

Hebrews Chapter Five (vv.1-10)

The Lord Jesus is superior to prophets, priests, kings and angels (Hebrews 1-2). He is also superior to Moses, who led the people **out** (Hebrews 3), Joshua, who led the people **in** (Hebrews 4) and now He will be shown to be superior to Aaron, who led the people **on** (Hebrews 5-10). He is the superior Great High Priest. His priesthood is superior in terms of its: **order** (5.1-7.28), **ministry** (8.1-9.14), **covenant** (9.15-28) and **sacrifice** (10.1-18). Hebrews 5.1-10 emphasises the **call** (v.1, 4-6, 10) and **capacity** (v.2-3, 7-9) of every high priest. 5.1-4 focus on the **Aaronic priesthood**, whilst 5.5-10 consider the **priesthood of Christ** after the order of Melchizedek.

1 *For every high priest (being) taken (chosen) from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:*

Or, every high priest *'is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God'*. The high priest identified with those he represented and must partake of the nature of the person for whom he officiates. This would enable them to know and understand the difficulties of manhood. Aaron, unlike Moses, knew the slave conditions of the people in Egypt. He had been exposed to the same pressures and trials of the people. Every high priest was 'appointed on men's behalf', or 'in their interests' in 'things pertaining to God'. This was his sphere of service and so he ministered in relation to **worship** (gifts) and **fellowship** (sacrifices for sins). Those who brought 'gifts' were **giving** and those who brought 'sacrifices for sins' were **receiving**. The adoring heart will always want to give to God (Matthew 2.11). Gifts were free will and for God's pleasure, e.g. peace offering for thanksgiving (Leviticus 7.15, Luke 10.21). Sacrifices for sins were brought with a view to atonement and forgiveness, i.e. the offerer's own blessing. These were for God's requirements or man's need.

2 *Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.*

The high priest is able to have compassion on the sinner because he himself knows the weakness of human flesh. The priest dealt with those who were 'ignorant' and 'out of the way' or 'erring'. **Ignorance** (e.g. Luke 23.34) is a lack of knowledge of God and His will which might and should have been known. Sins of omission (ignorance) still required a sin offering (Numbers 15.22-31). There was no such provision for the 'defiant' or 'wilful' sinner who committed a deliberate act of rebellion or blasphemy against God (Numbers 15.29-30, cf. Matthew 12.31-32). This will be considered in terms of **apostasy** later in the epistle (Hebrews 6.4-8, 10.26-31). Ignorance leads to 'erring', i.e. a departure from the revealed will of God (1 Peter 2.25, Romans 1.19-32). Let us be careful to get to know the Word of God.

The high priest was to have 'compassion' on such individuals. This is a unique word in the NT and means 'to deal gently and tenderly', showing 'control' and 'moderation'. The high priest was to deal firmly with sin, but tenderly with the sinner. This was not the attitude shown by the Scribes and Pharisees (John 8.4-5), but beautifully demonstrated by the Lord (John 8.10-11). If the priests became angry with the people then they could not minister effectively to them (Numbers 20.10). The high priest could be compassionate because he himself was 'compassed' or 'encircled' by sin. He 'wore the garment of weakness' and was therefore conscious of moral shortcomings.

3 *And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.*

As the priests were also sinners, they had a 'moral obligation' to offer sacrifices for their own sins as well as the sins of the people. This is seen in particular on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16.6, 11). *Leviticus 16.6: And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.* There was also a sin offering for the priest (Leviticus 4.3-12). To be a suitable representative, the priest must stand in purity before God and the people.

4 *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.*

To be the high priest was an 'honour' or 'precious' (a possible reference to garments of glory and beauty, Exodus 28.2). *Note. In connection with the Aaronic priesthood there was honour. In connection with our Great high Priest there is glory (5.5). To become a high priest after the order of Aaron, one must be called of God, (Exodus 28, Leviticus 8), belong to the tribe of Levi and physically descended from Aaron himself.* When those from a different tribe, or family within a tribe tried to seize the priesthood, God broke out in judgment (Numbers 16.20-35, 18.7). 1 Chronicles 6.3-15 gives the line of high priests from Aaron to the captivity and 1 Chronicles 6.49-53 from Aaron to David. As time went by, the high priest of Israel became more and more removed from the principal qualification of calling. Indeed, at the time of the Lord Jesus the Romans themselves chose the high priest, substituting **Caiaphas** for **Annas**. However, the Jews preferred to retain Annas, meaning there were two high priests in Jerusalem during the Lord's ministry, neither of whom had been chosen by God (Luke 3.2). The last high priest, **Phanni**, son of Samuel was even appointed by popular ballot (AD 67).

5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. 6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

'So also Christ' is the signal that the writer will compare those statements already made to the Lord Jesus. The high priest after the pattern of Aaron was **called** (5.1, 4) and had the **capacity** to minister (5.2-3). Our Great high Priest after the order of Melchizedek was also **called** (5.5-6, 10) and has the **capacity** to minister (cf. 4.14-16, 5.7-9) in a far greater way.

The Lord Jesus was **not** of the tribe of Levi. Did this mean He could not be a High Priest? **No!** The Lord Jesus is High Priest after a different order; the order of Melchizedek. As such, being born into the family of Aaron was not important; the calling of God was **all** important. This is emphasised by two quotations from **Psalm 2** (v.5) and **Psalm 110** (v.6). These are essential as they link together two parts of the epistle. Until now, the writer has been emphasising the **Sonship** of Christ. He will now go on to speak of His **Priesthood**. These quotations show that the same God who declared or 'saluted' the Lord Jesus as the Son of God at His **incarnation** now declares Him to be Great High Priest at His **resurrection** (cf. vv.9-10). He who is the perfect Son of God from eternity becomes the perfect High Priest to eternity. The priesthood of the Lord Jesus is an essential characteristic of His position as Son. **Psalm 2** stresses the One *Making* Him Priest (God); **Psalm 110** stresses the One *Made* Priest. The Lord Jesus did not 'glorify Himself' to be made a high priest. God glorified Him by calling Him to this office. In all things the Lord Jesus glorified not Himself, but rather humbled Himself (John 5.41, 44, 13.32, 17.5, 2 Peter 1.17).

Who was Melchizedek? He was King of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of the Most High God. He is only mentioned in three places in Scripture: **Genesis 14** (historically), **Psalm 110** (prophetically) and **Hebrews 5-7** (doctrinally). He is a picture of the Lord Jesus who will exercise a King-Priest ministry in the millennium (Zechariah 6.13). Melchizedek's order of priesthood is greater than that of Aaron (Hebrews 7). Abraham (and therefore Levi) acknowledged his greatness by paying him tithes.

The Lord Jesus is priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. What does this mean? The word 'order' has the idea of 'arrangement in time' or 'succession'. Aaron's order was marked by succession. When one high priest died, another took their place. This was flawed by the weakness and mortality of men. However, the order of Melchizedek is different. There is no record of Melchizedek's birth, death, ancestry, mother, father etc. (Hebrews 7.3). His order of priesthood is therefore eternal. There is no succession! This is therefore a different and superior order of priesthood; an order which came before and remains after that of Aaron. *Note. The Lord Jesus does function today after the **pattern** or nature of Aaron's priesthood. He meets our need in relation to the throne and the wilderness journey (Hebrews 2.17-18).*

10 Called (saluted) of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

So, following the 'perfecting' of the Lord Jesus (5.9), God publically saluted or addressed Him as high priest after the order of Melchizedek. This took place at the ascension of the Lord Jesus (see context of Psalm 110). Calvary was obviously a priestly work, but He could not be saluted as a priest 'for ever' after the order of Melchizedek until following His death and resurrection.

