



METRO NEW YORK WORLD MINISTRY
COMMENTARY on HEBREWS: VERSE by VERSE
Study Notes on Chapter Five by *Pastor Jeff Wehr*

Hebrews Chapter Five

5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

In the first four verse of chapter five, Paul will enumerate some of the qualifications for the appointment of a high priest. First we find that He must be “taken from among men.” The high priest for Israel could not have been an angel. It would have to be someone who was familiar with the frailty and experience of being human.

Second, they are “ordained for men in things pertaining to God.” Their calling to a sacred calling to serve like a mediator between God and the repentant sinner.

Third, he was to “offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.” In so doing, the high priest was showing God’s abhorrence of sin and the solution to be both forgiven and cleansed.

5:2 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.

Fourth, the high priest was to show “compassion on the ignorant.” They were to deal gently with those who have fallen prey to sin. Many people have never heard the everlasting gospel and hence do not know the way, they are as Paul says, “out of the way.” But thanks be to God that men who have been misled by others or by their own sinful inclinations can find peace and salvation with God. The high priest is able to have compassion, after all, he too has been “compassed with infirmity.”

5:3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

Because the earthly high priest was also “compassed with infirmity,” he ought to make an offering for his sins as well. By doing so, this will help him to be a compassionate and understanding high priest.

5:4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

A fifth qualification is that the high priest is “called of God.” Aaron was chosen of God. The tribe of Levi was chosen of God. And it was God who chose to have the descendants of Levi to serve in the role of the priests of Israel. This does not mean that all these priests were good men; some in fact were terrible men, but God nonetheless set up the Levitical priesthood.



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5:5 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.

In verses 5-10, Paul will now show that Jesus meets the qualifications for the role of High Priest.

In the time of Christ, the position of high priest had been bought and sold, and at times even acquired by assassination. Men desired the role of high priest to glorify themselves and to gain wealth and notoriety. But “Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest.” As Jesus said, “If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:” John 8:54

Since the Father appointed Jesus as our High Priest, it demonstrates the love the Father has for us. As Paul wrote, “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:19

The phrase “Thou art my Son,” is another reference and proof to the divinity of Christ and hence His superiority to the Levitical priesthood. See Psalm 2:7

5:6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

In this verse, Paul would have us to consider two thoughts. First, there is the declaration that Jesus is the Son of God in verse 5. This is taken from Psalm 2:7, which reads, “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

The second reference is to Jesus as our priest “after the order of Melchisedec.” This is taken from Psalm 110:4, which reads, “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Jesus as the Son of God would naturally have the right to approach the Father due to His divinity. As the Son of man, who lived a perfect life in our fallen flesh, Jesus would not be denied any access to the Father. Yet Jesus chose not to glorify Himself, but to wait upon the Father for the approval of His sacrifice for man.

So in verse 5 and 6, we have the Son of God becoming the high priest of our salvation. He comes “after the order of Melchisedec.” Unlike the earthly priesthood that was based upon a bloodline through Aaron, Jesus is appointed high priest because of His perfect life. After all, the name Melchisedec means “king of righteousness.” So Jesus is the high priest of our profession NOT because of genetics, but because of righteousness.

5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

It was Jesus who “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears” in the Garden of Gethsemane. While Jesus prayed that this cup of our indignation might pass from Him, nevertheless He closed with the words “Thy will be done!” It was not the first death that Christ referred to, but the second death in which there is no hope of a resurrection. He was not praying to be saved from death but saved out of death, meaning He prayed for the hope of a resurrection that He might see the Father again. What this is saying is that Christ was willing to suffer an eternal death for us, whereby He would never see the Father again.



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Christ had always been an intercessor for others, but in Gethsemane He sought an intercessor for Himself. However, it was prophesied that He must tread the winepress alone. With all our sins laid upon Christ He must now experience the bitter cup of that separation from God. Before this He had always walked in the presence of His Father; always doing the will of His Father. But now He is the Sin-bearer and cannot see beyond the portals of the tomb. His decision is made, He will die for guilty humanity that we might enjoy the presence of the Father forever.

So when you consider that the earthly high priest had compassion upon the ignorant, in that the earthly high priest himself is familiar with the weakness of human flesh and sin, think now upon the compassion of Christ.

He who knew no sin, became sin for us all. The earthly priest was willing to offer up sacrifices for the ignorant, but Christ was willing to offer up Himself eternally. Now I ask you, Who is the great high priest? It is Jesus. Who is the most loving and compassionate high priest? It is Jesus.

5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Even though Jesus was the Son of God, it became necessary for Him to become one of us. He learned as we must learn. He would learn through suffering, for the path of the just faces many tests and trials in this fallen world. Nay, more than this, the path of the just faces opposition from the evil one and evil men.

Jesus was willing to learn obedience from suffering. He did not turn back and say “This is too difficult.” Oh no, He faced the trials and hardships that we must face, and yet He always remained faithful and pure. Jesus is our encouragement to always do the right no matter the consequences.

5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

And because He lived a perfect life in the likeness of our sinful flesh, He became the author of eternal salvation for us who are born with this sinful flesh. Because He lived a sinless life in our sinful flesh, we now know that we can obey Him by following in His steps. This is an important part of God’s plan for our eternal salvation.

5:10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Because He lived this perfect life He has earned the right to be the “high priest after the order of Melchisedec.”

5:11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

Spiritual things are spiritually understood. If a man lacks an understanding of God’s Word, he will find certain concepts hard to grasp. But as one draws closer in similitude to the character of Christ and has made the Word his foundation for faith and practice, he will have an easier time grasping more difficult sayings.



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5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Over a course of time we should be better students of God's Word. Through unnecessary talk and the folding of hands we have lost valuable time in our understanding of God's Word and in our spiritual growth in Christ. Our failure to build on what we know makes it necessary to go back and relearn many lessons. Had we added to our faith every day we would be teachers of God's Word

5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

The milk of God's Word is not bad, but we should have grown up to eat more solid food from God's Word. We are not to remain as babes in Christ, but to grow up into full maturity in Christ Jesus. The man who is "unskillful in the word of righteousness" may know little about righteousness, but he can and should know more.

5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

As we study through the book of Hebrews, Paul is preparing us for some "strong meat." He wants to encourage us to get off the milk and to dig deeper into God's Word. We are not to remain as babies in Christ; we are to grow and mature. As we do, we will be better able to discern between good and evil. We will have clearer spiritual eyesight, clearer perceptions of truth, and a greater knowledge of the true nature of Christ's work for us as our High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary.