

## More About our High Priest

### Hebrews 5:1-10

This section of Hebrews continues to emphasize Jesus's high priestly ministry. Having introduced Jesus' greatness as High Priest, the author now briefly discusses the work and position of the high priests of Israel (5:1-4). Many implicit comparisons between the old covenant priests and the person and work of Christ are made in this section.

#### First: 1-2 – The Purpose of the High Priest. 1-2

*For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup> He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.*

Jesus is certainly a superior priest, but this superiority should not make us shy. In the previous verses we are encouraged to approach him with boldness because of his superiority. Christ's superiority is based partly on His ability to uniquely sympathize with us, having been tested as and more than we are we are. This makes his throne of mercy and grace.

Note that Jesus –

- a) Is chosen from among men

Christ became incarnate for this reason. His incarnation enables him to relate both to God and to man. He knows what it is to be God – Justice. He knows what it is to be a man – Mercy.

Romans 3:25b-26 – *This (25a - whom [Jesus] God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith) was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

The old covenant high priests offered sacrifices that satisfied God's justice and demonstrated His mercy. God accepted the offerings from these imperfect men because He knew Christ's own perfect sacrifice would cover their sins. Our OT siblings looked forward to the cross in faith, just as we look back to the cross in faith.

- b) Is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God

But Jesus, 5:8-9 - *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. <sup>9</sup> And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,*

Jesus does for us what no other priest could do. He was perfectly obedient.

The active keeping of God's commandments by Jesus was necessary so that he could be our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). But in addition to Jesus' active obedience, we also need His passive

obedience, His suffering the curse of God so that we could be cleansed of our sin (Rom. 3:21–26).

Passive obedience does not mean that Jesus was merely a passive recipient of suffering in His passion. Yes, He suffered because other men beat Him and crucified Him, but he was very active in all of it. He willingly gave Himself over to sinful men so that He could die in our place (Mark 15:16–20). He laid down His life; no one took it from Him unwillingly (John 10:18).

- Passive obedience – Dying for us
- Active obedience – Living for us

Jesus did more to save us than die.

He lived the life we *could not* live and died the death we *could not* die.  
He lived the life we *should* have lived and died the death we *should* have died.

His life and death are one reality. He lived for us, died for us and rose for us.

His death without his life is meaningless and his life without his death is powerless.

*Romans 5:10 - For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

We should speak as much of the saving death of Christ and the saving life of Christ

Think of that throne: Mercy forgives us because of his death. Grace enables us because of his life.

- c) Offers gifts and sacrifices for sins

The weaknesses of the OT priests made them understand and “deal gently with the ignorant and wayward...”. Those weaknesses qualified them as priests. But those weaknesses also disqualified them as the ultimate and final priest. They could not save themselves, much less anyone else, and were as dependent on the sacrifices they offered as the Hebrews were also.

- d) Deals gently with the ignorant and wayward out of his own weaknesses

Christ’s sinlessness does not make Him unable to deal gently with us (4:16). In fact, it makes him a better high priest. Christ can deal gently with us because He shared our human experience, including temptation. Yet he never sinned. And his sinlessness ensures he can better sympathize with us. If he had sinned, he could not be the great high priest who superseded the imperfect priesthood of the old covenant and he could not be the great high priest we need.

In these regards, Jesus lacks nothing that hinders his work as a high priest. He is uniquely qualified. He alone can understand us and care for us appropriately. In him we discover perfectly balanced mercy and grace, understanding and healing.

## Second: The Calling of God & the High Priest. 3-4

<sup>3</sup> *Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.* <sup>4</sup> *And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.*

In order to be a high priest, Jesus had to fulfill the office's requirements, and we must keep this in mind when we read about the men who served as high priest before He did.

In 5:3, the writer tells us that the high priest of old offered sacrifices not only for others but first, also for himself because of his own sins. Christ's high priestly work is very different from this, unique, because the writer of Hebrews repeatedly claims that that Christ never sinned (4:15; 7:26),

4:15 - *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

7:26-27a - *For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup> He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people,*

In this way, Christ is far superior to the old covenant high priest. Unlike the high priests of old, Jesus was and is totally free from any moral corruption that results from a sin nature.

V 4 is very ironic. It is supposed to speak to God's prerogative and the priest's humility. God's prerogative creates and insures humility.

Hebrews 2:6 - *“What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?”*

Job 38:1-7 - *“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? <sup>3</sup> Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. <sup>4</sup> “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. <sup>5</sup> Who determined its measurements — surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? <sup>6</sup> On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, <sup>7</sup> when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”*

But every person who read this epistle knew that men did take this position for themselves. Herod and all his Roman successors routinely promoted men to the office of high priest in response to their bribes or promise of political favors as high priest. Few, if any of these men, really possessed the credentials necessary to faithfully fulfil the office of high priest.

For instance, during Jesus's lifetime, two men served as high priest. Annas was appointed to the office of high priest in A.D. 6 by Quirinius, governor of Syria. He was later removed from that position in A.D. 15 by Valerius Gratus, governor of Judea. However, since the Old Testament dictated that the high priest was to fill the office for life (Num. 3:10), the removal of Annas was

considered illegal by most Jews. For this reason, the Jews continued to regard him as their spiritual leader. However, Annas' son-in-law Caiaphas (John 18:13), served as high priest for nine years (A.D. 27-36), including the entire ministry of Jesus, as well as the whole of Pontus Pilate's administration. Some authorities believe that at this time Annas was appointed president of the Sanhedrim, or deputy high priest, and thus was also called high priest (Luke 3:2).

But Jesus, is unique as a person and priest. His character and reputation are whole.

### **Third: Jesus is Our God-Appointed High Priest. 5-6**

*So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you" as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."*

The point of comparing Jesus to the OT high priests is to enable the Jews to see the superiority of Jesus. And it worked.

*Acts 15:5 - But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."*

Some Pharisees were already Christians and struggling with the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus when the book of Hebrews was written. Perhaps others were 'on the fence' about Jesus. It may be that some of those Pharisees they are in the cc: to the Hebrews.

Christ did not seek out the priestly office for Himself but rather agreed to take it upon Himself when the three persons of the Trinity made a covenant among themselves to redeem humanity. The idea that the Son was appointed by the Father is well attested in the gospel of John. Throughout John's account, we see the Son seeking glory for His Father and not for Himself

*John 7:18 – The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.*

*John 14:13 - Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

*John 5:19 & 22-23 - So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing....For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup> that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*

God intends to eternally and supremely honor the Son and has set all creation's wellbeing on him

*Philippians 2:10-11 - ...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,*

- a) in heaven and*
- b) on earth and*
- c) under the earth,*

*<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

That is everyone, everywhere!

*V 6 - as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”*

Who is Melchizedek?

*Genesis 14:17-20 - After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). <sup>18</sup> And Melchizedek king of Salem...*

*Psalms 76:2 - His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.  
(This means that Salem is Jerusalem)*

*...brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) <sup>19</sup> And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; <sup>20</sup> and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

We will talk more about Melchizedek in chapter 7. For now, we see that he was both a king and a priest and that Jesus is also, like Melchizedek and unlike the line of Aaron or the tribe of Levi, also both a king and priest.

God intentionally separated the positions of prophet, priest and king.

In 1 Samuel 13, Saul and his army were waiting for Samuel to arrive to offer a sacrifice before going to war. Samuel had not yet come, and the soldiers were preparing to flee rather than fight the Philistines. Growing impatient, Saul chose to offer a sacrifice on his own.

Just as Saul finished the sacrifice, Samuel arrived and said, “*You have done a foolish thing. . . You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you*” (1 Samuel 13:13). Why was offering a sacrifice foolish? Because Saul had disobeyed a direct command from the prophet Samuel given in 1 Samuel 10:8: “*Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do.*”

Another reason that Saul's action was wrong is that Saul was not a priest or Levite. Thus, he could not legally offer a burnt offering or peace offering. Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin and not of Levi, thus, he was not to do the work of a priest. (However, the biblical text notes that the direct reason why Saul's sacrifice was sinful was that Saul disobeyed Samuel's command. Samuel was a prophet and person of authority, and the word of the Lord had been spoken through him to Saul).

In fact, King David, the king who followed Saul, offered a burnt offering to the Lord.

2 Samuel 24:25, we read, “*David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings.*”

In this case, however, David did so in obedience to the command of the prophet Gad (2 Samuel 24:18–19).

God intentionally separated the positions of prophet, priest and king but Jesus united all three.

Finally, the quotes from these two verses about Sonship and priesthood tell us something very important about redemption. Both open with the same words “*you are ...*,” and both are from the book of Psalms. This tells us that in redemption, Sonship and Priesthood are united. For redemption to take place in God’s economy, the Son has to be the High Priest, and the High Priest has to be the Son. To be sure, God was not required to save us. But once God decided to purchase our redemption, He could accomplish it only by appointing His Son to be the great High Priest.

#### **Fourth: Jesus’s Suffering and Obedience to be our High Priest. 7-8**

*In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.*

<sup>8</sup> *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*

The phrase “learned obedience” is interesting and might strike us as odd. After all, Jesus is God incarnate (John 1:1–18), and God cannot and does not grow in His knowledge. But remember that Jesus is also truly man and did grow in his experiential knowledge according to His human nature.

ILL – Many of us know about something but have not experienced it and the experience changes, expands our knowledge.

The demons know that Jesus is Lord but have never experienced salvation (James 2:19).

Mark 5:6-9 – *And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. <sup>7</sup> And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.” <sup>8</sup> For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” <sup>9</sup> And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.”*

In Christianity, we should fear unexperienced knowledge (1 Cor 8:1).

In God’s plan of redemption, it was necessary that the Son become the High Priest (Heb. 5:5–6). Sonship and Priesthood, much like deity and humanity, are united perfectly in the person of Jesus Christ.

After telling us that Jesus was appointed priest by the Father in 5:5–6, verses 7 and 8 very briefly describe some of the experiences Jesus had while He was performing His priestly work on earth. However brief these two verses are, they are nonetheless extremely important to the Hebrew's understanding of Jesus as their perfect High Priest.

Though Jesus lived His whole life in prayerful dependence on the Father. This particular verse refers most explicitly to the experience of Jesus' suffering on the cross which began with His tearful prayer in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39–46).

It might surprise us that Jesus felt such anguish in the moments before his death since that death was planned before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). But you and I both know that it is one thing to plan something and another thing to experience it.

(I cried the first time I saw Cinderella's castle at Disney World)

It is in his perfect humanity that Jesus now 'feels' the weight of what he is about to do. He has walked among us and seen, felt, endured our sin. There is something particular, something unique about this aspect of his incarnation.

The incarnation is the fulfilment of Genesis 18:21 - *I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know.*"

Jesus now knows, because he has come down -

*Oh long and dark the stairs I trod,  
with stumbling feet to find my God,  
Gaining a foothold bit by bit  
Then slipping back and losing it.*

*There came a certain time when I  
Loosened my hold and fell thereby,  
Down to the lowest step my fall  
As if I had not climbed at all.*

*And as I lay despairing there,  
there came a footfall on the stairs  
And 'lo' when hope had ceased to be  
My God came down the stairs to me.  
- Theodosia Pickering Garrison (1909)*

It is by that descending of the stairs that Jesus (v 8) learned obedience and knows what it means for me to obey and disobey.

*"One special kind of obedience is intended here, namely a submission to great, hard, and terrible things, accompanied by patience and quiet endurance, and faith for deliverance from*

*them. This Christ could not have experience of, except by suffering the things he had to pass through, exercising God's grace in them all."*

- John Owen

In obedience, he understands my obedience and disobedience. But in obedience, he also proves he is the Son of God.

*Matthew 4:1-11 - Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." <sup>4</sup> But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." <sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple<sup>6</sup> and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you," and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" <sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" <sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.*

Jesus did not come to by-pass the law. He did not see himself different from us. He had to become like us in order to die for us, save us and intercede for us.

*Hebrews 7:25-26 - Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

*<sup>26</sup> For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens*

He is only able to do this because, even though he is God's son, he doesn't set aside the law but fulfils it.

*Matthew 5:17-20 - Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Jesus did not set aside the law but fulfilled it because my righteousness does not exceed that of the Pharisees. I have relaxed the commandments. But he, on my behalf, has fulfilled them.

This is why, even as he begins his ministry, Jesus submits himself to the life we have not lived and lives it for us, fulfilling all righteousness.



Matthew 3:13-15 – *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.<sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”<sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.*

Jesus came into the world to identify with us; and to identify with us is to identify with sin. He could not purchase righteousness for us if He did not identify with our sin.

Hundreds of years before Christ’s coming, Isaiah had declared that the Messiah “*was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many and interceded for the transgressors*” (Isa. 53:12).

Jesus’s baptism, among other things, represented his willing identification as the sinless Son of God, with the sinful people He came to save.

By suffering as a man, Jesus has shared our human condition of suffering and can now best help us when we suffer.

And yet...in His suffering, Jesus also experienced something that we will never know. There is something particular to Jesus’s suffering

- a) What it means to suffer *for* us
- b) What it means for a sinless person to suffer
- c) What it means to suffer *with* us

In his role as our Mediator Jesus presented himself as a perfect sacrifice and was made perfect as our High Priest. By offering Himself as our atonement, Christ fulfilled His Father-appointed task and, as such, became “the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him...” (Heb. 5:9–10)

### **Sixth: All of this Makes Jesus the Perfect High Priest. 9-10**

<sup>9</sup> *And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,* <sup>10</sup> *being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*

The beginning of this chapter describes the work of the old covenant priesthood in order that in 5:5–10, the author can then demonstrate how Jesus perfectly meets the requirements of the old covenant high priest....but....because Jesus is God incarnate and completely sinless, He is a greater High Priest than any that came before Him.

That’s what “to be made perfect” means in this context: to be uniquely set apart for the office of high priest. Jesus accomplished this by suffering.

Jesus knew, let’s say ‘in theory’ what suffering obedience would be like, prior to the incarnation, but only in the incarnation did he know, in practice, what it meant. In the same way, he knew what the work of the High Priest would be like in theory before the incarnation, but he could not know it in practice until his suffering fully qualified him for that office.

High Priests, in order to commiserate and sympathize with the people whom, they represent before God, must be human. This enables them to experience the sufferings of those they represent and better, more humanely, represent them.

This is why Jesus was made human. He is best able to suffer with us because he suffered for us. He alone knows what our sin means and what our sin costs. He alone knows the glory of the Trinity and how far short we have fallen from it (Ro 3:10, 23) and what it required to make us right with God.

On the other hand, (as was said earlier), being human disqualifies them from being an eternal high priest which is what we need because no sinful human can die for us. He has to die for his own sin. And no sinful human being be an eternal high priest which is what we need because “*it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*” (Hb 10:4).

Warning: Once Jesus assumed the role of High Priest through His full experience of suffering, He “became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey **him**.”

After so much doctrinal teaching – vs 1-8 – the author now comes to the practical application.

- Obey Jesus and be saved.
- Ignore him and perish.

Will you follow Jesus and not the old high priest who represents the old covenant in the old Jerusalem? (Rev 21:2). Will you follow Jesus out of the Temple, out of Jerusalem and onto a desolate hill called Golgotha?

Hebrews 2:11 – “*...he is not ashamed to call them brothers...*”

Do not be ashamed to call him, ‘brother’ and Savior.

Only those who do so will inherit “eternal salvation.”

How can he do this? Because he is not a priest after the order of Aaron but the order of Melchizedek.

<sup>10</sup> *being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*