

1. Compassion: A Requirement of Priesthood (Heb 5:1-3)

The discussion of the high priesthood of Jesus begins in 5:1 and continues through 10: 18. This is the core doctrinal plank of Hebrews: Christians have a great High Priest who ministers on their behalf in heaven. The author refers to the Levitical priesthood and notes the importance of the high priest's compassion. It was the role of the high priest to represent sinful men before a holy God. He served on behalf of those "*who are ignorant and going astray*" (Heb 5:2). The word "compassion" (*metriopatheo*) is defined thusly: "To treat with mildness, or moderation, to bear gently with ... The idea is that of not being unduly disturbed by the faults and ignorance of others ..." (Vine, p. 53). To maintain this outlook the high priest needed to remember that "*he himself is also beset by weakness*" (5:2b).

1. Where must high priests come from? Who do they represent?
2. On whose behalf did the high priest offer sacrifice?

2. The Appointment to Priesthood (Heb 5:4-6)

Another element of priesthood is that one legitimately served in such capacity by divine appointment (Heb 5:4). Beginning in 5:5, the author begins to make his applications to Jesus. First, he asserts that the same God who declared Jesus to be His begotten Son (as established in Heb 1:5) "*also says in another place: 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'*" Note that the author bases his arguments on the OT itself. Time and time again the author reasons with his Jewish brethren from the ancient writings as he seeks to bolster their confidence in the messiahship of Jesus.

3. Who was appointed by God as first high priest over Israel?
4. What OT passages are quoted? Where are these psalms previously cited in Hebrews?

3. The Suffering Priest (Heb 5:7-8)

The author here makes the point that Jesus qualifies as *compassionate* high priest by virtue of His own sufferings. This suffering came "*in the days of His flesh,*" and in that form Jesus "*learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*" It is the ultimate act of suffering upon which the author focuses – the struggle Jesus experienced at His death. Note the intensity of Jesus' appeal to His Father: He "*offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears ...*" (Heb 5:7). He also prayed with "*godly fear*" (5:7b). Jesus desperately wished for a change in circumstances; He petitioned God to alter His will so that He would not have to endure the physical and emotional agonies of the cross. But He also submitted Himself to the will of God: "*nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will*" (Mt 26:39). We are given the assurance that, although God did not spare Jesus the death to which He had been assigned, Jesus "*was heard because of His godly fear.*" God acknowledged

Jesus, comforted Him through an angel (Lk 22:43) and glorified Him afterward, *but He did not comply with His wishes*. In the struggle between His own concerns and God's intent to provide atonement for sin, Jesus "learned obedience." As a man, Jesus completely subjected Himself to the rigors of obedience. Obedience *isn't always easy!*

5. What was God able to do for Jesus, but declined?

6. What does "vehement cries and tears" suggest about Jesus?

4. The Author of Eternal Salvation (Heb 5:9-11)

Not only did Jesus learn obedience by His own experience, He *teaches* it by example. As He demonstrated obedience, He now demands it from His disciples. Thus "*He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*" (Heb 5:9). This ties the present discussion back to the admonitions of obedience in 3:18. "Author" is from the word *aitios* and refers to that which causes something. Vine struggles to capture the exact essence of the word in English but makes the point that Jesus did not merely *provide* salvation but *is* salvation in a direct, personal sense. Those who obey Him are grafted into the source of life itself, Jesus Christ the mediating High Priest between God and men. Having established Jesus' qualifications as high priest and His appointment to the position, the writer now wishes to explore the order of His priesthood. He is hampered from doing so, however, by the spiritual immaturity and intellectual dullness of his readers (5:11). He thus pauses to rebuke them for their neglect.

7. In what sense was Jesus "perfected"?

8. T/F Jesus is not the author of salvation for those who disobey Him.

5. Rebuke of Willful Immaturity (Heb 5:12-14)

It would be foolish to blame a six year old for not being as developed mentally and physically as a twelve year old, for natural growth patterns cannot be circumvented. However, the brethren addressed in Hebrews have failed to mature through a lack of effort: "*by this time you ought to be teachers*" (Heb 5:12). Instead, they now need to be re-taught the very basics of the gospel – the ABC's if you will. "Use it or lose it" is the slang expression of what has happened to these brethren. Unfortunately, those "*unskilled in the word of righteousness*" (5:13) lose their ability to "*discern both good and evil*" (5:14). Consequently, these brethren are floundering between the blessings offered by Christ and the old yoke of Mosaic Law. The author is attempting to recover them if at all possible. His parenthetical rebuke runs from 5:12-6:20.

9. How do we learn to discern both good and evil?