

**Chinese Martyrs Catholic Church  
Bible Sharing Program 2017-18  
Hebrews #5: Go on to Maturity;  
the Melchizedekian Priesthood**

*CSB – Ignatius Catholic Study Bible – Daniel  
CCSS – Cath Commentary on Sacred Scriptures on  
Hebrews, Mary Healy  
NJBC – New Jerome Biblical Commentary  
SN = Special Notes / NAB = New American Bible  
SK = Chinese Bible / CCC = Catholic Catechism*

<p><b>A</b></p>	<p><b><u>Overview of the Passage – Heb 5:11-7:28</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This section offers teachings and encouragement ahead of an in depth discussion of Christ’s priesthood: “let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity” (6:1); avoid “apostasy” (6:6), “realizing the full assurance of hope until the end” (6:11), as God has “interposed with an oath” (6:17), establishing Jesus as the “high priest for ever” (6:20).</li> <li>• The Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ is in every way superior to the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants established under Moses (7:1-10): the latter one is temporary (7:11-19) while the former is permanent (7:20-28).</li> </ul>	<p>5:11 – 7:28</p>
<p><b>B</b></p>	<p><b><u>Teachings and Encouragement</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “About this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing” – the author demands believers and elders to stop living on “milk” but start taking “solid food” to prepare them for more difficult teachings about Christ’s priesthood.</li> <li>• Therefore, now is the time to “leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity”; understanding “repentance from dead works”, “baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment”. Note that the Sacrament of the Eucharist does not belong to “elementary doctrines” since this teaching is part of Mystagogy according to the Catechism taught during the Middle Ages.</li> <li>• Christians have received five special grace: “have once been enlightened”; “have tasted the heavenly gift”, “become partakers of the Holy Spirit”; “have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come”. If one commits “apostasy”, it will be difficult for him/her to repent by his/her own account; this person is “cursed”. The author encourages believers: “we feel sure of better things that belong to salvation. For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work”. Therefore, one must show “the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end”. This contradicts the teaching of “once saved, always saved”.</li> <li>• God promises Abraham and even swears by himself; He blesses the descendants of Abraham; bringing them into his “glory” (2:10) and “rest” (4:10), into “the city of the living God” to be with “Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant” (12:22-24). This double assurance (promise and oath) affirms our hope, “as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain” where Jesus has “become a high priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek”.</li> </ul>	<p>Heb 5:11 – 6:20</p> <p>5:1-14, CSB CCSS 111-114</p> <p>6:1-3, CSB CCSS 116-117</p> <p>6:4-12, CSB CCSS 118-124</p> <p>6:13-20, CSB CCSS 124-128</p>

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<p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b><u>The Priestly Order of Melchizedek</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There only two brief passages in OT about Melchizedek, namely Gen 14:18-20 and Ps 110:4; however, Heb 7 reveals that this Levitical priest affirms the one who has appeared in scriptures a few hundreds years ago, that is, he prefigures Christ “the high priest for ever”.</li> <li>• Characteristics of Melchizedek: the first high priest in scriptures; his name is translated into “king of righteousness” and “king of Salem”, that is, “king of peace”. He possesses the two traits of the Messiah, righteousness and peace. He blesses Abraham with bread and wine after Abraham’s victorious return from battle. There is no mentioning of his priestly image in scriptures (Num 18:7, Ez 2:62), “he has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever”.</li> <li>• According to the law, the Israelites are required to offer a “tithe” to the Levitical priest. Melchizedek “has not their genealogy received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises”. This demonstrates his unique priesthood that is superior to Abraham.</li> </ul>	<p>Heb 7:1-10, CSB</p> <p>CCSS 130</p> <p>7:1-3, CSB CCSS 132-3 Ps 85:11, Is 9:5-6, Gen 14:18</p> <p>7:4-10, CSB CCSS 133-4, Num 18:21, Gen 48:14</p>
<p><b>D</b></p>	<p><b><u>The Priesthood of OT and Aaron is Only Temporary</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just as the Promised Land is not the true rest for the Israelites, the Levitical priesthood of Aaron is not what God has intended for the Israelites as the eternal high priest since its laws and liturgies were powerless to cleanse and perfect the worshipping People of God. This priesthood is only temporary which prefigures and heralds Christ the high priest forever.</li> <li>• This priesthood serves according to the laws, upholds the laws by providing a means to atonement when it is violated. Therefore, the change in priesthood (Aaron =&gt; Christ) signals the change in the laws (Moses / OT Law =&gt; Christ / NT Law).</li> <li>• Why the change in priesthood? Christ, the high priest forever, does not follow the Levitical sacrificial rites that involve animal blood; however, according to Ps 110, Christ is a “priest-king” from the tribe of Judah. He is “raised up” =&gt; resurrection; by His death and resurrection He becomes the high priest forever. A former commandment is “set aside because of its weakness and uselessness” and “a better hope is introduced, that is, eternal salvation of Christ. How should “a former commandment is set aside” be understood?</li> </ul>	<p>Heb 7:11-19, CSB</p> <p>CCSS 136</p> <p>7:11-12, CSB CCSS 136-7 Acts 15 SN2</p> <p>7:13-19 CCSS 138-140</p>
<p><b>E</b></p>	<p><b><u>Jesus is the High Priest Promised by God</u></b></p>	<p>Heb 7:20-28</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The priesthood of Jesus is “addressed with an oath” by God, therefore, his office is permanent. The Levitical priesthood is without an oath, therefore, it is temporary. Part of the purpose of the priesthood was to uphold the covenant, “this makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant”, whom upholds law as the “Mediator of a New Covenant”.</li> <li>• Jesus “holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever”; He always lives to make intercession for them”; His sacrifice is “once for all”; He is a “blameless, unstained” priest. Unlike the high priests established under the law who were appointed “in their weakness”, “the word of the oath ... appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever”.</li> </ul>	<p>7:20-22 Ps 110:4, CSB CCSS 143, Gen 43:8-9</p> <p>7:23-28, CSB CCSS 144-147</p>
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**SPECIAL NOTES**

1. Regarding the misconception of “once saved, always saved”, refer to Mk7:21, 24:10; Lk 8:13; 1Cor 6:9-10; 9:24-27; 10:1-12; Gal 5:4; 1Tm 1:19; Rev22:19; CCC837 (CCSS 129).
2. Patristic writers’ defence of Christian non-observance of ordinances in the Old Covenant Law:
  - 2 different categories of law per OT scriptures: those with universal and abiding application (usually identified with the Ten Commandments) and a set of precepts necessitated by the historical circumstances of God’s people.
  - The sacrificial and purity laws were imposed as a response to the sin of the golden calf. They were not part of God’s original arrangement with Israel.
  - Christian non-observance of Israel’s ritual code was anticipated in the Patriarchal period. Christianity is a return to this period.

(See Michael Barber, *The Yoke of Servitude: Christian Non-Observance of the Law’s Cultic Precepts in Patristic Sources*, in *Letter & Spirit*, vol 7, 2011, p.69.)

Also, Ez 20:25; Jer 7:22; destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and cessation of all ceremonial laws in 70 A.D.
3. “In this case, the thought of Hebrews is similar to that of Paul, who wrote that Jesus “has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances” (Eph 2:15). Both Paul and Hebrews are declaring that in Christ’s death and resurrection the true aim of the Torah – a lasting, unbreakable covenant relationship with the Lord – has been perfectly accomplished” (CCSS 139).

“[J]ust as the fruit is separated from the seed, although the fruit comes from the seed. So likewise the gospel is separated from the law, whilst it advances from the law – a different thing from it, but not an alien one; diverse, but not contrary” (St. Irenaeus, ANF 3:361).