

## Hebrews 5:1-10

### *“The perfect priest”*

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#### I. Introduction

In the arena of religion one of the most important questions a follower of one religion can ask the follower of another religion is, “*Who “mediates” between you and your god?*” “*Who do you go too when you have violated your religious practice and now need to be pardoned?*” We Christians might ask, “*What do you do about SIN?*” we are in the heart of the book of Hebrews chapters 5-9 and it is all about answering that question and as such it’s all about Jesus as our High Priest and what He alone has done about SIN! The Hebrews, in which the author writes, were familiar with the idea of the Messiah and they were familiar about the high priest but they were *not familiar with the Messiah also being the High Priest.* To complicate things, the writer needs to combat what was known about Jesus as far as His earthly ancestry being from the tribe of Judah not from the priestly tribe of Levi as Moses and Aaron were. Jesus while on earth had no access to the temple as a priest, He never performed any priestly duties which would have contradicted the Hebrews concept of the priesthood.

#### II. Vs. 1-4 Four qualification for a priest

As we continue looking at Jesus’ superiority over that of Aaron as high priest the first four verses deal with the *general qualifications* to be considered a high priest. We know this to be the case by the initial words of the writer in chapter 5 as we read, “*for every*

*high priest*” and this indicates that he is not speaking specifically of Jesus Christ. This can be easily compared to the opening words of verse 5 where we read, “*So also Christ*” which indicate that **this section is dealing specifically with Jesus as High Priest.** So in the first four verses of the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter the writer lists **four regulations or qualifications, to be a priest in Israel.** The writer is reminding these Hebrews what a priest really is. He is **NOT** to be identified by what he wears or the tasks he officiates. These four qualifications for a priest are:

1. Vs. 1a “**Taken from among men**”: I realize that in today’s society of political correctness and gender equality this maybe offensive but “**A priest must first be a man**”. But more importantly as this relates to Jesus, in order to represent humanity Jesus needed to cover His deity with His humanity. Paul writes of this in Philippians 2:6-7 saying, “*who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*” He entered the human race as a babe in Bethlehem.
2. Vs. 1b “**He may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins**”: The second qualification isn’t so much a qualification as it is **a responsibility**. Further more it isn’t centered around what he does so much as **WHY** he must do what he does. The Hebrew priests chief concern is dealing with “sins”! The priest offered sacrifices to deal with **the single most important problem facing humanity: That which separates man from God. He must deal with universal problem of continual personal failure, SIN and the enviable consequences of that failure of sin, GUILT!** This is the experience of every single person in humanity and no person has been able to escape its grip over our lives. There is not a person save Jesus who has ever known what it is to not suffer from SIN and a sense of GUILT. **The problem isn’t just sin and rebellion, no the problem is what do we do once we have had our “fun of sin and rebellion” and all we have left is guilt and shame?** The antidote to sin and the consequences of sin, GUILT is life must be sacrificed and a priest must therefore offer that sacrifice. Jesus completely fulfilled this at the cross when as both the sacrifice (the Lamb of God) and the High Priest He became both the priest and the Victim. And as we noted already in 4:14 “*passed through the heavens*” presenting His own blood to the Father at the mercy seat.
3. Vs. 3 “**As for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins**”: The third qualification of a priest is that he must himself be afflicted with the same single most important problem facing humanity, that which separates man from God. He must understand the same problems others face. But here lies the problem some of these Hebrews had with Jesus: **How could Jesus Christ fulfill this and still be sinless? How could he live as a man and never sin, and yet understand how we feel when we sin?** This was the area that the enemy was

using to dislodge the faith of some of these Hebrews under intense persecution. We will return to this in a bit as it is the whole point of the passage.

4. Vs. 4 "**No man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was**": The fourth qualification of a priest is that he must be appointed by God! **A man doesn't decide this as a career choice but rather is called too it by God**. The truth is no church, or institution can ordain priests, only God can do that. **The purpose of a priest, was to cleanse and strengthen humanity making us fit for life. If a priest didn't do that then they were he is worthless**. That is what God's indictment was against the priests or shepherds was in Ezekiel 34 to who only used God's sheep for their own benefit.

### III. Vs. 5-10 Jesus the perfect priest

Vs. 5-6 This next section, (verses 5-10), as noted deals with Jesus' qualifications in light of the four mentioned in the first four verses. The difficulty in this section is that the writer doesn't take Jesus' qualifications in the same order as the above four. For instance, **the first two quotations of verses 5-6 answer the qualifications of 1 and 4 that a priest had to represent humanity in its weakness and be called of God to do so**. To do this the writer quotes two psalms that prove his point.

1. The first quote is out of Psalm 2:7, and relates to Jesus being in the womb of Mary and born in Bethlehem. Thus we see that Jesus fulfilled the first qualification of becoming a priest as He became a man; one with us in the essential humanity of our life.
2. The second quote is out of Psalm 110:4 is where we are told that at the age of thirty he entered upon the priesthood. The difference here is that this quote refers to a different priesthood than that of the Aaronic priesthood; one that was established before Aaron known as the order, of *Melchizedek*. We will learn much more about this mysterious person as we go on in Hebrews. But for now this is a reference to Genesis 14:18-20 and here in psalm 110:4 were we see him as a person who was a king-priest (royal-priest) who lived in the time of Abraham. His ancestry is completely unknown but we do know that he was the king of Salem which was the ancient name for Jerusalem and that he was the priest of the True God. We also realize that he lived long before Aaron and as such the priesthood of Melchizedek superseded the Aaronic priesthood and that his priesthood was unending.

Vs. 7-8 In the remaining 4 verse we take up the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> qualifications of being a priest

the responsibility of taking care of the greatest need of humanity, dealing with sin

through the sacrifice and how Jesus could never sin, yet fully sympathize with sinners?

Again this is in reverse order as the writer take up the 3<sup>rd</sup> qualification and how can **Jesus**

**sympathize with all that we humans go through, if he has never sinned**? The answer to

that is in verse 7 and as you read that verse there is no other incident that we know of in

the ministry of Jesus that this could refer too other than Jesus prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, which is found in three of the Gospels (Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42 and Luke 22:39-46). This verse fits perfectly into the description where we see Jesus making, prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the Father who was able to save him from death. As the Lord and his disciples left the Upper Room they passed through the dark valley of the Kidron, up unto the side of the Mount of Olives to the olive tree grove where it was his custom to go. Separating three of the disciples, Peter, James and John, he withdrew with them into the deeper shadows of the garden. There followed a protracted period of excruciating torment of spirit that found expression in loud, involuntary cries, streaming tears, and ending in a terrible bloody sweat. Here we come face to face with the mystery of the Garden of Gethsemane:

- A. First, is **the total unexpectedness of this to the Lord**. He had gone to the garden, but he suddenly began to be greatly distressed and troubled. Nothing like this is recorded of Him before. In Jesus' anticipation of what He would be going through and His explanations of it to the disciples, He had never once mentioned Gethsemane. There is **no prediction of this in the Old Testament**. There are many verses that predict what he would go through on the cross; but there is **not one word of what he endured in the garden**.
- B. Second, we note **His deep unrest of heart, and distress of soul**. Never prior to this do we ever read of Jesus experiencing such a thing. **So deeply troubled is Jesus that He does something unprecedented in His earthly ministry he appeals to his own disciples for help**. He asked them to bear him up in prayer as he went further into the shadows, falling first to his knees and then to his face, crying out before the Father. There we are told Jesus prayed three separate times each time asking the necessity of what He was presently experiencing. He even asked the Father to make clear to him if this was a necessary activity. The only explanation to Jesus' behavior is to realize that this experience was so unexpected and sudden that it had left Him for the first time, confused. Such things come upon us all the time but had never come upon Jesus.

To this mystery Hebrews 5:7 reveals that Jesus was facing the full misery which sin produces in the heart of the sinner. The Garden of Gethsemane reveals that Jesus was being exposed to the full intensity of what makes sin in our lives so defeating:

- **Shame**: Shame is the awareness of my unfitness. A self-contempt, a loathing of myself. Not being able to look myself because I have been false to my standards, and ideals. As Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane, suddenly, for the first

time, he began to feel ashamed. All the naked filth of human depravity forced itself upon him and he experienced the shame of our misdeeds as though they were his. No wonder he He cried to the Father, *“If it be possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless,”* he adds, *“not my will, but thine, be done.”*

- **Guilt**: After awaking the sleeping disciples Jesus again returned to prayer and He began to feel a sense of guilt. Guilt is the sense of injury done to someone else. It is the awareness of damage that I have caused to the innocent or the undeserving. Jesus experienced an awful sense of guilt, as if He deserving judgment. He writhed in silent torment and Mark tells us he began to pray more earnestly than ever before.
- **Despair**: Once again he came to his disciples and finding them sleeping he went back. And this third experience was the worst of all, as Jesus for the first time experienced despair. He was crushed under a sense of hopelessness, of helpless discouragement, of utter defeat. His eyes filled with tears, his mouth was opened in involuntary, agonized cries, his heart was crushed as in a wine press, so that the blood was literally forced from his veins and his sweat fell to the ground in great, bloody drops.

This is what is meant by the writer of Hebrews in the words in verse 8, **“Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”** **Jesus through the Garden of Gethsemane experience learned what it means to obey God when every cell in his body wanted to disobey, when everything within him cried out to flee this experience.** Yet, knowing this was the will of God, he obeyed, trusting God to see him through. He learned what it felt like to hang on when failure makes us want to throw the whole thing over. When we are so defeated, so despairing, so filled with shame, and guilt that we want to forget the whole thing. He knows what this is like, he went the whole way, he took the full brunt of it. You and I will never pass through a Gethsemane like he went through. He went the whole distance.

Vs. 9-10 Carries us on to the victory of the cross with the words “Being made perfect”.

Because He alone entered into all that any sinner in all their weakness knows, *“He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”* When we obey him, as he obeyed the Father, then all that God is, is made available to us, just as in the hour of his anguish. Jesus refused to question the Father's wisdom. He refused to blame the Father, to

say what He was going through was unfair. **He refused to take refuge in unbelief even though this came suddenly and unexpectedly upon him.** Instead, Jesus surrender to His Father's loving care and looked to him to sustain Him through what He was experiencing. Psalm 107:27-29 says, “*They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and **are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses.** He calms the storm, so that its waves are still.”*