

Christ, the Qualified and Perfect High Priest
Hebrews 5:7-10
Part Two

We are presently studying the Book of Hebrews. This book was written by an unknown author to a group of struggling Hebrew Christians living in Rome, who under a great persecution were considering leaving the Christian faith in order to return to Judaism.

The author in response to this struggle wrote this particular book in order to strengthen their faith so that they, in having their faith strengthened, might be able to persevere.

And what was at stake? Their souls, for if they did not persevere it would demonstrate that they never truly possessed genuine, living saving faith, that kind of faith, that is given by God and is protected by God. So obviously there was a lot at stake in the mind of this author as he penned this letter.

So how did author within this letter go about strengthening the faith of his readers? He focused on Christ's superiority in matters related to Judaism.

So, what have we seen so far? We have seen that Christ is superior to the Old Testament prophets in **Hebrews 1:1-4**. We have seen that Christ is superior to the angels in **Hebrews 1:5-2:18**. We have seen that Christ is superior to Moses in **Hebrews 3:1-4:13**. And now we are seeing, in our ongoing examination of this epistle, that Christ's priesthood is superior to all other priesthoods (Hebrews 4:14-10:18). This section began in **Hebrews 4:14** and will continue all the way down through **Hebrews 10:18**. So how did the author begin this particular lengthy section?

The author of Hebrews in Hebrews 4:14-16 focused his readers on Christ's heavenly high priestly ministry. These verses served as an overlapping transition that tied what he had said earlier in the epistle about Christ's high priestly ministry, which was very limited, to what he was about to say about that ministry but in a much more expansive way.

So after the author finished this overlapping transition in **Hebrews 4:14-16**, what did the author do next? He then plunged into that very expansive

section of Scripture dealing with the superiority of Christ's priesthood. Can the superiority of Christ's priesthood be divided? Yes, it can.

The superiority of Christ's priesthood can be divided into two parts. So, what was the first part?

The first part addressed the Son's appointment as high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:1-10; 7:1-28). And how did the author begin this section?

The author in Hebrews 5:1-10 began with a simple introduction. And how did that introduction begin? The author in Hebrews 5:1-4 outlined for his readers universal principles of high priesthood.

So, what was the first principle? The first principle was that the high priests were taken from among men (Hebrew 5:1). We saw this principle, in essence, stated at the very beginning of **Hebrews 5:1** when the author began the verse with these words, **"For every high priest taken from among men."** So where were the high priests taken from? They were taken **"from among men."** In other words, they were not celestial beings. They were just simply flesh and blood men. This of course was a necessity in order to make it possible for the high priest to represent man before God. But to represent man before God in respect to what? This brought us to the second principle.

So, what was the second principle? The second principle was that the role of the high priest was to represent the children of Israel in matters related to God, especially pertaining to gifts and sacrifices (Hebrews 5:1). We see this principle also in **Hebrews 5:1**. So let us continue to read and what does it say? **"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."**

And what separated the high priests from other priests who were also, on behalf of men, offering up gifts and sacrifices? The high priests alone were permitted under the Law to enter the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle or in other words the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to offer up sacrifices on behalf of the people for sins committed the previous year (Leviticus 16:1-25). This is what separated the high priests from all other priests and made them so very special.

So, what was the third principle? The third principle was that the high priest's weakness enabled him to deal gently with the people (Hebrews 5:2-3).

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 5:2-3**. **“He can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; (3) and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.”**

The high priests and the people he represented on the Day of Atonement shared a common weakness, they were both **“ignorant”** and **“misguided,”** and it was for this reason that the high priest on the Day of Atonement, before he offered up sacrifice for the people, first of all offered up sacrifice for himself and his family. And this is why the high priest in performing his duties on behalf of the people on the Day of Atonement could do so with gentleness. It was because he and the people shared the same weakness.

And how did the author describe those who were characterized by this weakness? He described them as **“ignorant and misguided.”** And as a point of interest why did he do this? The reason why he did this was because the sins that the sacrifices under the Old Covenant atoned for were not intentional sins but rather unintentional sins or in other words the kinds of sins that would have been committed by the **“ignorant and misguided.”** And if there is any doubt about this all you have to do is to read **Numbers 15:27-31** as well as **Leviticus 4**.

So, what was the fourth principle of high priesthood? The fourth principle was that God, by divine appointment, conferred the office of high priest (Hebrews 5:4). Let me now read for you **Hebrews 5:4** and see if this is not so. **“And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.”** So based on this verse was God the One who by His own divine appointment conferred the office of high priest? Yes!

So after the author in **Hebrews 5:1-4** outlined for his readers universal principles of high priesthood he was then ready to show his readers how these universal principles applied to Christ. But there was a problem that first of all had to be overcome. If the high priests were divinely appointed and were divinely appointed from the descendants of Aaron, how could

Christ be a divinely appointed high priest since the descendants of Aaron would have come from the tribe of Levi and Christ was not from the tribe of Levi but rather from the tribe of Judah?

The author then addressed this problem in **Hebrews 5:5-6**. And how did the author address this problem? The author in Hebrews 5:5-6, seeking to establish that Christ was in fact a divinely appointed high priest, focused on the glory bestowed by God on His Son when He appointed His Son as high priest.

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 5:5-6** and see if this is not so. **“So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten you’; (6) just as He says also in another passage, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’”**

So did the author by focusing on the glory bestowed by God on His Son when He appointed Him as high priest solve this problem of Christ not having come from the tribe of Levi and therefore not having come from the descendants of Aaron? Yes! I believe he did.

So how did the author accomplish this? He quoted two Old Testament prophetic pronouncements from the Psalms in order to prove the fact that God had indeed bestowed the glory of the high priesthood on His Son and thus had divinely appointed Him. So, what was the first prophetic pronouncement that the author quoted?

The first one, quoted in **Hebrews 5:5**, came from **Psalms 2:7** where the Psalmist, based on **Acts 13:32-33**, in essence communicated to his readers a thousand years before Christ that on the day of Christ’s resurrection and in view of His imminent exaltation to His Father’s right hand that His Father would say to Him, **“You are My Son, today I have begotten you.”**

But even though this Psalm established the fact that Christ was God’s Son, and on the day of His resurrection and in anticipation to His exaltation that God the Father would speak these certain words to his Son, the words that He spoke to His Son did not speak specifically of Him being appointed by God as high priest.

This is why the author of Hebrews in **Hebrews 5:6** then quoted a second Psalm or in other words **Psalm 110:4**, which also recorded words that God the Father would be speaking to His Son on the day of His resurrection and in view of His exaltation. And what were those words recorded for us in this second Psalm? **“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”**

This pronouncement clearly communicated that when God the Father resurrected His Son and subsequently exalted His Son that He also appointed His Son as high priest not according to the old order of priesthood established under the Old Covenant but according to an entirely new order of priesthood; the order of Melchizedek, who according to **Genesis 14:18-20** served as both a king and a priest to God in a city called Salem prior to the giving of the Law or in other words prior to the Old Covenant through Moses.

This new order of priesthood, this order of Melchizedek, did not flow out of the Old Covenant, which was rooted in animal sacrifices but rather it flowed out of the New Covenant that was rooted in Christ’s self-sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, which of course was a superior sacrifice by a superior high priest.

And who was this superior sacrifice and who was this superior high priest? Jesus, the Son of God! So did Christ, based on **Hebrews 5:5-6**; though he was not from the tribe of Levi nor taken from the sons of Aaron, fulfill the universal principle of divine appointment?

Yes! Absolutely! In fact, He not only fulfilled the universal principle of divine appointment, He more than fulfilled it.

So after the author dealt with the problem of how Christ fulfilled the universal principle of divine appointment, even though He was not from the tribe of Levi and therefore not one of the descendants of Aaron, what did the author do next?

The author in Hebrews 5:7-10, after explaining the glory that God bestowed on His Son when He appointed Him high priest, then went on to describe Christ’s path to that appointment. So, what was His path? Was it His relationship with the Father? No!

Christ's path to His divine appointment as high priest was **suffering, obedience and perseverance**. So if there is any doubt about this let me now read for you **Hebrews 5:7-10**. **“In the days of His [Christ's] 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. (8) 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.”** So was Christ's path to His appointment as high priest based on something more than His relationship with His Father? Yes. His path to His appointment as high priest was the path of suffering, obedience and perseverance. So where do we see this in this passage?

Let us first of all look at Christ's suffering in **verse 7**. And what does it say? **“In 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.”** So do we see the suffering of Christ in this verse? Yes! These prayers that were being offered up to God by Christ with loud crying and with tears in the days of His flesh were not being offered up because He was not suffering but because He was suffering.

Now even though there may have been various times while He was in the flesh where He may have prayed in this way to His Father, the specific incident that must certainly have been in the mind of this author when he wrote these words were the prayers Christ offered up to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to his arrest, trial and crucifixion, for it was in that place according to **Luke 22:44** that His prayers were so intense His sweat became like drops of blood suggesting that subcutaneous capillaries of His skin were bursting because of the stress that He was undergoing in anticipation of the cross. Can this actually happen? Yes, it called hematuridrosis.

So, what was He praying? When we examine the various gospel accounts of Christ's prayers and supplications that He offered up to His Father in the garden of Gethsemane, the only thing that is recorded for us and that was repeated three times were these words, **“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”** This is clear from **Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-43 and Luke 22:40-46**.

So did God, the One able to save Him from death, answer Christ's prayer? Absolutely! Does this mean that the cup that His Father gave His Son to drink, which was His crucifixion, passed from Christ? No! What it means was that God's will was done, just as Christ had prayed. And what was God's will? God's will was for His Son to die on our behalf so that we might be saved by grace through faith knowing that Christ's death did in fact pay the full debt of our sin.

And why did God give His Son what He prayed for? He gave His Son what He prayed for because of His **"piety."** Let us go back to the verse, **"In 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."**

The word "piety (EULABEIA) can also be translated "fear." The reverential fear that led to Christ's complete abandonment of His will to His Father in the midst of suffering was the reason why His Father answered His prayers. This abandonment to His Father's will in the midst of His suffering helped Him to experience something new. So, what do I mean by this?

Let us look at **Hebrews 5:8** and what does it say? **"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered."** So, what does this mean? He "learned obedience" means that the Son arrived "at a new stage of experience" in respect to obedience as He passed through the school of suffering.

In other words, Christ was obedient before He suffered. But He was not able before He suffered to practice obedience in the same way as He practiced obedience in the midst of His suffering, for obedience in the midst of His suffering is far harder. Suffering provides certain opportunities for obedience that we would not be able to experience apart from suffering.

So as Christ learned obedience through what He suffered, was there any profit to it? Let us now read **Hebrews 5:9.** **"And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation."** So, what does this mean?

The profit of Christ learning obedience through the things He suffered was that after He persevered through this learning process He was **"made**

perfect.” So, what does that mean? Christ having been “made perfect” referred to Christ’s graduation from the school of suffering after persevering and successfully completing His work of redemption.

So should Christ’s graduation from the school of suffering after persevering and successfully completing His work of redemption be a source of joy for us? Absolutely! Why? It opened the door to eternal salvation for those who are willing to obey Him, which is actually what the author told his readers at the end of **Hebrews 5:9**.

So, what does this mean for us practically? This is what it means. If we are going to take advantage of Christ’s graduation from the school of suffering that made it possible for those who obey Him to receive eternal salvation, then we must be willing, when we profess faith in Christ, to go down that same path as Christ, that path of “suffering, obedience, and perseverance,” for it is this path that will result in glory just as it did for Christ.

And is there help for us as we seek to go down this path? Absolutely! What does **Hebrews 5:10** tell us? It tells us that after Jesus had been made perfect or in other had graduated from the school of suffering after persevering and successfully completing His work of redemption that He was designated as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. And why was this done? This was done so that He might provide us the help so that we might be able to successfully walk the same path that He walked with a similar glorious result.

May God give us the grace to understand that the help we need to successfully walk the path of suffering, obedience, and perseverance is available to us through Christ our great heavenly high priest.