

8. Of such a character as made it impossible for either the relaters or hearers to believe it, if false, without supposing a *universal deception of the senses of mankind*:

After doing this could they display, on the part of its *professed eye-witnesses*, similar *proofs of veracity* in some *doctrines* founded upon it, and *unaided by force or intrigue*, a like *triumph* over the *prejudices* and *passions* of mankind: And among its *believers*, equal *skill* and equal *diligence* in *scrutinizing* its evidences, or, alternatively, let them submit to the irristible certainty of the Christian religion.

NOTES ON HEBREWS

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Chap. 4, verse 16

The Throne of Grace

We have already noticed that the first chapter describes the Son of God as having a Throne and a Sceptre, while in the second and third chapters He is seen as a merciful and faithful High Priest. Here in the fourth chapter the Throne is presented in association with His Priesthood as a place to which we are encouraged to draw near because there His authority is combined with His sympathy, His power with His mercy. The grace that meets us in our need emanates from a Throne.

The subject of God's grace is taken up again in the latter part of the Epistle, but there it is presented from the standpoint of Christian conduct. We are warned against doing despite unto the Spirit of grace (10:29), and exhorted to have our hearts established by grace instead of being carried away by divers and strange doctrines (13:7). But in this earlier part of the Epistle grace is viewed from the Divine standpoint as that which was exhibited at the Cross and is now ministered from the Throne.

Analysis of Chapter 5: 1-10

The Excellency of Christ's Priesthood

A.	<i>Christ's Priesthood and the Aaronic</i> —a parallel and contrast	...	...	...	...	vs. 1-4
i.	The appointment and its object	...	...	...	...	1
ii.	The character of the priest	...	...	...	...	2
	(1) his attitude towards the people	...	...	...	...	2a
	(2) his identification with the people	...	...	...	...	2b

iii.	The subjects of his offering—both himself and the people	...	...	...	...	1-3
iv.	The dignity of his office—not self-appointed	...	...	...	...	4
B.	<i>Christ's Priesthood—Melchizedek order</i>	...	...	...	vs.	5-10
i.	First similarity—in mode of appointment	...	...	...	...	5
ii.	Illustrated by Melchizedek's	...	...	...	...	6
iii.	Second similarity—identifications with the people	...	...	...	...	7,8
	(1) His prayers and tears					
	(2) His suffering and obedience					
iv.	The dignity of His Office	...	...	...	...	9, 10
	(1) His worthiness	...	...	...	...	9a
	(2) His power	...	...	...	...	9b
	(3) His Melchizedek order	...	...	...	...	10

Note how verse 10 goes with verse 1; verse 9 with verse 2a; also vs. 8 and 7 go with v. 2b; vs. 6 and 5 with v. 4.

NOTES

The writer now speaks more fully of the High-Priesthood of Christ, first in regard to the *Aaronic* priesthood and then to that of *Melchisedek*.

Verses 1-3 state first the essential for a true high priest as one taken from among men. *Verses 4-6* state the next essential, that he must be called of God. *Verses 7-10* expand all that preceded in verses 1-16, and show how Christ, in His exalted position, has fulfilled all the qualities required in both respects.

There is a beautiful, organic order in these ten verses (an order known as *chiastic* or crosswise from the shape of the Greek letter chi—X), and the chief points in the High-Priesthood of Christ are thus set forth:—

(a) v. 1, *appointed by God* (as Aaron).

(b) vs. 2 and 3, *human experience*.

(vs. 4-6 central—Aaronic and Melchisedek).

(b) vs. 7 and 8, *human experience*.

(a) vs. 9, 10, *appointed by God* (as Melchisedek).

The opening of this part of the chapter demonstrates that whatever was essential to the office of a high priest is found in Christ and first in regard to Aaron. At the same time, whatever imperfection there was in the Aaronic order is *not* to be found in Christ.

Verse 1. "For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins".

For—This is not by way of drawing an inference from the preceding, but is almost equivalent to "now," as an additional fact, and in this way connecting what follows with what has been stated in vs. 14-16.

every high priest,—not limited to the Aaronic order, but with that order especially in view.

being taken from among men,—That is, since they were partakers of human nature, in common with other men; and this is borne out by what follows in this verse and in vs. 2 and 3. The meaning is *not* "every high priest who is taken from among men": "taken from men" in the original is not to be attached to the subject "every high priest", but to the *predicate* "is appointed". There is not a contrast between earthly high priests and the Son of God, but a *parallel* between God's appointment of *both*, neither the earthly nor Christ glorifying themselves.

is appointed for men in things pertaining to God,—Gk. *huper*, that is, "on behalf of men", in their interests, to do for them whatever is required to be done toward God.

that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:—The words "for sins" are to be taken in connection with "both gifts and sacrifices." For the word rendered "gifts," is used in 11:4 of the gifts offered by Abel, which consisted of "the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" (Gen. 4:4). Even the *Minchah*, which is used frequently in Leviticus of a meal-offering, without blood, is used of Abel's sacrifice. The meal-offering has as its basis an expiation by the shedding of blood.

The writer uses the preposition *peri*, "concerning," in the phrase "for sins" (not *huper*, as just before). This he does everywhere; see 10:6, 8, 18, and 13:11. The sacrifice of Christ was not offered on behalf of sins, but on behalf of the *sinner*.

Verse 2.—*who can bear gently*: *Metriopatheō* (from *metrios*, moderate, and *paschō*, to suffer) signifies to treat with mildness, or moderation, to feel in some measure, in contrast to feeling fully, as expressed in the word "sympathize," in 4:15, which speaks of Christ as our High Priest. It involves a mean between undue severity and undue leniency.

with the ignorant and erring,—The ignorance is not that of

innocence, it is culpable ignorance, a lack of the knowledge of God and His will, which might and should have been known; it includes the effects of ignorance in sin itself. *Planaō*, to err, literally signifies to wander, and here indicates a departure from the revealed will of God; as the result of yielding to temptation. The two evils are closely associated. Ignorance of God leads to departure from God (Cp. Rom. 1:20, ff. and 2:14, 15). The two evils here mentioned have their source in the sinful propensities of human nature.

for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity;—That is to say, like those on whose behalf the high priest acted, he was himself conscious of besetting weakness natural and moral. The infirmity includes the tendency to yield to temptation, and even the effect of doing so. This is borne out by what is said in verse 3 of his sins. These facts made the priest capable of bearing gently with the ignorant and erring.

Verse 3.—and by reason thereof is bound as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.—Because of his consciousness of besetting infirmity, he not only manifests tenderness towards the ignorant and erring, with accompanying regard to justice and rectitude, but realizes the obligation imposed on him to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for theirs. On the day of atonement he laid his hands on the bullock of the sin-offering, making confession for himself and his house, and again making confession for the priesthood in general, and again for all Israel. There were other occasions when he must offer sin offerings for himself and for the congregation (Lev. 4:3-12), but it was especially on the Day of Atonement that he identified himself with the people in the common and general need of expiation because of the common sinful nature and guilt.

Verse 4. And no man taketh the honour unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron.—*Timē*, honour, is here used, as often, of an office of dignity, namely, the high-priesthood. The statement means that no man lawfully assumes this office unless Divinely called to it (it takes no account of any who dared to assume it unlawfully, as did Korah, Dathan and Abiram and others). Aaron and his sons were called of God, but all others even of the tribe of Levi were excluded. It depends absolutely on the will of God whether He will pardon the sins of men and accept their services. His doing so would never be a fact if anyone chose to offer gifts and sacrifices, or

did so by the appointment of any of his fellows. Aaron's vocation was a case, not of self-willed assumption ('taking upon himself'), but of reception from God. This is just where the comparison of the High-Priesthood of Christ with that of Aaron comes in, and the way is now prepared for the demonstration of this.

Verse 5.—*So Christ also glorified not Himself to be made a high-priest.* There is a purposive change of expression here. The exact parallel in phraseology would have been, "So Christ took not the honour unto Himself," but the verb here is *doxazō*, and thus *doxa*, glory, is the thought instead of *timē*, honour. The double glory of Kingship and High priesthood is about to be shown, as seen in Melchizedek, and in each respect mention has already been made of "glory." The glory of His Kingship has been intimated in 1:3; He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," and again in 2:9, He was "crowned with glory and honour." This explains the change of word.

All this is brought to bear upon the manner in which He has become a High Priest. Just as in regard to His Kingship, He glorified not Himself to attain to it, but received His glory from the Father, so in regard to His High Priesthood, as mentioned in 2:17, and now in this fifth verse. It is the Father who, having said to Him regarding His Incarnation, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee," who says also, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (verse 6). That is the point to which the Epistle has brought us.

Verse 6.—*as He saith also in another place,*—or, simply, "elsewhere," introducing a quotation confirming the fact that Christ did not glorify Himself to become a High Priest.

Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.—By this declaration of the Father He confirmed the fact that the Son did not glorify Himself, for the king-priest Melchizedek was appointed by God. This twofold capacity, exemplified in the case of Melchizedek, made the Son superior to the high priests of the Aaronic order. Christ's was of a different and higher rank. The *taxis*, an order or arrangement, here denotes the divinely—appointed character or nature of this priesthood. In 7:11 the Aaronic order is set in contrast.

Verse 7.—*Who in the days of His flesh*—This, which resumes the subject of His humanity, introduces some statements which show, not how He discharged the functions of High-Priesthood, but how He became qualified to discharge them. The phrase

refers to His life on earth, as possessed of the weakness of our human nature, sin apart. For the use of the term "His flesh" see John 1:14; Rom. 1:3; 8:3; 9:5; Eph. 2:15; Col. 1:22; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 10:20; 1 Pet. 3:8; 4:1; 1 John 4:2.

having offered up—*Prosp̄erō* literally signifies to bring to. The word is chosen here as suggestive of an anticipation of His future mediation as a High Priest.

prayers and supplications—The former, *deēs̄is*, elsewhere rendered "supplications" in the R.V., primarily indicates a wanting, a need, and stresses the sense of need. The latter, *hikētēria*, primarily signified an olive-branch carried as a badge by a suppliant (*hiketēs*); hence a supplication, suggesting an urgent and humble prayer. It is found here only in the N.T. Both words are used in the LXX of Job 40:22 (Eng. Version 41:3).

with strong crying and tears—The word *kraugē* here denotes a cry of anguish, as in Rev. 21:4. The only actual mention of Christ's tears is in John 11:35; compare Luke 19:41. The Lord spent whole nights in prayer. In Gethsemane His anticipation of all that just lay before Him filled His soul with agony. There were seasons of soul trouble before, as in John 12:27, but the agony, so dire in Gethsemane, reached its climax when on the Cross He cried, "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?"

unto Him that was able to save Him from (out of) death,—This is addressed to Him who, besides His other attributes, had this especial power, to answer His cries, and to deliver Him, not only from becoming the prey of death, but out of death, combining the two ideas of preservation and salvation, both of which Christ knew were possible. What underlies this statement is the complete trust and confidence He had in God the Father.

and having been heard for His godly fear,—He was not delivered from death, for He came for the purpose of giving Himself up to death. His prayer was heard in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43), and in the experience of resurrection. Cp. Ps. 22:21. His "godly fear" translates the word *eulabeia*, which expresses that combined fear and love which constitute the pious attitude of man toward God, and so, in the case of the Lord, His filial and reverent submission to the will of His Father.