

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Website: www.churchredeemeraz.org

Series: **STUDIES IN HEBREWS**

Pastor/Teacher

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Text: **Heb. 5:1-10**

Gary L. W. Johnson

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CHRIST IN HIS OFFICE AS PRIEST

The connection between this and the foregoing paragraph (4:14-16) is clearly indicated by the word FOR. Now comes the confirmation of 4:14-16, by showing what true priesthood is and what it requires. It means oneness with man (vv. 1-3) and authority from God (v. 4), and then it is seen that Christ has both of these (vv. 5-8), and on this account is Priest and Savior (vv. 9, 10).¹

I. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR PRIESTHOOD (vv. 1-4)

NOTE: It should be remembered that chapter and verse numbers are not part of the inspired text. This is nowhere more apparent than here, for the writer's thought in 4:14-16 is continued without any break. As mentioned in the introduction, FOR introduces the reasons why He, Christ, meets the requirements for priesthood and can, therefore, be depended upon.

A. The Genuine Humanity (vv. 1-3; cf. Ex. 28:1)

1. One of the two qualifications for priesthood is that of fellowship with man; **TAKEN FROM AMONG MEN IS APPOINTED ON BEHALF OF MEN IN THINGS PERTAINING TO GOD.** Why is this? "The principle lying at the foundation of our Savior's priesthood, of which the Levitical priesthood was emblematical, is this: God is displeased with man on account of sin, and cannot have direct favorable intercourse with him. There must be a mediator – one to deal for man with God.² The priest was a mediator, like the king and the prophet. But kings and prophets were mediators by reason of personal charisma, because they were individually chosen by God; the priest was *IPSO FACTO* a mediator, for the priesthood is an institution for mediation.³

What is stated in vv. 1-3 is as follows:

- a. The priest is **TAKEN FROM AMONG MEN**
- b. The priest is **APPOINTED ON THE BEHALF OF MEN**
- c. The priest's occupation is **IN THINGS PERTAINING TO GOD**
- d. The priest **OFFERS BOTH GIFTS AND SACRIFICES FOR SINS** (cf. Lev. 16)
- e. The priest must be one who **CAN DEAL GENTLY WITH THE IGNORANT AND MISGUIDED**

2. The Greek word *METRIOPATHEIN* (trans. **DEAL GENTLY WITH**), "It means," according to Barclay, "the ability to bear with people without getting irritated; it means the ability not to lose one's temper with people when they are foolish and will not learn and do the same thing over and over again. It describes the attitude to others which does not issue in anger at their fault and which does not condone it, but which to the end of the day spends itself in a gentle yet powerful sympathy which by its very patience directs a man back to the right way."⁴ The purpose for this is because the priest has to deal with the **IGNORANT AND MISGUIDED**. "It was for such people – for those who succumbed to the moral infirmities that are common to mankind – that sin offerings were prescribed in the law: "And the priest shall

make atonement for the soul that erreth, when he sinneth unwittingly, before Jehovah, to make atonement for him; and he shall be forgiven" (Num. 15:28). No such provision was made for the *deliberate* and *defiant* law breaker."⁵ (cf. Num. 15:30).

3. The reason given for the Priest's attitude toward his fellow men, is because HE HIMSELF ALSO IS BESET WITH WEAKNESS. "The verb," says Vincent, "is graphic: *has infirmity lying round him*, Comp. 12:1, of the *encompassing* cloud of witnesses."⁶ The priest himself has weakness lying around like a chain.⁷ Weakness (Gk. *ASTHENEIAN*) the *moral* weakness which makes men capable of sin. This is denied in the case of Christ. See ch. 7:28.⁸ The common ground with us, says Hughes, "was that of his fellow humanity which was subject to temptation or testing. The difference between him and us is that he unfailingly overcame temptation, whereas we have been overcome by temptation. For him to have been our fellow in defeat would have been of no worth to us. The levitical high priests were sinners and therefore in need of atonement no less than the people on whose behalf they ministered. Hence the imperfections of that system with its constantly repeated sacrifices which could never take away sins and cleanse the conscience (cf. Heb. 10:1-11). What we, and they, needed was not a fellow loser but a winner; not one who shares our defeat but one who is able to lead us to victory; not a sinner but a savior."⁹

B. The Godly Calling (v. 4)

The second qualification needed for priesthood is authority from God. Because God cannot have fellowship with man due to sin, a mediator is needed, and since it is man's sin which has caused the problem, then the mediator must be of God's and not man's choosing, for we have no way of knowing whether God will accept a representative of our own choosing. Therefore, God must appoint the mediator. This is illustrated in our text with the calling by God of Aaron.

II. HOW JESUS CHRIST REALIZED THE REQUIREMENTS (vv. 5-10)

Does Jesus meet the two requirements given in vv. 1-4?

A. The Godly Calling (vv. 5-6; Ps. 2:7, 110:4)

"His priesthood," says Griffith-Thomas, "is based on His Sonship, the latter truth being the theme of chapter 1. And because He is Son, He is, therefore, Priest, and has been appointed by God."¹⁰ The royal and the sacerdotal offices are united in him. The author of our epistle is, in effect, emphasizing the truth that there is but *one Messiah*, unique both in his sonship and in his priesthood.¹¹

B. The Genuine Humanity (vv. 7, 8)

1. IN THE DAYS OF HIS FLESH ("in the days when he was a man on earth" J.B. Phillips trans.) referring to the days of poverty, weariness, reproach, and supreme testing. LOUD CRYING AND TEARS – What does the author mean by this? He remembers Jesus in Gethsemane. "The word he uses for CRY (Gk. *KRAUGE*)...is a cry which a man does not choose to utter but is wrung from in the stress of some tremendous tension or searing pain."¹²

a. THE GETHSEMANE ACCOUNT (cf. Matt. 26:36-46)

(1) The first petition (vv. 36-39; cf. 20:22)

(2) The second petition (vv. 40-42)

(3) The third petition (vv. 43-46)

What is the meaning of what S. Lewis Johnson has called "tortured" petition? "The agony of Christ at Gethsemane," writes Hughes, "was occasioned by something other and deeper than the fear of physical death; for what he faced was not simply a painful death, but also judgment – the

judgment of a holy God against sin, our sin, which is the experience of separation from God. Hence the terrible cry of dereliction from the cross: MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME? (Mk. 15:34)...The LOUD CRIES AND TEARS which accompanied Christ's supplication are to be understood, then in relation to the indescribable darkness of the horror that he, our High Priest, was to pass through as, on the cross, he bore not only the defilement and guilt of the world's sin but also its judgment."¹³

LEARNED OBEDIENCE FROM THE THINGS HE SUFFERED (Gk. *EMATHEN APH' HON EPATHEN*). This, says Barclay, "is a linguistic jingle...and this is a thought which keeps recurring in the Greek thinkers. They are always connecting *MATHEIN*, to learn, and *PATHEIN*, to suffer...God speaks to men in many experiences of life, and not least in those which try their hearts and souls."¹⁴

C. The Resultant Salvation (vv. 9, 10)

1. What does it mean by Jesus HAVING BEEN MADE PERFECT? "By means of the experience through which he passed, the Authorized Version says that Jesus WAS MADE PERFECT (Gk. *TELEIOUN*). *TELEIOUN* is the verb of the adjective *TELEIOS*. *TELEIOS* can quite correctly be translated PERFECT so long as we remember what the Greek meant by that perfection. To him a thing was *TELEIOS* if it perfectly carried out the purpose for which it was designed. When he used the word, he was not thinking in terms of abstract and metaphysical perfection; he was thinking in terms of *function*. What the writer to the Hebrews is saying is that all the experiences of suffering, through which Jesus passed, perfectly fitted him to become the Savior of men."¹⁵
2. The word DESIGNATED (Gk. *PROSAGOREUTHEIS*, only used here in the New Testament) lit. since he was *addressed* or saluted by God. God recognized and saluted him as that which he had become by passing through and completing his earthly discipline.¹⁶

CONCLUSION:

In preparing this set of sermon notes, I came across fellow Reformed Pastor Lewis Allen's blog post on *Gethsemane, Tears and the Truth*. "On Sunday morning I preached on Gethsemane. I'm drawn to the Passion narrative like no other part of Scripture, and always count it a holy privilege to trace the suffering obedience of the Saviour in my pulpit ministry. In the darkness of Gethsemane Jesus was, surely, 'made sin for us', in the language of 2 Corinthians 5.21. In consenting to receive the cup of wrath, He was being overwhelmed by the horror of His separation from His Father, as His soul was being invaded by the sin of a lost humanity. He also felt the anguish that, a few short hours later, He would be consumed by the wrath of His Father, and would be broken apart in order to redeem His own. He cried, sweated, dreaded, and suffered there for us. Some sermons are so hard to preach, but do us so, so much good, and this was one of them. We worshipped as we heard the Word. We sang songs and hymns which focused us upon the sufferings of the Lord Jesus for His people, and our hearts were led to the Lord's Supper, which I was leading. I fenced the Table, and prayed, called believers to walk forwards to the Table to receive the bread and wine, and began to read Psalm 23. I began, and then couldn't continue. After verse 2 great waves of emotion smashed into me. I paused, for well over 20 seconds, then managed another phrase. Then another almost 20 second

pause. I got my way to the closing verse of the Psalm and looked to the Table to see the last person coming up. Apart from him, I didn't see a single person take the Sacrament; I was too blinded by my tears, and overcome by the Lord's grace. I thought about that lonely, agonizing man in the garden, fighting and praying for the stupid, selfish, double-minded man that I am. I thought about the same massive struggle He endured for all our fellowship at Hope, and for all the elect. A few moments later, as we tried to embrace a world of massive pain and suffering in our prayers, the waves of emotion were still rocking me. Reformed people are ever so good at claiming that all our emotion and heart responses during corporate worship are so deep and so sincere that they're out of sight. Yes, maybe. Give me a good old hymn which stirs me to a silent, open heart, and I'm truly at worship. But always? I've been choked while singing, and have seen the same in others. I've preached with tears before, and I've preached to tears. In many ways, I expect these things, but I don't seek them, and I don't work them up, in myself or in others. There's no real embarrassment in expressing a heart-reaction to the Savior's love. We might, one day, realize that we've expressed our love to Him so little. Now that would be more than an embarrassment.¹⁷

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ W.H. Griffith-Thomas, *Exposition of Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 1953) p. 62
² John Brown, *An Exposition of The Epistle To The Hebrews* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1971) p. 239
³ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel II* (Doubleday, 1965) p. 357
⁴ William Barclay, *Commentary on Hebrews* (Westminster Press, 1957) p. 47
⁵ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle To The Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 1964) p. 91
⁶ Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies In The New Testament IV* (rpt. Baker, 1969) p. 422
⁷ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament V* (Broadman, 1936) p. 368
⁸ Vincent, *op. cit.* p. 433
⁹ Philip Hughes, *Commentary on Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 1977) p. 177
¹⁰ Griffith-Thomas, *op. cit.* p. 63
¹¹ Hughes, *op. cit.* p. 181
¹² Barclay, *op. cit.* p. 47
¹³ Hughes, *op. cit.* p. 183
¹⁴ Barclay, *op. cit.* p. 48
¹⁵ *Ibid.*
¹⁶ Vincent, *op. cit.* p. 437
¹⁷ <http://reclaimedblogger.blogspot.com/2012/03/gethsemane-tears-and-truth.html>