

Hebrews

Chapter Five

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Heb 5:1-4 For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; ²he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; ³and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. ⁴And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.

At the end of chapter four we read that God will see every flaw in people and they must give an account of their actions before Him. This chapter then begins with a “for” or “therefore” regarding that information. Since Christians will have to give an account before God they must have a high priest to intervene for them since no person can stand alone before God. The author also said that we have the greatest high priest of all because of all that He has done and that He is without sin. Now he relates some qualities of the office of high priest using the Aaronic priesthood of the LXX. In these verses he is discussing only those priests taken from men and not Jesus. These high priests were appointed by God to represent men before God in the offering of cereal and animal offerings.

“To deal gently with” is an attempt to translate the Greek word “metriopathein” that generally refers to taking the middle ground between apathy and anger in dealings with people. The high priest must deal with people according to God’s standards but he must do so in a loving manner. Dealing with the ignorant and misguided means that those who sin in error who can be forgiven (Num15:28). For those who sin deliberately and willfully there is no such provision: *Numbers 15:30 'But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people.* The priest should not react in anger at people who sin because of their ignorance or having been misled by false teaching. They must correct in love. Such a reaction would be similar to that expressed in *Jeremiah 10:24 Correct me, O Lord, but with justice; Not with Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing.* This manner of correction is also expressed by Paul: *Eph 4:1-3 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, ³being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

High priests who are only men are urged to treat people properly because they also have the same ignorance and wrong guiding in their interpretations of the Word of God and they also have weaknesses. This should be true of all teachers of the Word today also for we also are ignorant of

many ways of God, we are also guilty of misinterpretations of the Word, and we have weaknesses that can cause us to improperly teach. All teachers should remember *James 3:1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.*

These human high priests have to first offer sacrifices for their own sins. The Day of Atonement was when the high priest had to present a bull for his own sin offering (Lev 16:11). The high priest had to recognize that in matters of sin he had the same problem as did the people he represented before God. A person must be called by God to occupy that office and cannot just appoint himself that honor. The example of this appointment is given in:

Exodus 28:1-3 "Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me-- Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. ²"And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. ³"And you shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me.

There are instances where a person not of the lineage of Aaron were called by God to be priests such as Samuel (1 Sam 7:3-17) but there must be a divine call evidenced. There are also Biblical example of people who tried to assume such honors themselves with disastrous results such as Korah (Num 16), Saul (1 Sam 13:8) and Uzziah (2 Chron 26:16).

Heb 5:5-7 So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee"; ⁶just as He says also in another passage, "Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." ⁷In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.

Now the author of Hebrews addresses Jesus as the High Priest. Some Jewish writings state that there will be two messiahs with one coming from the line of Aaron and one from the line of David. The author has an original way of speaking of Jesus as the High Priest as no other NT author makes such a statement. In Greek, instead of writing "Christ" the words "the Christ" (ho Christos) appear. This is important for the word "Christ" means messiah and this author is saying that Jesus is **the** Christ and not one of two or more such people. Unlike Saul and others, Jesus did not seek to glorify Himself with the functions of this office. His appointment was by God. We must be careful with knowing who the "he's" and "him's" are in the writing so here is how to read the middle of verse 5: "but God said to Jesus". He then quotes from Psa 2:7 making the point that Jesus as the Son of God has rights in heaven unlike any earthly priest. He next quotes from Psa 110:4 when God refers to the Son as a priest like Melchizedek who was a priest and king. But note that this priesthood is not just for the life of the priest but is forever. Saying that

some priest is of the order of another priest implies a lineage but Melchizedek had no successor and neither does Jesus. Human priests offer sacrifices symbolically but Jesus offered Himself as a real sacrifice for atonement so that no other sacrifice is required.

In verse 7 the author reflects some of the similarities of Jesus with mankind. Saying “in the days of His flesh” means during the time that He lived on earth and referring to His flesh is probably referring to the weaknesses of His humanity. The prayers and supplications offered by Jesus were in the Garden of Gethsemane:

Mark 14:35-36 And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground, and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. ³⁶ And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

Because of His perfect obedience to the Father, His prayer was heard but, since He had to die for atonement, He did die. His prayer was certainly heard for He needed divine help to drink from this cup. We should all include, either explicitly or implicitly, the last part of the prayer of Jesus (*yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt*) for we do not know how to pray or what to ask. We do know that God’s perfect will is going to be accomplished and we should not even want to thwart that will.

Heb 5:8-10 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, ¹⁰ being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus is the Son of God and so it seems strange that He had to learn anything. But there is a difference between knowing something about an event and participating in the event. Innocence is the application of virtue. He had to suffer in the perfect plan that was made before the foundation of the world (the Creation Covenant) so that He would experience the obedience required of all who profess a love of Him:

John 14:15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

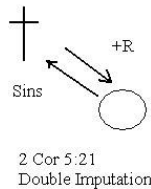
John 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."

John 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

2John 1:6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

In verse 9 the author states that Jesus was made perfect but that does not mean that He was imperfect. The statement means that He was made complete in that a rose is the completeness of a rose bud so we might say that the rose makes the bud perfect. Saying that Jesus is the source of

eternal salvation means that saving of people from the wrath of God was accomplished by Him on a scale that lasts forever and is complete. We learned of this completeness of salvation by Paul in the concept of double imputation:



The learning of obedience by passing through events is something that we also have to do as we walk in the world. Paul stated that he had to learn to be content in all things: *Phil 4:11 Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.* So we also learn contentment and obedience as we walk in the world and are disciplined by God (Heb 12: 5-8).

This “learning” of obedience by Jesus would also serve as an example to Christians then and now. Christians at the time of the writing of this letter could reduce their suffering and hardship by either denying or drawing less attention to their allegiance to Jesus. We should never be ashamed of the gospel: *Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* We can also be made more mature in our faith by accepting the suffering that comes from being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Finally in verse 10 the author completes his discussion of Jesus being designated the High Priest according to the example of Melchizedek. This title was given to the man who shared in our human life but was also God and received the title by appointment from God the Father. Melchizedek is first discussed in Gen 14:18 but a discussion of the meaning of the example of him is deferred until chapter 7.

Heb 5:11-14 Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Because the “him” is probably Melchizedek, some commentators will put verse 11 at the end of the above paragraph (verses 8-10). But I thought that it belongs in this paragraph since the author expands upon the reason the people are “dull of hearing”. The reason that the author cannot expand upon the High Priesthood of Jesus and its similarity to Melchizedek is because of the mental state of the people to whom he is writing. If someone is described as “dull of hearing” it

does not mean a physical problem of hearing but a mental problem of not being able to assimilate the information. We continue to see his concern for the spiritual state of his readers for he perceives that they might be slipping into a state of apostasy that would mean that they were really not saved people. Hearing and studying the Word of God should result in a person becoming more mature in His understanding of the things of God. Studying without application is futile. Studying the Word of God should result in a fundamental change in the spiritual state of the person and a change in his actions and thoughts in the world. Paul elaborated on this process: *Rom 12:1-2 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

A study of the Word of God should result in the person's mind being renewed and thus his being transformed into a person more like Christ. Peter also stated this similarly: *1Peter 3:15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;*

A person can spend a lot of time going to "church", attending Christian conferences, going to Bible studies and still not be spiritually different from the person who never does any of those things. Needing someone to teach them the elementary things renders the Greek that literally means the "ABC of the beginnings". Often I have been teaching chemistry to the same people for a semester and then receive a question from one of the students demonstrating that the person never grasped the beginning concepts. I have also seen the same situation from people to whom I have been teaching the Bible for years. Christianity is like a science in that first one has to grasp the fundamentals before they can be applied to other concepts. A simple example is faith. If a person does not understand that faith is a gift of God (the enabling power of God) rather than the same as trust and obey that is built entirely by the person then he cannot understand other concepts built upon the meaning of faith such as that people who genuinely have received salvation cannot lose it. Paul faced similar situations:

1Cor 3:1-3 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I ²gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

The analogy in the last verse is to the athlete whose performance continues to improve as he practices properly. It seems that there are either very few Christians in the USA today or that most of them are very immature because of all the false teaching that goes on in churches that people flock to attend. For example, the prosperity theology is very appealing to those who are immature in Christianity but it is easily seen to be a false teaching when people have their spiritual senses trained to discern good and evil. Peter warned of false teachers:

2Peter 2:1-3 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. ²And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; ³and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

We should always test teachings with the Word. Paul warned of false people and teachings:

*2Cor 11:4 For if one comes and preaches **another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or you receive a **different spirit** which you have not received, or a **different gospel** which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.*

*2Cor 11:13 For such men are **false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.***

*2Cor 11:26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, **dangers among false brethren;***

There have always been people leading people astray from God such as stated by Jeremiah:

Jer 23:13 "Moreover, among the prophets of Samaria I saw an offensive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray.

Jer 23:32 "Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares the Lord, "and related them, and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit," declares the Lord.

Jer 50:6 "My people have become lost sheep; Their shepherds have led them astray. They have made them turn aside on the mountains; They have gone along from mountain to hill And have forgotten their resting place.

Paul issued further warnings:

1Cor 3:1-4 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

Today we hear of people praising some particular preacher rather than praising Jesus and that is a danger sign. Even the Holy Spirit never sought praise for Himself but always passed on the glory to Jesus. Churches need great preachers but they should not be worshiped and should always give glory to Jesus. The author of Hebrews will continue to be concerned that some of these people who are so immature are perhaps not even Christians.