

† The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

The Character of a High Priest (Part 3)

Hebrews 5:1-10

1 For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; 2 he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; 3 and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. 4 And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.

5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"; 6 just as He says also in another passage, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." 7 In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, 10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

This has been one of those interesting kinds of weeks, a week in which I feel I have joined in the illustrious crowd of the middle-aged, along with all of its aches and pains. For the first time in my life I found my self debilitated and bed-ridden because of a back pain that I have nothing else to compare. Of course, when such things happen the inevitable question to the Lord is, "Why me, why now?" I found myself lying in my office, back on the floor, face up to God (wondering if I might be perceived as arrogant for not being face down), asking God to teach me the lessons I need to learn through this, wondering as well if this condition was to be temporary or permanent.

Over the past couple of weeks we have been looking at the character of the high priest as seen in both the Old Testament priesthood and in the priesthood of Jesus. The point of our study has been to show how much better is Christ over the any other priest that has served the people of God. Not only is Christ a great, sympathetic and gracious high priest, but no other priest has so completely fulfilled the office of priest for the people of God.

Remember as well that we sought to put

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How do we know that Jesus is a better high priest than those of the Old Testament? Jesus is better in...

- I. The Comparison with the Old Testament High Priests (5:1-4)
- II. The Contrast with the Old Testament High Priests (5:5-6)
- III. The Conduct of Jesus as High Priest (5:7-8)
- IV. The Confirmation of Jesus as High Priest (5:9-10)

1. Confirmed by the completeness of the mission.

“and having been made perfect...”

The idea here is not the imperfect becoming perfect, for we know that the Scriptures teach us of the sinlessness and perfection of Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Rather the idea behind the verb, *having been made perfected* means “to bring to an end by completing or perfecting.” What confirms Jesus as a better high priest than others is that God, through Him, brought to its perfect end, the goal of salvation. Much of the rest of the book of Hebrews has much to say about the insufficient ends and means of the former high priests.

Hebrews 10:1-3

1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year.

Every high priest of the Old Testament could not bring about God’s ultimate purpose through their sacrificing the blood of lambs and goats. But the mission of Jesus as high priest had a very different end, the completion and perfection of this thing called salvation.

Acts 2:22-24

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22 Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know — 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Perfect life, perfect sacrifice, completed and finished. Even Lord Himself made comment of this in John 17:4, using the same verb found here in our Hebrews text:

John 17:4

I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

In fact, one of the last phrases out of the mouth of Jesus when upon the cross was, ***“It is finished!”***

The work of Christ on the cross, the suffering by which He was made or shown to be the perfect sacrifice for sin, is a complete and sufficient sacrifice for sin. The reason why Jesus is a better high priest is because there is nothing left for the repentant sinner to do but to rest on the work of Christ as High Priest. In the Old Testament, there were various sin, fellowship and peace offerings to be given at various times and due to various circumstances. But in Christ, once for all, is the perfect completed offering of every demand of God for sin. In Christ, no stone was left unturned when it comes to the salvation of God’s people.

To often, in too many churches, and even among those who should know better is the attitude that Jesus did a wonderful and remarkable job upon the cross, but – there is still a little left for me to do to finish this task of salvation. Where stands it written? And I ask you, “What can you add to that which the Scriptures unequivocally say that Jesus has fulfilled perfectly? Is it possible that you might

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be more obedient than Jesus who is said to be “without sin?” There is nothing to add on your part for salvation. Jesus paid it all.

Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul;
Not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole.
Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God;
Not all my prayers and sighs and tears can bear my awful load.

Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within.
Thy love to me, O God, not mine, O Lord, to Thee,
Can rid me of this dark unrest, And set my spirit free.

Horatius Bonar – 1861

Jim Elliot, one of the missionaries brutally killed by the Aucas Indians of Ecuador in 1959 made this prayer at age twenty, over a decade before he would lose his life in service of Jesus Christ –

“Father, make me a man of crisis. Bring those I contact to decision. Let me not be a milepost on a single road; make me a fork, that men must turn one way or another facing Christ in me.”

Ultimately Jim Elliot wanted to be like his Savior. Jesus was not a milepost on a single road, but rather a fork that a man must turn completely one way or another, either to the way that seems right to him, whose end Proverbs 16:25 says only ends in death and destruction, or to take the way of Jesus, who is the only way, the only truth, the only life, the only access to the blessings, the mercies and the graces of God – this is salvation. Jesus was “made perfect” – revealing Him as the complete and ultimate end of the purpose of God, the salvation of man. Remember that the name “Jesus” means “salvation.”

2. Confirmed by a consequential mission

“...the source of eternal salvation...”

I desire to jump over the statement *“He became to all those obey...”* for just a moment to finish what I see as the next thought after this idea of Jesus “having been made perfect.” Here we read at the end of verse 9 that Jesus is *“the source of eternal salvation.”* This is what we have already been alluding to.

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Because the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus was perfect and complete, then it only stands to reason that the salvation He offers as High Priest is not a temporary one like that of the Old Testament High Priests, but rather is, as stated here, an eternal or forever salvation. Actually, a more literal translation of this phrase would be that Jesus is “the author, or causer of salvation of eternity.” In other words, Jesus is not a source, an author, or a causer, or even just a way of salvation, but is rather the only source or causer of an eternal salvation. For those who think and believe that salvation can be lost must contend with the testimony of Scripture that so clearly teaches that salvation is from the Lord, it is found only in Jesus, and once secured by Christ in salvation, such a salvation is eternal, forever.

What is being communicated here, to a beleaguered church, under the gun of persecution for following Christ and under pressure to walk away from Christ in order to find relief and refuge from some other only temporary source of seeming deliverance, is that coming to Christ is not some temporary fix; not some cosmic band aid that only covers the spiritual wound. Jesus saves and He saves completely. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Jesus saves “forever” or completely those who draw near to God through Him, not through their own efforts, understanding or reasoning. Not by doing things their own way, but through Jesus and what He offers. Here is a hard teaching that deserves much consideration – Jesus must be everything or else He is really nothing.

Sometimes a guest who comes over for dinner may ask the hostess the question, “Why can I do to help?” The perfect or complete hostess will reply, “Nothing” She says this not because there are things to be done that she simply does not want her guest to help with, but says it because everything is done, everything is complete, everything for the dinner is ready.

Coming to Jesus in salvation is coming to the perfect dinner party. The food is prepared, the table is set and there is nothing left but to praise the host of meal. Jesus has perfectly prepared and is the only source of sustenance when it comes to eternal salvation. This makes Him far superior and much better than any other high priest or any other vain effort of man to be reconciled to God.

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3. Confirmed by the conduct of mission's charges

"...to all those who obey..."

The next confirmation that reveals the priesthood of Jesus as better than the priesthood of the Old Testament is the actual conduct of the charges, of those for whom Jesus became a high priest. And just what is their conduct? Our text says, *"to all those who obey..."* We might ask ourselves the question, "How is Jesus "confirmed" as my high priest?" The simple answer is, "Do I obey Jesus?" Genuine faith is obedience, the giving of one's self over to the authority and command of another, in this case Jesus. The word obey here in the text has the idea of "hearing and heeding." Obedience to Christ is hearing and heeding the voice of God. To obey is to "listen with the utmost attention." This word is used in Matthew 8:27 to describe how the winds of the storm obeyed the voice of Jesus to be still. It is the word Paul used in Romans 6 to charge believers not to obey or listens to sin but rather to listen and heed the call of righteousness in God.

Consider what Jesus said in those familiar words of Matthew 28:20, *"teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..."* The true disciple of Christ is not content with a partial obedience. Faith is the pursuit of total obedience to all that Jesus commands. But oh, how partial is my obedience. How much more of me and less of Christ is my reality when Christ must increase and I must decrease. Full of self I am when I preach and profess that Christ is all in all, that Christ is sufficient, that Christ is better. Obedience here is in the context of knowing Christ as my only sufficient mediator and therefore I give myself over to following Him fully.

4. Confirmed by the call of God

"being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek."

Finally we find Jesus being better than the Old Testament high Priest by virtue of this truth – God has said so. Remember that three times in this passage of Hebrews 5:1-10 we have been confronted with the this truth, that what makes Jesus better is that Jesus has been appointed (v. 1); called (v. 4) and now designated (v. 10) by God as high priest. This is a way of saying that we must see salvation as doing things God's way. I may not always understand what God

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is doing, but I must always trust and depend upon the way God calls, ordains and designates as right.

"The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

1 John 4:14

It is a sweet thought that Jesus Christ did not come forth without His Father's permission, authority, consent, and assistance. He was sent of the Father, that He might be the Saviour of men. We are too apt to forget that, while there are distinctions as to the *persons* in the Trinity, there are no distinctions of *honour*. We too frequently ascribe the honour of our salvation, or at least the depths of its benevolence, more to Jesus Christ than we do the Father. This is a very great mistake. What if Jesus came? Did not His Father send Him? If He spoke wondrously, did not His Father pour grace into His lips, that He might be an able minister of the new covenant? He who knows the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit as he should know them, never sets one before another in his love; he sees them at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane, and on Calvary, all equally engaged in the work of salvation. O Christian, have you put your confidence in the Man Christ Jesus? Have you placed your reliance solely on Him? And are you united with Him? Then believe that you are art united unto the God of heaven. Since to the Man Christ Jesus you are brother, and hold closest fellowship, you are linked thereby with God the Eternal, and "the Ancient of days" is your Father and your friend. Did you ever consider the depth of love in the heart of Jehovah, when God the Father equipped His Son for the great enterprise of mercy? If not, be this your day's meditation. The *Father* sent Him! Contemplate that subject. Think how Jesus works what the *Father* wills. In the wounds of the dying Savior see the love of the great I AM. Let every thought of Jesus be also connected with the Eternal, ever-blessed God, for "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief."

Soli Deo Gloria

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