

Hebrews 5:1-6

Hebrews 5:1-10 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. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ 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"; ⁶ as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

⁷ 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. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

We know from the start of this epistle that there is a single minded focus upon the Supremacy of Christ, of who he is, what he has done and what he will do.

- He is greater than the prophets, the angels, than Moses, better than the Old Covenant promises of rest, and as we have been learning he is THE Great High Priest.
- Richard Phillips in his commentary quotes John Calvin:
 - "There is indeed no book in Holy Scripture which speaks so clearly of the Priesthood of Christ, which so highly exalts the virtue and dignity of that only true sacrifice which he offered by His death... and, in a word, so fully explains Christ is the end of the Law'.
- Derek reviewed with us last week how this thought of the priesthood starts in Chapter 2:17.
 - That is interrupted with a long warning in Chapter three through to the end of chapter 4 where in verse 14 this theme of Jesus as our High Priest is once again picked up.
 - This theme continues into chapter 10 where the result is to give us confidence before the throne of God.

So now the focus is upon the priesthood.

- In the Old Covenant God gave the Law to his people on Sinai instructing them on how they should live to keep his commandments.
 - The Law blessed those that obeyed and cursed those who disobeyed.
 - And what about those who disobeyed?
 - What about those who sinned against God and His law?
 - Sin needed a way to be dealt with and create restoration between God and the sinner.
 - What were the requirements for law breakers?

- If one sinned what could they do to restore fellowship with Yahweh – and their brethren?
- It is here where the priesthood enters into the law.
 - The Law – many times artificially broken up into three divisions – the Moral, Sacrificial and Judicial.
 - The Law acted as one.
 - Each part was essential to the whole.
 - God gave them opportunity through a means of restoration when those commands were violated.
 - It is through the priesthood and sacrifices that this restoration occurred.
 - It was the duty of Priests to represent sinful humanity before a Holy God.
 - And that was done through prescribed offerings and sacrifices that would account for their violation of God’s law and restore any broken fellowship.
- These offerings were broken into two categories 1. freewill or fellowship or peace offerings and 2. Offerings for sin or violations of the law:
 - Voluntary burnt offerings of unblemished bulls and rams symbolizing complete surrender to God (Leviticus 1 & 6)
 - Voluntary grain or meal offerings that symbolized devotion to God (Leviticus 2 & 6)
 - Fellowship or peace offerings of unblemished animals from the flock or herd were sacrificed. (Leviticus 3 & 7)
 - Sin offerings of bulls, sheep or goats and even grain for the poor that were required for breaking the law and ritual uncleanness (Leviticus 4 & 5)
 - Guilt offerings of unblemished rams or lambs for those who violate others rights (Leviticus 4, 5, 6)
 - Sum: Fellowship offerings and then sacrifices for sin.
 - For some sins there were no sacrifices and they required death. (Leviticus 20)
 - But these were for the individual that broke the Law.
 - If you violated the law you went to the priest with your offering and he sacrificed it upon the alter for you.
- But what about sacrifice for “sin”. (Inherited from Adam)
 - Sacrifice for the congregation because they are sinners not because they sin or break individual laws?
 - What about all those sins both intentional and unintentional that they did every day because we are sinners.
 - Sins that come from the fact that we have all gone astray and turned unto our own way?
- While there were many priests there was only one High Priest. His ministry to Israel was unique.

- While many priests served the people when they broke the law or when they wanted to bring a fellowship offering only one Priest – the High Priest - served the people for sin – and that only once per year.
 - On the “Day of Atonement” (Israel’s most Holy Day - Yom Kippur – late September) The High Priest would offer sacrifice for the nation and the people and make atonement “for all of their sins”.
 - Leviticus 16 gives the details of this high day.
 - **Leviticus 16:34** And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins.”
- On that day the high priest would put on the “holy” garments of the high priest and go into the Holy of the Holies in the Tabernacle and make atonement for his sin and the sin of the people.

In Exodus 28 we are given a magnificent picture of the High Priest.

- I wanted paint a word picture of what that High Priest looked like.
 - The requirements for the priestly garments are given for Aaron and all his successors for this honorable position.
 - **Exodus 28:2** And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.
- Every detail is given for his holy priestly garments all the way down to his holy undergarments.
 - His outfit started with this special holy underwear to cover the hips and thighs (v42).
 - Next he put on a linen tunic as the foundation to his priestly uniform.
 - Over this was placed a royal blue robe.
 - At the bottom hem of the robe there were attached pomegranates woven from blue, purple and scarlet yarn
 - In between yarn pomegranates were small golden bells that rang with his every movement.
 - A woven multicolored girdle or wide belt held the robe in place.
 - Next, there was an ephod that went over the robe
 - The ephod was woven with gold thread, white twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarns – it was like a big apron.
 - There were shoulder pieces on the ephod and each bore a large onyx stone, set in gold filigree (a thick thread made of gold).
 - On the shoulder piece were the names of the twelve tribes were engraved on the stones, six on one side and six on the other, in order of birth.
 - Important – names on his shoulders.
 - Fastened to the front of the ephod by golden chains, was the breastplate
 - A nine-inch square plate of gold, blue, purple, scarlet and linen

- It had four rows of three stones
 - First, ruby, topaz, beryl; second, turquoise, sapphire, emerald; third, jacinth, agate, amethyst; fourth, chrysolite, onyx, jasper
 - The stones were each engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes.
 - Important — all twelve next to the priest's heart.
 - Along with the mysterious Urim and Thummim.
 - Translated lights and perfections
 - Used for making divine decisions for the congregation before God.
- Lastly, the priest was crowned with a turban of fine linen, on the turban was a plate of pure gold inscribed in Hebrew "HOLY TO THE LORD" (Exodus 28:36).
 - Separated – sanctified – he was holy unto the Lord.
- The image of the high priest is a holy, sanctified picture – full of glory and beauty (Exodus 28:2).
 - Can you imagine the beautiful sight of the high priest in the bright September sunlight as he approached the Tabernacle (Temple).
 - Brilliant white linen, royal blue robe
 - The gold on his turban, chains and in the fabrics he wore, gleaming in the sun—the large gems on his shoulders and over his heart glistening in the sun — with the golden bells ringing with each step!
 - But even more than the deep spiritual significance of his priestly garments. He bore the weight of Israel on his shoulders and over his heart.
 - In Exodus 28 we are told the reason for the bells at the end of the robe in:

Exodus 28:35 And it shall be on Aaron when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the Holy Place before the LORD, and when he comes out, so that he does not die.

 - He was bearing the sins of the people before the Lord and if he went into that Holy of Holy's with his sin not first atoned for he would have been struck dead by the Lord.
 - Tradition – rope tied around his waist.
 - This was the holiest of holy occasions and the High Priest also had to have been right before he went into the Most Holy Place into the presence of the Lord.

It's important here to say that one could put on the glorious high priestly garments and appear outwardly qualified, but fall tragically short of the inner qualifications so necessary for effective ministry.

- It is these inner qualifications with which our text first deals in Hebrews verses 1-4.
 - It then goes on to demonstrate how Christ, our great high priest, meets and supersedes every qualification—proving he is the Great High Priest of our confession.
- There is a reason I went into detail about the High Priest.

- As we consider this matter of priestly qualifications, we would do well to keep the image of the Aaronic high priest before us
 - Because Jesus is the fulfillment of everything he symbolized in all his glory – Jesus fulfilled everything that Aaron was a type of.
- He is the true fulfillment of “Holy to the Lord”.

The writer opens this section by proclaiming in verses 1-4 three essential qualifications for one who would aspire to be high priest –

- 1.) oneness
- 2.) compassion
- 3.) selection.

1.) Oneness

First we see the high priests oneness with his brethren:

Hebrews 5:1 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.

- He had to be a living human being—a mortal like everyone else.
 - He was not some superhuman – or special being that was and above his fellow man.
 - The reason given here is that his primary function was to represent his fellow man—“ to act on behalf of men in relation to God.”
 - To be sure, as we will see he needed to be linked to God.
 - Once a year he would appear in priestly splendor as the only one who would go into the Holy of Holies to perform the atoning ritual for sin before a Holy God.
- But what is emphasized here is that he must be well-linked to humanity.
 - The ideal high priest was not a man who retired to the seclusion of his priestly mansion, or rectory, or monastery there only to commune with God, like some monk, or pope and foregoing daily contact with humanity.
 - Rather, the model was a man from among men, one who related to people.
 - The High Priest was to be involved in life, because he had to know what it was like to be human.
 - He had to understand that life is not smooth sailing.
 - He had to experience it all.
 - All of life's stresses and joys and victories and losses and of course the bent to sin
 - This all made him human.
 - These things better qualify him to represent his people in "related to God."
 - His union with his brethren was essential to be an effective priest.
 - He was a real man with a real link to God AND a real bond to man.

2.) Compassion

This sets us up for the next quality for the human priesthood, which is compassion or sympathy:

Hebrews 5:2-3 ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.

- The ideal high priest had an inner character that enabled him to "deal gently with the ignorant and wayward."
 - The high priest was equipped, to act on behalf of the people – because he understood their weakness.
 - It says here that "he himself is beset with weakness or subject to weakness".
 - He shared in the universal "brotherhood of weakness" common to all of mankind.

- This word means weakness whether physical and or moral.
 - Think of the physical weakness that we all have, bodily, mental, emotional. He shared in all of them.
 - He was subject to weakness in body:
 - Became ill – he suffered physical trauma – he got tired – he got hungry – sometimes he may have ate too much – he felt the effects of aging.
 - He was subject to weakness of intellect:
 - He forgot things, he sometimes felt stupid – there were things that were beyond him – things that he did not understand.
 - He was also subject to weakness of emotion: sometimes he lost his temper – he got angry – possibly was sometimes depressed – he may have allowed others to control his emotions.
 - Indeed, he was a member of the universal "brotherhood of physical weakness."
 - He also had an awareness that he was himself was subject to moral weaknesses – he understood that we are all sinners subject to moral failure.
 - We see that he was aware that he, though he was the high priest, was a sinner, beset with weakness for ...
 - **Hebrews 5:3** he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins.
 - Back to that Day of Atonement:
 - While decked out in his spectacular priestly garb, he had to kill a bull for his own personal sins.
 - In slaughtering the bull, he would lay his hands on its head and then confess his own sins.
 - This was followed by taking the blood of the sacrificed bull into the Holy of Holies and sprinkling some on the mercy-seat, and then sprinkling more of the blood seven times before the seat (Leviticus 16).
 - It was only after taking care of his own sins that he was readied to offer sacrifice for his people.

- The ideal high priest knew he was morally bankrupt – he was a sinner – therefore this equipped him to "deal gently" with sinful people.
 - He did not elevate himself above them, but ministered with a compassionate and understanding attitude.
 - Understanding God's grace towards him as a sinner and then showing grace to other sinners in need of God's grace.
 - Indeed, he was a member of the universal "brotherhood of moral weakness."
- This awareness of weakness, this awareness of man's physical frailty and man's frailty, produced the ability "to deal gently with those who are ignorant and wayward."
 - The word translated "to deal gently" was used in classical Greek to define a course of conduct that was the middle course between anger and apathy, between being enraged at sin or permissive about sin.
 - It meant "wise, gentle, patient restraint."
 - Such a high priest was compassionate and sensitive.
 - He dealt gently with his people yet at the same time was not exceedingly harsh towards their sin.
 - He understood his own moral shortcomings and his on propensity towards ignorance and straying in a wayward direction.
- Mini application:
 - When one is truly aware that he or she is a sinner, and combines this with the inner awareness of human weakness, that man is sinful, unrighteous, ignorant and wayward, this person will deal in a godly gentle way with others.
 - They understand - there but for the grace of God go I – and then act accordingly with other sinners.
 - On the flip side, a harsh, judgmental, unfeeling, hateful spirit is an indication that one does not possess a sense of personal weakness and awareness of sin.
 - In my mind many fundamentalist churches today fall to this syndrome – i.e. West Borough Baptist
 - Many that profess Christ as savior are quickly deluded into thinking they are better than others.
 - They look down upon sinners – the ignorant and wayward.
 - Such arrogance, however, actually disqualifies them from ministry – and may even disqualify them from the faith!
 - Where are the beatitudes of poorness – mourning – meekness in their lives.
 - What a beautiful priestly quality it is to "deal gently" with those in sin.
 - This should be a quality by the grace of God that we should all seek to attain.
 - It is a quality we should all seek to possess.

- After all, aren't we all priests in the kingdom of God?

3.) Devine Selection

The third and final qualification after oneness and compassion — is that the high priestly position must originate from divine selection:

Hebrews 5:4 And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

- All of Israel's priests were to come only through God's sovereign divine appointment.
 - Attempts to do otherwise met with God's judgment. We see this several time in the Old Testament:
 - Korah and his 250 followers were swallowed by the earth because they elevated themselves to the priestly office by burning strange fire – unauthorized fire (Numbers 16).
 - Saul lost his reign because he impatiently assumed Samuel's priestly function (1 Samuel 13).
 - And Uzziah, wrongly used a priestly censer – he broke out with leprosy that lasted until he died (2 Chronicles 26).
 - No priest was to ever elevated himself to the high priestly office.
 - All were sovereignly chosen.
 - V1 – “chosen from among men”
 - His work was never a career choice or an office where he jockeyed for position to move up the ladder to become the CEP – Chief Executive Priest.
 - A man could not rise from the tabernacle mailroom to that of High Priest.
 - No high priest could do it “my way”.
 - It was a divine calling that was to fill him with a deep humility.
 - Mini Application → Think of your calling.... What has it produced in you?
- These verses give us a further picture of the ideal human high priest.
 - You see it wasn't all about his priestly garments as great of significance as they did bear.
 - It was about his heart AND God's sovereign appointment.
 - You see he bore Israel on his shoulders and his heart.
 - A beautiful picture (don't want to go all AW Pink on you here)
 - He was sovereignly appointed and anointed with a holy calling before God and the people.
 - He worked atonement for sin. Bearing the people before God.
 - Wearing their names upon his shoulders and his heart.

To sum this up:

1. He was in united with his fellow brethren – he was one of them.
 - He was the link between God and his fellow Jew.
2. He was in such close union with them, that he showed compassion for them so that he always could "deal gently" with them.

3. And he was divinely selected – free from ego and arrogance.

- He was selected to serve.

The ideal high priest was a man of for glory and for beauty – that is God’s glory and God’s beauty. Could anything or anyone ever exceed this ideal of the high priest? Could anything have more beauty and glory? The answer is a resounding "Yes!" – Jesus Christ!

For we see several of Christ’s qualifications in verses 5-10. Some of these are reinforced from what we saw earlier in chapters 2 & 4. We will deal only with the first in verses 5 and 6 and Charlie will pick up where I leave off.

Jesus too was a product of divine selection:

Hebrews 5:5-6 ⁵ 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”; ⁶ as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”

- Not only was Christ divinely chosen, but he was chosen for two offices — the ultimate royal office and the ultimate priestly office, as is shown by two Old Testament Scriptures.
 - His royal office was prophesied in
 - Psalm 2:7** I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”
 - This first quote here also appeared in Hebrews 1:5 where the writer used the Old Testament reference in establishing Christ’s divine nature as the Son of God.
 - Here again he is reinforcing and confirming Christ’s divinity – his royal appointment as Son, heir, and king.
 - This restatement that Jesus is eternal divine King that then rolls into his announcement as eternal priest. He is both King AND Priest.
 - Jesus' *priestly* office was prophesied, says our writer, in:
 - Psalm 110:4b** “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”
- Now, this seem a bit obscure. (because it is!)
 - This probably comes as a bit of a surprise to his hearers for the writer has previously used Psalm 110 before as it applies to Christ.
 - Psalm 110 is a Messianic Psalm it reads in:
 - Psalm 110:1** The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”
 - He used that in chapter 1:13 and it is used many times by others in the New Testament
- But this is the first time Psalm 110 is used to announce his priesthood.
 - And better yet not a priesthood after that of Aaron but one that identifies Jesus’ priesthood with the mysterious priesthood of Melchizedek!

- The writer does not stop with that thought here but uses Psalm 110:4 as a central theme-text of the heart of the letter to Hebrews (Melchizedek is alluded to 9 times in Hebrews and the verse is repeated again here in V10).
- Psalm 110 is a messianic psalm it begins with Christ enthroned and then verse 4 seemingly out of the blue informs us that the messiah will also be a priest in the order of Melchizedek.
- Let's take a step back and get a little background about this character Melchizedek.
 - Is he just a bit of bible trivia? → Who was Melchizedek?
 - Marlene as a little girl plating hangman with her uncle Russ
 - He used to stump them by using Melchizedek's name.
 - Of all the Old Testament characters that we might expect to show up in the New Testament Melchizedek is one of the least likely.
 - He briefly touches the life of Abraham and surfaces again a thousand years later in Psalm 110 with no real explanation.
 - Peeking out only twice from among the thousands upon thousands of verses in the Old Testament, we would hardly expect him to be a significant as he really is.
- Let me sum up his appearance in Genesis.
 - Now I don't want to give the game away because the writer of Hebrews will give us more detail later on – especially chapter 7.
 - Genesis 14 tells the story of a raid on Israel by a coalition of northern kings.
 - The invaders penetrate the south all the way to the plains city of Sodom where Abraham's nephew Lot had settled.
 - When Abraham (actually he was still Abram at this time) – when he realized his nephew had been captured he went to his rescue and with his servants attacked by night.
 - Abram drove off the Raiders and rescued Lot. He also freed the other inhabitants of Sodom and recovered all the spoils the raiding Kings had taken.
 - On the way back home Abram runs into Melchizedek, and Melchizedek blessed Abraham: **Genesis 14:18** And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.
 - We see hear that he was the king of Salem
 - Word means “peace” - he was the king of peace!!
 - Later on was eventually the city of Jerusalem).
 - He brought bread and wine to Abram and blessed him.
 - Interesting – bread and wine – the symbol of the Lord's Table.
 - Then in:
 - **Genesis 14:19-20** ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And then Abram gave him a tenth of everything – a tithe of the spoils.

- So, he blesses Abram and then Abram tithes the spoils to him.
 - And so Abraham then went on his way and return to his tents.
- Later in Hebrews, particularly in Chapter 7 the writer will carefully exegete this passage and find surprising significance in every detail but for now however the writer hurries on having established a vital point.
 - He even tells us in verse 11 that he will have a lot more to say about this relationship but that will do it for now.
- The point here is that Jesus priesthood although like the priesthood held by Aaron and his sons it finds its source not only in Aaron but in another priest entirely.
 - In a source that not only THE priest but was also THE king.
 - You see Melchizedek, according to Genesis 14, was both king of Salem and priest of God Most High.
 - And it is from this obscure character - Melchizedek that we must recognize that Jesus is both eternal King and eternal priest.
 - Jesus is a priest “after the order of Melchizedek”. What does that mean?
 - Leon Morris in his commentary says that this should be translated “as the same kind as Melchizedek” instead of “after the order of Melchizedek”.
 - He reasons that there was no “order” or succession of Priests from Melchizedek – like Aaron and his predecessors.
 - I would reason that there was an “order” of Priests here.
 - And there were only two members of that order!
 - There was only one successor to the order of Melchizedek and that was Jesus.
 - Jesus' priesthood is, therefore, far superior to that of Aaron.
 - Jesus is a ROYAL PRIEST!
 - He is both priest and king!!!
- But like Aaron it all came to him by the ordaining and appointing of God the Father.
 - It was not something that Jesus through ambition and ego sought out.
 - Jesus did not seek it!
 - **Hebrews 5:5a** Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest,
 - Paul tells us in:
 - **Philippians 2:6-7** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
 - He did not seek high office
 - He was appointed; he emptied himself with his end goal to glorify God the Father – not himself.

- When you read the whole verse from Psalm 110 it says :
 - **Psalms 110:4** “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”
 - It is important for the writer of Hebrews to prove that Jesus was appointed to this office by God.
 - And this appointment is eternal it can never be changed or withdrawn.
 - It is something ordained by Yahweh – to save his people from their sins!!!
 - The Lord will not change His mind. → AMEN!

This leaves us with great comfort – great assurance of a great salvation.

- As we have seen so far the writer of Hebrews give us many a warning against falling away.
 - He has been discussing the great matter of perseverance.
 - He talks about drifting – falling away – failing to enter into God’s rest.
- How can we have any assurance? Will we persevere? Will we make it to the end?
 - The answer doesn’t lie ultimately in us → it lies in the one who was appointed as our Royal High Priest.
 - Appointed to be made like us in every respect, who is merciful, faithful, able to help, who can sympathize with our weakness, tempted like us yet without sin.
 - Appointed to complete the work of dying for our sins.
 - Appointed to intercede on our behalf.
 - So that we can draw near in our time of need.
 - Appointed as both King and Priest – Lord and Christ!!!
 - Christ is our appointed triumphant, eternal Royal High Priest
 - AND the reason why we will persevere is because the Lord has sworn it and will not change his mind. → AMEN?