

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:"

Jesus Christ has thus far been called the high priest four times in this letter. The author finds it necessary to expound upon the priesthood of Christ, since his exhortations to 'enter into rest' have been based upon Christ's eternal mediation as high priest.

The high priest was selected to represent the people before God. He is 'ordained for 'men' meaning this mediator was appointed for mans benefit. The role of the priest was to offer gifts as well as sacrifices. Gifts were free-will offerings to glorify God, while sacrifices were required offerings for sin.

The high priest was necessary to offer both gifts and sacrifices. In the same way, good works are only acceptable through the high priest Jesus Christ, and sins can only be purged through his once for all sacrifice.

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Isaiah 64:6

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10

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."

Being a man, the high priest could have compassion, having knowledge of the weakness of human nature. As a mediator between God and the people, the high priest had to be patient with the sinner, but could not condone the sin. The high priest had to be understanding, but could not compromise God's word.

The high priest was to mediate on behalf of the ignorant and misguided. The old system provided atonement for unintentional sin. Atonement was not made available for those who sinned deliberately and in defiance or were unrepentant.

"And the priest shall make atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them. But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he is born in the land, or a stranger, the

same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people."

Num. 15:28-30

It has already been pointed out twice in this letter that Christ is a compassionate high priest having experienced the infirmities of human nature. Being God he is righteous and uncompromising.

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

Not only being familiar with human weakness but also giving in to it, it was necessary for the high priest of the old testament to offer sacrifices on his behalf as well as for the people.

"If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering."

Lev. 4:3

Being without sin Christ did not offer a sacrifice for himself, but became the sacrifice for the sins of the people.

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

The office of high priest was instituted by God as a position of honor and great importance. Aaron was appointed by God as the first high priest. Any true high priest had to be appointed by God, seeing that his duties pertain to the things of God (v. 1).

"And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priests office."

Ex. 28: 1-3

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

The author uses the old testament scriptures to prove that Jesus Christ was the King/Son as well as the high priest. Being king did not disqualify him from the priestly office.

The kings of Israel were descended of the tribe of Judah, while the priestly tribe was the tribe of Levi. Jesus, a descendant of David, was of the tribe of Judah. He was referred to as a king and the Son of God, however he was never in his earthly ministry referred to as a priest. The author quotes Psalm 2:7 proving God had ordained Jesus as Son and heir. Psalm 110:1 was quoted earlier in this letter to also point to the kingship of Christ. (Heb. 1:3) Psalm 110:4 is now quoted showing that the Messiah would not only be a king, but also appointed by God to be a priest.

"And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."
Zech. 6:12-13

Christ can fill these two offices for his priesthood is not of the line of Aaron, but of a line older and superior to that of Aaron, which is the order of Melchisedec. (The order of Melchisedec will be discussed and the superiority of this order proven in chapter 7).

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;"

As a man, Christ completely trusted and depended upon the Father. He had a perfect fear or reverence of God. The author has stated repeatedly that Christ was a true man. He experienced all human infirmities and was tempted in all ways. (Heb. 4:15) As the high priest offered sacrifices for his own infirmities, so Christ in the days of his flesh offered prayers and supplications to the Father because of the infirmities of his flesh. This was evident in the garden of Gethsemane.

"And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening

him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."
 Luke 22:39-44

Christ did not sin. He depended totally upon the Father who heard his Son's prayers and delivered him from all sin which is death.

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

His trust and dependence upon the Father was tested to the utmost. He was the Son and heir, but also a man. He learned obedience, something he knew of being God, but as God could never experience. So Jesus 'learned' to be obedient. He experienced the full cost of the obedience he demands. (Heb. 12:4) Having been tested to the limit concerning obedience, he can as the high priest, be compassionate knowing the full strength of temptation.

5:9-10 - "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec."

Through his calling, his obedience, and his sufferings, within the realm of time, Jesus was made perfect or superior to all things. He fulfilled his calling, accomplished all the Father sent him to do, and became the perfect high priest and everlasting mediator.

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:"
 Phil. 2:8-9

He became the author, the source, or the pioneer of eternal salvation, having provided the once for all sacrifice. As was presented earlier, he became the fulfillment of mans destiny. (Heb. 2:9-11) Jesus Christ is eternal salvation to all who obey the gospel message. True believing is manifested in obedience. In the context of this letter, obedience is the means by which the believer grows.

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."
 Acts 5:32

The readers are again reminded that Christ has been called a priest not in the line of Aaron, but of 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."

There are still many things the author wants to present regarding the priesthood of Christ and his calling in the order of Melchisedec. The author refrains from going any further at this point. The teachings are hard to express because the readers are not ready to grasp it.

5:12-14 - "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. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 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."

The author decides that a rebuke is in order and then some preliminary teaching before the subject of Melchisedec is resumed. Enough time had elapsed that the readers should have matured enough in the faith to the point of being able to teach. They needed to again be instructed in the elementary truths of the gospel. It was not that they didn't know them or believe them, but they could not apply them.

Christianity is such that if one is not growing then he is actually slipping. The Christian is called to growth. Verse 12, 'and are become such as have need of milk' indicates slipping. The reason for the slippage is lack of use. It is use or study which produces greater maturity and discernment (v. 14).

When one first becomes a believer, he is unskilled in the word. He knows what he believes, but can easily be confused by other doctrines or beliefs. When his faith is shaken he needs mature believers to assure and instruct him in the truth. As a whole this church had not grown in applying the principles of the faith. They were still being confused, by possibly the Jews and Judiazers, on the elementary principles of their beliefs. Paul came upon the same problem with the people in Corinth.

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."

I Cor. 3:1-2