



## 14: Jesus Is Qualified To Be Our High Priest

"For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honour to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him:

"You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You."

As He also says in another place:

"You are a priest forever  
According to the order of Melchizedek";

who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"

Hebrews 5:1 – 10

At the end of chapter 4 the writer brought us back to the thought that Jesus is our High Priest; now he's going to develop that idea and he's out to show us that Jesus is a better high priest than any of those who have previously held the office: better even than Aaron himself. First He has to establish that Jesus is qualified for the role.

### What Qualifications Must A High Priest Have?

It's a high priest's job to represent the people with God — he's appointed for men in things pertaining to God. One part of that job is to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins on behalf of the people (verse 1). If he's going to represent them properly when he brings those gifts and sacrifices to God he has to be like the people: he has to have the same weaknesses they have; he has to be able to sympathise with them; he has to feel

compassion for them (verse 2). But because he has the same weaknesses they have he too is a sinner and so he has to offer sacrifices not just for the people but for himself as well (verse 3). The high priest was never meant to and should never perform his duties in a detached, unfeeling manner.

- ◆ *What does this tell you about God?*

Everyone who holds the office high priest then has to be able to sympathise with the people he represents and as well as that he has to be appointed by God (verse 4). Having reminded us of that, the writer of the book of Hebrews is about to show us that Jesus meets those two requirements.

## Jesus Has Been Appointed By God

First, in verses 5 and 6, he uses two quotes from the Old Testament, to prove that Jesus has indeed been appointed by God to be a high priest. The first is Psalm 2 verse 7. He's already used this verse in chapter 1 and it's used in a number of other places in the New Testament. It's used, for example, in connection with Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:22), His resurrection (Acts 13:33) and His transfiguration (Mark 9:7). In each case it makes the point that Jesus has been appointed, sent and approved by the Father. More than that it establishes the He is God's Messiah and that's the point here.

But here the writer is particularly concerned about the role of priest. To establish that Jesus has been appointed as a priest he turns to Psalm 110:4. Psalm 110 is clearly a Psalm about the Messiah and in the verse the writer has picked out God says of Him:

"You are a priest forever  
According to the order of Melchizedek"  
Psalm 104:10, Hebrews 5:6

Boom! Point proven!

## Who's Melchizedek?

You may be wondering who Melchizedek is. Melchizedek made his cameo appearance in the big story of the Bible in Genesis 14:18. We're told there that he was the king of Salem (Salem is thought to have been an older name of Jerusalem) and a priest of the Most High God. I guess you could say then that centuries later when David became king of Jerusalem he was heir to Melchizedek's kingship and also, in name at least, to his priesthood. We'll hear more about Melchizedek another time, all we need to know now is that Jesus has been appointed by God to be a priest. On that count He's qualified.

- ◆ *Why might believers from a Jewish background have objected to the assertion that Jesus is our High Priest and how does this quote from Psalm 110 get around their objection?*

## Jesus Can Sympathise

In verse 7, the writer is still telling us about Jesus. The words, "in the days of His flesh" remind us that He experienced all the weaknesses that go along with being human. His description of Jesus' experience is probably a description of the whole of His time in this world but it does call to our minds thoughts of Gethsemane. In any case it's a reminder of the extreme anguish of soul that Jesus experienced in the world and in that way it proves the point that He is indeed able to sympathise with His people. He knew great anguish of soul, He knows what it is to cry out to God in anguish and even though all His prayers were heard and ultimately answered and even though He was God's Son He learned obedience through suffering.

In what sense did Jesus learn obedience by the things which He suffered? This doesn't mean that He had to learn to be obedient: Jesus was always obedient to His Father and, what's more, His obedience was always willing, joyful obedience: it was His delight to do His Father's will. No, for Jesus to learn obedience was to learn what it is *like* to obey. He experienced the gut-wrenching agony that comes with persevering in perfect obedience when the answers to prayer seem not to be coming. Jesus always knew what obedience was but He never felt what it was *like* for men to obey until He became a man.

And so Jesus was made perfect — perfectly qualified for His role — through the experience of obedience: He became perfectly qualified to be the Saviour of all who obey Him (verse 9) and perfectly qualified to be a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (verse 10) because now He could sympathise with His people.

## Jesus is Qualified

So it's established: Jesus is qualified to be our High Priest because He has been appointed by God to be a priest and He is able to sympathise with us.

- ◆ *Why do you think it's important for us to know that Jesus is our High Priest?*