

## **The Qualifications Of The High Priest**

### **Hebrews 5:1-10**

#### **Introduction**

The writer of Hebrews calls on the reader to consider Christ as superior in every way to Judaism. Remember the letter's emphasis is to Jews contemplating returning to Judaism. Jesus is superior in both His person (chapters 1-9) and superior in His life (chapters 10-13). Jesus is superior to the Hebrew prophets (1:1-3) angels (1:4-14); Moses (chapter 3); in his office (3:1-3); in his ministry (3:3-6); in the rest that he provides (3:7-19); and the writer declares Jesus is superior to Aaron and the Levitical priesthood and that Jesus is our High Priest. We have a divine priest, a redeemer priest, an apostle priest, and eternal priest. For all those reasons we can draw near to God; believe the Lord and His promises; endure hardship and continue in love.

For the person who wants to abandon Jesus for Moses or his brother Aaron—points out that you are abandoning the greater for the lesser. How is Jesus to superior to Aaron? In at least three ways; the Lord Jesus has a greater ordination from God. Aaron was taken from among men and elevated to the office of High Priest. The honor was passed to his oldest son. Aaron like Moses belonged to the tribe of Levi. But the Lord Jesus Christ's priesthood is greater—Jesus is not mere man but God in the flesh. The sons of Korah tried to take on the role of priests (Numbers 16) and died for their sin. Aaron and his sons were temporary priests but Jesus is an eternal priest. Jesus is also superior in His sympathy (vv.2-3; 7-8); and offers a greater sacrifice (v.3; 9-14).

Why in the world did the Jews need priests and why in the world does the Christian need priests? On what basis may people approach God? Can a person come to God exclusively through Jesus Christ?

The Jewish reader might be skeptical of this claim. How can Jesus be the High Priest? The High Priest must be have the right credentials. Jesus has all the right credentials. His appointment (ordination) God

We are saved to live in spiritual victory.

#### **Human Qualifications For The Position Of High Priest (vv.1-4)**

*Hebrews 5:1–10 (NKJV) 1For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.*

*2He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.*

*3Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins.*

*4And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.*

## The Qualifications Of The High Priest

### Hebrews 5:1-10

1. Appointed by God to represent men before God; and God before men.
2. Offers gifts and sacrifices for sin; offering their possessions or lives.
3. Full of compassion; towards those who sin ignorantly or willfully.
4. The High Priest must offer sacrifice for His own sin before he can offer sacrifice for the people.
5. The High Priest cannot be **self-appointed**.

#### Appointed By God (v.1a)

Aaron was appointed (*kathistemi-cathisteeme*; literally *set down—bring down to a place*) by God. The word came to mean an authoritative appointment by a government to an office—hence ordained! Not everyone could be the High Priest. You had to be from the right tribe (Levi) and the right family (Levi's oldest son). **God's call was limited to Aaron and his descendants; no one outside that family could serve in the Tabernacle or Temple.**

He was taken from among men (human beings). In this sense Aaron serves as a type or picture of a human High Priest. But Jesus is a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec—and functions as a human High Priest. Jesus is God. And as God has access to God. Jesus is human—and as a human can serve as a representative for human beings.

This work as a Priest is only available to believers. It is not for sinners. A sinner cannot appropriate Jesus as Priest—until the sinner has laid hold of Jesus as Savior. The sinner must make his or her first stop at the Cross before access can be given to Christ as Priest in Heaven.

#### Offering Gifts And Sacrifices (v.1b)

In the ancient world of the Jew—the Priest was ordained by God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. In context the word gifts seems to mean any offerings presented to God; and sacrifices as that special offering in which blood was shed for the atonement of sins.

It was in part on behalf of those who were ignorant (unknowing) of God's will (Lev. 4). The ignorant could come to the Priest and claim forgiveness on the basis of the blood of a sacrifice. Those going 'astray' or out of the way—those who had fallen into sin—and who had forfeited fellowship with God. For such the priest was ordained to provide cleansing and forgiveness.

#### Compassion For People (v.2)

**“. . .he can have compassion (*metriopatheo*)”**—“*To hold one's passions or emotions in restraint; hence to bear gently with, feel gently towards*”

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Why compassion?

The verse cites ‘the ignorant’ and those who are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. Does the Bible exonerate the ignorant? No. Those who willfully go astray? No. Yet both require compassion! James (5:11); “The Lord is full of compassion and mercy”.

Paul wrote; “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Eph.4:22). In Colossians 3:12 we are told as God’s chosen people, dearly beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you have against one another.”

Honesty without compassion is brutality.

Criticism is easy. Compassion is hard. Mechtild of Magdeburg wrote; “Compassion means that if I see my friend and my enemy in equal need, I shall help both equally. Justice demands that we seek and find the stranger, the broken, the prisoner and comfort them and offer them our help. Here lies the holy compassion of God.”

### **Offer A Personal Sacrifice For Sin (v.3)**

But Aaron and the other priests could not intercede for others until he first offered a blood sacrifice for himself (v.3); Aaron was imperfect! Aaron **could not take away sin**.

### **Divine Qualifications Met By Christ (vv.5-10)**

*5So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”*

The writer is arguing that God Himself ordained His Son as High Priest. He quotes Psalm 2:7.

*6As He also says in another place: “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek”;*

Now the writer links Psalm 2:7 with Psalm 110:4.

The Father ordains the Son into an eternal priestly ministry. In what sense? The writer ties the eternal priestly ministry of Jesus as it relates to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

In Acts 13 Paul travels to a place called Antioch of Pisidia. He preaches a sermon. In that sermon Paul shows how the Old Testament was a preparation for Christ’s coming. In verses 23-37 he outlines the death of Christ, proving His resurrection and pointing out that Israel (“they

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that dwell in Jerusalem and their rulers”(v.27) rejected their Messiah. Verses 38-41—give the conclusion of the message showing that salvation was not through obedience to the Law but rather faith in Christ. In Acts 13:33 Paul says; “God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

“You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten  
You.”

How does Paul’s sermon and citation of this passage help us in Hebrews 5:5-6?

The High Priestly ministry of Jesus is related to His resurrection.

The priesthood of Melchizedek is the main theme of Hebrews 7-10—and we will talk about that later at great length (see Genesis 14:17-20—for more background).

*7who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,*

*8though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*

*9And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,*

To be perfected means to be whole, holy, clean.

Human beings are not whole, or holy or clean. The fact that we need an intercessor and a High Prince speaks to our need.

But does this mean that salvation is unfinished or incomplete? No. For the Believer salvation in Christ is full and final and complete. We have the assurance of Heaven. Hell is closed to the born again blood bought believer. Nothing we do or leave undone can undermine salvation in Christ. But what we do or fail to do—will have an effect on the presence or the absence of reward and will have a profound effect on whether we live a life of victory in the Spirit or defeat in our flesh! Your life matters to God! We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account of what we have done with our lives; with our talent and with our treasure.

In this sentence we find unlimited treasure. Jesus is the author (source) of eternal salvation.

*10called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”*

The same qualifications listed in vv.1-5 for the High Priest are now listed in reverse order as they pertain to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus not only meets but exceeds the qualifications.

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1. NOT self-appointed (vv.5-6)
2. Self-sacrificing (v.7)
3. A willing sacrifice (v.8)
4. The Source of Salvation (v.9)
5. The Perfect High Priest (v.10)

### **NOT self-appointed (vv.5-6)**

#### **Self-sacrificing (v.7)**

In verse 7 the writer tells us our Jesus—the sinless one; offered up prayers, supplications with strong crying and tears! This is a sacred place. The Son of God sobbing, crying out in painful agony with tears and bloody sweat. In John’s Gospel we read; “Save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12:27).

Jesus was heard! In what way? Jesus did not ask to be spared a painful death. “. . .to Him who was able to save Him from death”—out of death—that is bring Him back to life. Jesus will triumph over death! Jesus will come back to life! Jesus rose from the dead—in part—because Jesus was obedient in His suffering!

#### **A willing sacrifice (v.8)**

Here is the mystery of the incarnation (MacDonald; p.2171). God becomes man to die for men. Jesus learns obedience (experimentally) as the Son always subject to His Father’s will.

#### **The Source of Salvation (v.9)**

Jesus is the author (source aition—cause) of salvation.

In what way was Jesus ‘perfected’—how do you perfect that which is perfect? I suspect it is not a reference to His character—but rather the completion or perfection of His office as Savior. Jesus could not be our perfect Savior in Heaven. Jesus had to come to earth. Jesus had to be born a man. Jesus completes His work in the mystery of His incarnation; ministry; death and resurrection. Jesus completes the work necessary to save us from our sins. Returning to Heaven

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—Jesus is the author of eternal salvation TO ALL WHO OBEY HIM. Jesus is the source of salvation for all—but only those who obey Him are saved.

How are we to think about this? In other passages we are saved by faith—and here by obedience? Which is it? Clearly there is an obedience to faith in His Word. But it is also that saving faith—is the kind of faith—that results in obedience. It is impossible to believe—at least in the New Testament sense of the word ‘believe’ without obeying.

### **The Perfect High Priest (v.10)**

“called by God as High Priest” (*prosagoreuo—only here in the NT*)—*meaning call, name, designate—used RSV; NASB; And NIV—“expresses the formal and solemn ascription of the title (high priest) to Him to whom it belongs” (Westcott; p. 130).*

The Lord God has given Jesus the title “High Priest”.

Think of what the author has been trying to do; convince the reader that Jesus has a superior name; ‘seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession (confession)(4:14).

His name—Jesus

He is near—(4:14-16) He knows our nature; and our needs; no wonder Jesus is God’s choice—for us!

### **Conclusion**

We could easily get side-tracked or lost—in all of the wonderful historical information about Judaism, the High Priest and first century Christianity. And forget the simple and powerful point the writer is trying to make! God doesn’t want us to lead empty, powerless lives! We were meant to live lives of hope and victory!

Paul was not content to simply be saved, die and go to heaven. Paul wanted Jesus to use him, and perfect him—in Christ. In Philippians 3:12 Paul wrote; “Not as though I have already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend (lay hold of) that for which also I am apprehended of Christ.”

Paul made every effort in practice to walk in all that was given to him positionally in Christ. The writer of Hebrews in the last chapter urged the reader to “come boldly into the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”