

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Hebrews 4:14-5:10

New International Version

International Bible Lessons
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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, October 16, 2016**, is from **Hebrews 4:14-5:10** [Including **Hebrews 5:11-14** below]. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the **International Bible Lesson Forum**.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

(Hebrews 4:14) Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

The Law of God and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament point to the need of the human race for a Savior from sin. The work of the high priests as described in the Old Testament was to be temporary until the Great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, came from heaven to earth. After His death as the final and ultimate sacrifice for our sins, Jesus rose from the dead and passed back into the heavens where He sits as our High Priest on the throne of God. Let us keep believing and reminding ourselves of these facts. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us many times to “hold firmly to the faith.”

(Hebrews 4:15) For 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.

Jesus Christ is able to understand and show us compassion because He experienced life on earth in the same terms as we do. We may be tested and tempted in a vast variety of ways, but these ways could be categorized into different types of temptations and tests. Jesus was tested and tempted in all of the categories that human beings have been and are tested in, but Jesus never failed a test and He never committed sins. Therefore, He became a

perfect sacrifice for our sins, and a perfect High Priest who understands us.

(Hebrews 4:16) Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Since Jesus understands us and our situations in life perfectly, and since He understands and feels compassion for us and our weaknesses, and since Jesus rules the world from a throne of grace and mercy as our High Priest, we can come boldly with reverence into His presence to ask for and find the help we need – especially the help we need to do right, to distinguish good from evil, to practice doing God's will in God's power (see Hebrews 5:14). When we confess our sins, Jesus will show us mercy and forgive us, and He will give us grace to do better in the future, to more successfully pass our tests, to overcome our temptations, and to bring glory to Him as our Lord.

(Hebrews 5:1) Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

The Letter to the Hebrews refers to the Jews who still had priests that offered sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. Every high priest is chosen from members of the human race to work in behalf of the human race, and they are

charged to do those things that relate to our maintaining a right relationship with God in spite of the fact that we sometimes sin: we sometimes fail our tests and yield to temptations. These priests offer the sacrifices God's people need, and God charged them to rightly offer our gifts to God: gifts of thanks and other offerings. After Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, priests no longer offer meaningful sacrifices for sins; however, they can be involved in offering gifts and thanksgiving to God. Jesus Christ is far greater than any merely human priest, and He sits as our Great High Priest in heaven.

(Hebrews 5:2) He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.

The writer emphasized that the Jewish high priest (a Levite), since he is a fellow human being, should deal gently with sinners. Some sinners do not know the Law of God as they should or they do not understand the full consequences to themselves and others when they are ignorant and disobey God or do what is unwise and sinful. The high priest should know that he too is susceptible to doing wrong, so he should show mercy and forgiveness and offer sacrifices to help sinners repent and restore their relationship with God.

(Hebrews 5:3) This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

Because the high priest is also a human being, he has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; furthermore, he too sometimes yields to temptations, fails tests, and commits sins. Therefore, he offers sacrifices for his own sins as well as for the sins of the people. Jesus, of course, did not need to offer a sacrifice for himself, because He never committed a sin. Because Jesus is fully human and fully divine, He does understand us as a priest would understand us.

(Hebrews 5:4) And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

No one can say of themselves, “I am going to be a priest or high priest,” and then take that office without being called by God to take that office. King Saul stepped out of God’s will and Samuel’s favor when he offered sacrifices that he was not called by God to offer even though he was a king over all Israel. He suffered God’s just judgment for his disobedience. Aaron, the brother of Moses, was called by God to be a high priest; therefore, Moses anointed him as a high priest according to the command of God. In times of spiritual decline, some high priests were too often appointed by political authorities or for political reasons instead of being called by God.

(Hebrews 5:5) In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But

God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.”

Jesus Christ did not choose to become our High Priest because He wanted the glory and honor of that position for selfish reasons. Jesus was appointed our High Priest by His Heavenly Father. His Father also appointed Jesus King and Lawgiver. God the Father appointed His only begotten Son, begotten within the Virgin Mary, to be our High Priest. Jesus did not just “take a high priest position” by or for himself. He became our High Priest to serve humanity; especially all who would receive Him as Lord and Savior. (See Hebrews 1:5 and Psalms 2:7 and Hebrews 7:17).

(Hebrews 5:6) And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

God the Father did not appoint Jesus a high priest in the priestly order of Levi. Jesus was born to be King in the tribe of Judah, not a priest in the tribe of Levi. God the Father appointed Jesus a high priest in the order of Melchizedek. Since Levi was a descendent of Abraham, and Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek, Melchizedek is greater than Levi and Levitical priests (See Hebrews 7 and Psalms 110:4). Jesus is a greater High Priest than any other high priest.

(Hebrews 5:7) During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with

fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Jesus is the Son of God and a high priest, actually the Great High Priest, in the order of Melchizedek. When He was on earth, fully human and in human flesh, Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father with loud cries and tears, just as we do in times of stress and suffering. He prayed to His Father, who could save Him from dying on the cross (see Matthew 26:36-46). Because Jesus submitted to the will of God, God heard His prayers and He died as our substitute to save us from our sins. Jesus' body died on the cross, but Jesus' Spirit did not die and He rose bodily from the grave on Resurrection Sunday.

(Hebrews 5:8) Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered

God made Jesus our perfect High Priest and Savior from sin through suffering. Jesus suffered more than just one time; He suffered throughout His ministry; however, His supreme suffering was when He died sacrificially on the cross for our sins. Even though Jesus is the Son of God, when on this earth His Father did not so protect Him that He never suffered. Instead, He suffered as we do and often far worse. Human beings learn obedience in both "good times" and "bad times;" as fully human, Jesus learned what it meant to obey God in both "good times" and "bad times;" but He never disobeyed God.

(Hebrews 5:9) and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

The perfect Son of God was made perfectly ready to be our perfect sacrifice and High Priest by suffering as we have suffered and by being tempted and tested as all human beings experience. Jesus became “the source of eternal salvation” by the perfect way He lived, obeyed, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven. He is the Savior of all who follow Him in obedient faith; which is more than just believing some historical or theological facts about Him. (See Hebrews 6:1-12). Even demons know these facts.

(Hebrews 5:10) and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Salvation is possible for all who believe in and obey Jesus Christ, for all who are justified and sanctified in His name. Since we do not perfectly obey God our Father or our Lord Jesus Christ, we can thank the Father and Jesus that God the Father designated His Son as our Great High Priest and that Jesus prays for us and will forgive us when we repent of our sins and return to faithfully following Him. We are not saved by our obedience but by the grace and mercy of our Savior. Jesus enables us to follow and obey Him in faith through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 5:11-5:14

(Hebrews 5:11) We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.

The writer wanted to say more about eternal salvation. He wanted to teach more about Jesus and describe in greater detail how Christians could follow Jesus more effectively on earth; however, he acknowledged that truths in these and more complex areas are hard to explain and only those who have persistently and prayerfully been obeying and following Jesus would be capable of understanding deeper truths about God the Father and Jesus. They had become dull of understanding through neglect and not living up to the meaning of faith in Jesus Christ and their earlier understanding of the gospel.

(Hebrews 5:12) In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

If Jesus' followers, or those who claimed to be Jesus' followers, had been obeying Him they would have been growing in their faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Instead, because of their disobedience, they had become "dull in understanding." Those who obey Jesus and follow His teachings ought to be able to teach others, by example if not also by words. Instead, the disobedient must be

taught the same basic truths repeatedly, until they began to obey Jesus and grow in faith and understanding or choose to live apart from God and grace in Christ.

Teachings of and about Jesus in the Bible are the words and teachings of God that contain spiritual milk and meat for the new believer and the mature Christian. The Bible teaches truths for every level of understanding, and the Bible's teachings will make people wise: "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple" (Psalms 19:7).

(Hebrews 5:13) Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

A spiritual baby will try to live on the basic truths about Jesus – about Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and Jesus' coming back to earth – but he will not be skilled in living the Christian life rightly according to the Bible, "the word of righteousness." He will usually remain self-centered, as most babies do, instead of Christ-centered. However, God intends for spiritual infants to grow into spiritual adults, which happens when believers choose to do the will of God, to do what is right, to do what Jesus has commanded in the Bible, to obey "the word of righteousness" (which is Jesus Christ in the flesh and the word of God written in the Bible).

(Hebrews 5:14) But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to

distinguish good from evil.

God expects the followers of Jesus Christ to distinguish between good and evil; and once discovered, God expects us to do what is good and *practice* doing what is good. True Christian faith should lead to exemplary Christian and ethical behavior and show how true Christian faith leads to a good way of life. A mature Christian life and way of living requires practice. God trains our faculties (such as our intellectual, emotional, and volitional faculties) through our resolve to obey and our prayerful efforts to obey God's word of righteousness with reliance on the indwelling Holy Spirit and His interpretation and application of the Bible in our daily circumstances, purposes, and pursuits.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. When you think about Jesus, how often do you think about Him as your High Priest? Give a reason for your answer.
2. Why is Jesus an understanding high priest who knows our needs?
3. How do these verses encourage us to pray to Jesus?
4. How does someone rise to the honorable position of a high priest?

5. Why do some people remain spiritual babies?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly
International Bible Lesson.

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