

Obedience

Hebrews 5:5-10

This passage presents an early glimpse of an image central to the letter to the Hebrews: Jesus Christ as high priest who stands before God on behalf of humanity and offers up prayers and sacrifice for our salvation. These verses challenge us to think and to reflect on Christ's priestly role and his "obedience" and "submission;" his Christ's role as king. Psalm 2:7; and his role as expressed in the words "my Son," which was originally a reference to Israel's king.

Let us examine these "offices" of Christ are present in Hebrews 5:5-10. First let us see Christ as "My Son." The letter began by stating the identity of Jesus as Son of God (1:1-14), one who is the embodiment of God's Word (1:2) and who was sent into the world by God "for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation" (1:14). God declared Jesus as Son; Jesus the exalted Son of God, is human. The author refers to the earthly life of Jesus by speaking of "the days of his flesh." And that life is condensed into an intense moment of anguished prayer as "Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, *to His Father*, the one who was able to save him from death," referring not simply to his impending death on the cross but to the power of death that threatens all mortals. Jesus is "heard," by His Father, not in the sense that he escaped death in the enduring sense, but in the sense that ultimately because of his obedience, God raises Christ from the dead and exalts him to his right hand, thereby triumphing over death itself. Even though a privileged "Son" of God, Jesus' obedience in suffering led to new

life and make him a source of eternal salvation for those who trust in him. From death came abundant new life. Through obedience, Jesus became the source of salvation for all the world. **Donald Senior**

Second Christ is King: The references to Jesus as priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" link him to an Old Testament figure who was both priest and king (see 7:1). Thus by implication, Christ too is king. Since the early times Christians have reflected on Christ's saving work by noting that Jesus is "the anointed one," which connects him with those in the history of Israel who were anointed: prophets, priests, and especially kings. King means the monarch of a major unit...especially one who inherits the position and rules forever. Therefore when we receive him with faith Christ holds the preeminent position in our lives...the place of obedience, honor, peace, joy and hope.

Third, Christ is the great high priest who stands as mediator between the people and God. This passage clearly presents him as one with God (see v. 5) and at the same time one with humanity. Standing in this middle place, Jesus offers up prayers to God, reminding us that although God "was able to save him from death," those who have heard the Gospel stories know that Jesus was not prevented from dying. God could have saved him and God can save us from pain and suffering, but does not always chose to do so. We must consider Jesus' prayers in the larger context of not only his crucifixion, but also his resurrection. Because his prayers did not simply deliver him from sufferings, the portrayal of Jesus' cries and tears in prayer emphasizes Jesus' deep solidarity with humanity. His experience resembles that of many of us who pray and yet are not kept from pain and even death. But, though God did not save Jesus from experiencing real human death, this was not the end of the story. God then raised Jesus from death, "saving him from death"

in a more profound sense. In this way, God did answer Jesus' prayers, offering life not only to him, but to "all who obey him" (v. 9).

As "high priest" Jesus connects of our lives with God and bridges the chasm between the profane world of ache and ambiguity and the divine realm of glory and peace. This scripture gives us the reassurance that there *is* someone who can cross the divide in both directions. Jesus as this high priest is the messenger who brings the news of redemption from God to our longing, the mediator who bears the fruits of our living to God as our offering.

This scripture disturbs us. Our struggle is this language of obedience and submission has been used too often by those in positions of power to oppress marginalized groups of people, closely linking their submission to human power and submission to God. The interpretation of Jesus' pain and death as "reverent submission," can be better understood if we bear in mind three things. First, this made sense of what otherwise could be seen as a senseless death. To say that Jesus learned obedience through suffering is to say that the suffering of Jesus is not utterly meaningless. God worked through it for a greater purpose. Second, the language of "submission" need not be understood as groveling, but as the attitude of a priest, who bows reverently before God. Since the one who submits is himself also God, then this reveals something remarkable about God's own character: that God chooses humility rather than only exaltation. Finally, not only in his submission, but also in Jesus' torture and death, God's own self is involved. We remember that the one who went to the cross for humanity is God. Bearing this in mind helps us to see that the holy God is not absent from our sufferings, indeed does not direct our sufferings, but is present in the midst of sufferings—yet is not overcome by them! The promise of this passage is that because God in

Christ endured sufferings, the way to eternal salvation has been opened up to us. And as many of us have suffered greatly, we need to see the connection between his suffering and our own. For those of us whose spiritual lives consist largely of unmediated prayer in the solitude of our own yearning, meditation on this text leads us to an attitude of wonder and gratitude for Christ's work, even as we also continue to shudder at the horror of Christ's crucifixion, and all the crucifixions we continue to witness in our world today. **Martha L. Moore-Keish**

As high priest, Christ has performed his definitive and once-for-all work of salvation, whereby he enters into the heavenly Holy of Holies to atone for sin for the world.

Have you ever thought that if God had saved Jesus from death on the cross, there was no other who could have saved us from our sins.

Although Jesus was high priest, the Son, the king...he was obedient and gave his life to give us salvation and eternal life...if the high priest, the Son, the king was obedient...so should we be obedient...who knows, but that God will use our obedience as an example and blessings for the generations that follow in our path.

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