

## Heb. 5:1-10 Qualifications for High Priest

Really, 5:1, all the way to 10:18 we have one big theme, Jesus is our great high priest. Last week, we only introduced it. And now, our author is going to break it down for us; He will share the specifics of what it means that Jesus is our great high priest, particularly, his appointment to this role (5:1-7:28), and his superior offering in heaven (8:3-10:18). And, right in the middle of this section, he pauses for a moment from 5:11-6:20 to give an exhortation, a warning against apostasy (5:11-6:12). Then he appeals for his hearers to trust the unchangeable promise of God (6:13-20). With this in mind, I want to begin with vv. 1-10. In vv. 1-4 we see the qualifications of the earthly high priest. In vv. 5-10 we see the author show these same qualifications of the eternal high priest.

Just this week in my QT, I read about Aaron, the first high priest. In Exod. 28 ff. I was amazed with all the details that went into his priesthood. Both him and his sons were required to wear the most elaborate and precious clothing. They were specially made and were called “holy garments.” Only the most skilled tailors were used in making these garments. They were made with the purpose of displaying “glory and beauty.” His clothing included a breastpiece, and ephod, a robe, a coat, a turban, a sash, even underwear. These garments were made with gold, blue and purple yarns, and specially woven linens. The ephod (like an apron) was covered with onyx stones, with chains of pure gold that hung down. On the outside of the ephod hung a breastpiece. Into this piece were stitched 12 different kinds of jewels. The turban that went on his head was made of gold. I am barely describing the beauty and glory of his clothing. But, how the priest dressed was only ONE of the qualifications needed to be high priest, especially if you consider the washings, the ways and kinds of sacrifices that were prepared, their diet, the specifics of all the places and pieces of the tabernacle, etc.

Well, this week our text gives us an opportunity to consider three specific qualifications of the high priest. In vv. 1-4 we will see these qualifications in reference to the EARTHLY high priest. In vv. 5-10 we will see these SAME three qualifications in reference to our HEAVNLY high priest. Here are the qualifications from our text: 1) Solidarity; 2) Sympathy; and 3) Selection (I came up with the first two words and I took the last from a Kent Hughes, a commentator I like to read, just to keep three “S” words.)

1. Solidarity. When I think of the word solidarity, I think of a group of protesters from a factory who may be demanding better work conditions or higher wages. And when they go on strike, they join TOGETHER in agreement in solidarity. They are the same in this regard. They are said to be “in solidarity with each other.” In the same kind of way, our text says that the high priest is “one with us.” This is in reference to his humanity. In other words, the high priest must be a man. An animal or a celestial being, or even an angel could not be a high priest. They are not like us. They do not share the same humanity. And this is fundamental to the priesthood. Look at v. 1: “**For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.**” This truth is in regards to Aaron, and later high priests, and their ability to be an effective representative as they offered “gifts and sacrifices for sins” (we will come back to this part later). They had to be men. This solidarity, this “oneness with humanity,” qualified them to be their high priest and do the work of a priest.

2. Sympathy. The high priest has sympathy with his people. Look at vv. 2-3: **“He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.”** The root meaning of “deal gently” is really to have compassion on someone, or to “bear with someone” in their weakness. (SS “Gentle and Lowly”) A person could not do the duties of the high priest if he could not enter into the feelings of those whom he represented. Again, an angel or another celestial being is not qualified. They are not “like us.”

I think back to Aaron, the brother of Moses. He was a Hebrew slave. The experiences of the people were his. He grew up in a Hebrew home with his family. He had the same problems as any other young man growing up in slavery. In and of himself, he was no one special. He struggled with the same sins of his brethren. I am sure when he was called as a high priest later, he did not have an attitude of *“I’m better than you,”* when he thought of his brethren. In Egypt, he certainly understood and was capable of great sympathy. I think we get this truth. You know what it’s like growing up in your household. I can only speak for mine. I know what my family is like in a very intimate way. I know their tendencies. I know their joys. I know what makes them happy. I know their struggles. I know weaknesses. I know their sins. Even as a church family we can same thing (though not as deeply). As elders, we know your sins. We know what you struggle with. And it is much greater than some of your tendencies to be a couple minutes late on Sunday mornings. And, I think we are able to sympathize, to bear with you, to be compassionate with you, because we ourselves have the same weaknesses.

This is certainly the point of this text. But it goes further. Look again at the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of v. 3: **“Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.”** Before he entered the holy of holies, what did he do? He offered sacrifices for his family and then for himself before he ever entered the holy of holies to offer sacrifices for the people (Exod. 29; Lev. 16). Aaron was a sinner, just like the rest of the people. So, he was able to sympathize with the people in regard to weakness, AND in regard to sin. This is very important to remember as we will come back to this in a moment.

3. Selection. The high priest is called by God. This great position does not belong to just anyone. Moses was appointed by God. Aaron was appointed by God. Look at v. 4: **“And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.”** All of Israel’s priests were appointed by a sovereign God (Exod. 28:1-3; Lev. 8:1 ff.; Num. 16:5; 20:23 ff.; 25:10 ff.) Do you remember what happened in the dessert with a man named Korah? He, and 250 leading men of Israel challenged Moses, saying that they also have the right to do as the high priest. And in a great display of wrath, God caused the ground to give way and Korah and his family and the 250 men who also challenged Aaron’s position as high priest were swallowed up and perished. And the next day God Moses asked the chiefs among the people to bring their staffs, along with Aarons. And they put them into the tent of meeting overnight. Do you remember what happened when they went to get them the next day? Aaron’s staff blossomed with flowers and ripe almonds. This was God’s sign to the people, saying, *“I have the sovereign right to appoint Aaron as high priest. And it will be so!”* Many years later, we see King Saul try to take on the priestly role. And for this, he lost his kingship (1 Sam. 13). Also, do you remember

King Uzziah who used the censor of a priest and because of this he became a leper for the rest of his life (2 Chr. 26).

(Maybe speak candidly as a pastor as I am like all of you, but only called by God into this position as elder.)

The author's point is clear. ONLY the one God appoints can be high priest.

So, Here we see 3 qualifications of the earthly high priest. He has solidarity with the people he represents. He is man just like them. He is able to sympathize with them. He knows their weakness and their sins, because he has the same. And, he was selected by God to this position of high priest. With this in mind, let's move to the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of our text as we see our heavenly high priest. And we will see the exact same qualifications. This should not surprise us! After all, the earthly priesthood is a type that points to the ONE who is the fulfillment (anti-type). The priesthood of Aaron was meant to prepare the people for the coming of the true high priest, the ONE who could truly pass "through the heavens" (4:14). He is the TRUE high priest. And in every way he is SUPERIOR. (Now, before moving to vv. 5-10, I must say there is SO MUCH HERE that I want to spend some time there again next week. For today, I will move pass by some of the specifics and be brief and very general as we consider Jesus' qualifications as high priest.) In vv. 5-10, we see the same qualifications in reverse order: 1) Selection, 2) Sympathy, and 3) Solidarity.

1. Selection. As Aaron was selected by God for the position of high priest, so was the Son. Look at v. 5: "**So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you."**" Now, we must remember that the purpose of Hebrews is to show the superiority of the new covenant with the old. And the writer does this by showing how Christ is superior in all ways to EVERY part and person of the old covenant. They were shadows and types of the ONE who would come and fulfill them. And so, Aaron and Christ are not on the same page. Christ is infinitely superior in his position. And we see this as he first quotes Ps. 2:7 "**You are my Son, today I have begotten you.**" This Psalm is reference to God's king. Ps. 2:6 says, "**As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.**" And then look at v. 6: "**as he says also in another place, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.**" This is a reference to Ps. 110:4, and here we see the first mention of the great King of Salem, who is also a priest (See also Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:1). So, with these words, we see both the calling of God upon the Son as both king and priest.

And He isn't merely an earthly king, but an eternal king. And he isn't just an earthly priest, but an eternal priest. We see this in his comparison to Melchizedek of which Heb. 7:3 says, "**He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.**" Therefore, Jesus is both king and priest (more on this in cp. 7). But our truth is that all this calling is by God. Jesus did not seek this position for himself. I think of Phil. 2:6-7: "**who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.**" The only goal of the Son was to glorify the father.

2. Sympathy. Look at vv. 7-8: **“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”** In these verses we see the humanity of Jesus and his experiences as the basis of his great sympathy for us. The “days of his flesh” refer to the entire time of his incarnation. However, I believe these verses speak particularly of his prayers during the Garden of Gethsemane and his prayers on the cross. In the garden, he sweated drops of blood because of his great anguish as he considered the cross. There is great mystery here. But, I do not believe it was his own physical death that caused him such great emotion. Of course, as a man like us, he didn’t look forward to the cross and the suffering. But, his greatest cause of anguish, his cries and his tears, came because of his work as high priest of offering. This is what priest do! They offer up sacrifices. But in Jesus case, the priest himself was the sacrifice. He was the sacrifice! Therefore, I believe his cries and tears and his prayers of anguish to God the Father were due to the great wrath and anger and punishment, and especially the “turning of God’s face,” away from him as He could not look upon sin. The Bible says that **“He made him to be sin for us . . .”** (2 Cor. 5:21) And, he **“became a curse for us . . .”** (Gal. 3:13).

Today as Christians, we are here because of our great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, as He laid down his life a curse for us on the cross. And this was something no Christian will ever have to experience. Yes, in days of his flesh, He was just like us. He was hungry. He was thirsty. He was tired. He slept. He wept. He felt what we feel. He prayed and cried out to God in times of need. ALL the things in this life he experienced, yet without sin. But, he went further than we will go by becoming a curse for us. And in this way, He is more able to sympathize than with us than we can ever know. I can barely scratch the surface of our Lord’s sympathy toward us. I think part of the author’s point here is that “yes,” the earthly high priests were able to sympathize because they had weakness and were sinners like the people. But, with the Lord Jesus, he was without sin. And because they were sinners, they could not sympathize with complete compassion, as the Lord Jesus can with us. I don’t have the time to recall all the imperfections and sins of the high priests of Israel (See 1 Sam. 1:9-14 with Eli and Hannah).

But, think about it. Back in 4:13, **“No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”** He knows the depths of our hearts. He knows how far our sin can take us. He knows our motives and the deep things of our hearts. And because of this, He is able to sympathize with us. We are not like this. Think how often the sins of someone else bothers you. How patient are you when your spouse sins, and even sins against you? How compassionate are you when someone speaks evil of you or puts you down, especially from someone in your family or from your Christian family? I think generally speaking, our very sins make us more impatient and severe with regard to the sins of others. A.W. Pink says, *“Our vanity finds the vanity of others intolerable, our pride finds the pride of others excessive. Blind to the guilt of our own peculiar sins, we are shocked with another’s sins”* . . . not considering the offensiveness of our sins in the sight of God. Brothers and sisters, our great high priest hates sin and he know what judgment it requires (think of the cross). Yet, He is tender and gracious and able to so sympathize with us. He knows the weakness of the flesh and the difficulties we have. Therefore, look unto him. **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been**

**tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of graced, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”** (Heb. 4:15-16)

3. Solidarity. We see this also in vv. 7-8. As the high priest was taken from among men, so the Son of God took on flesh. He dwelt among us. He was like us in every way, he was “one with us,” except for sin. He offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears. And throughout his life in the flesh, God answered his prayers. He learned obedience through suffering. And then, at the right time, because of his solidarity with us, he was truly able to be our great high priest. He was able to do what the earthly priests could not do. They could only offer the blood of bulls and goats, and this for their sins also. But, with Jesus, what did He offer? He offered himself! Look at vv. 9-10: **“And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.”** You see the high priest could never enter the heavens and become the source of eternal salvation. Only the Lord Jesus could do this.

Look back at v. 1: **“For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.”** The OT high priest offered gifts and sacrifices. In all the types of sacrifices he brought incense, grain, wine, all kinds of peace offerings. He brought various kinds of prayers. He brought the blood of different kinds of birds. He brought the blood of goats, lambs, and bulls. He was dressed in the most beautiful clothing. In the absolute best way he knew how, commanded by God, this priest offered gifts and sacrifices in his duties. But, what did Christ offer? He offered himself! He shed his own blood! The Son of God, the image of the invisible God, the exact imprint of his nature, the living Word, the creator and sustainer of the world, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, took on flesh and offered HIMSELF! What solidarity! This is why he came!

How much greater his calling by God? How much greater his sympathy? How much greater his solidarity? Today we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens and will FOREVER be our high priest! Therefore, we worship him today. We follow him today. We live for him now in this world.