ahead for all who stay in the game.

Personal Challenge: Right now, what hurt is tempting you to give up? In your personal journal or on a piece of paper, write a prayer that does two things: (1) honestly expresses your pain and (2) asks the Lord for strength to persevere and “stay in the game.” **L**

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. In what tangible way did you act as part of Jesus' "holy priesthood" last week?
2. What trials or temptations did you face over the past week?

Ask two people to read aloud **Hebrews 5:1-10; 6:13-20** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to summarize the passages. Remind them to keep the summary simple and succinct.

3. What most stood out to you as you heard these passages read?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - How did someone become a high priest?
 - How are the purposes, role, and activities of the high priest described here?
 - How is Jesus as our high priest like and unlike other high priests?
 - How was Melchizedek a type (prefiguration) of Jesus Christ? (See Hebrews 7:1-3.)
 - What can we learn from the days of Jesus' life on earth?
 - How do these passages assure you that God will always keep his promises?
 - How do these passages assure you that God will fulfill his purposes?
 - In what ways is our hope in God like an anchor?
5. What do you learn about God from these passages?
6. What do you learn about people?
7. How can you learn to become more obedient to God?
8. People all around us need encouragement and hope. As you apply these passages in your circles of influence this week, how specifically will you offer encouragement and a hope that's firm and secure to others?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What encouragement do you need for the week ahead?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on Hebrews 7:11-28. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■