

The last chapter closed by telling us that Jesus is our great high priest who was tempted in every way like we are yet without sin. Because He can sympathize with our weaknesses, we should confidently draw near to His throne, the throne of grace, when we are in need. We will assuredly find mercy and grace when we do.

**Drawing near to God is a theme of Hebrews.** The phrase is used six times. (See Hebrews 7:19,25; 10:1,22 and 11:6) Under the old covenant, the people drew near to God through the high priest. It meant to approach the altar of God in worship (Leviticus 9:7-8). They would bring their sacrifices to the temple and make offer them according to the laws of Moses. Once a year the high priest would make a sacrifice for the nation on the Day of Atonement. He was the only person who was allowed to enter into the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, and present the blood before the Ark of the Covenant. That blood represented the acknowledgment that the penalty for sin is death (Ezekiel 18:4). The blood of an animal pictured the perfect acceptable sacrifice would one day be offered (Hebrews 10:4-7; Leviticus 17:11).

*<sup>1</sup> 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.* Hebrews 5:1 This person who served as a high priest was chosen by God from among one branch of the tribe of Levi. He oversaw all the sacrifices with the assistance of other priests. He represented the people to God, and he represented God to the people in that he would use the Urim and Thummim to divine God's will (Exodus 28:30).

*<sup>2</sup> He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. <sup>3</sup> Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.* Hebrews 5:2-3 God did not appoint an angel to this role, for an angel could not relate to sinful man like another man could. We say we should walk a mile in someone's shoes before giving advice. In other words, we need to have a similar experience to some degree to be able to relate to them. The priest was human because the people he served were human. They share the same weaknesses (Romans 3:23). Because of those common weaknesses, the priest should deal gently with the people. That is the hope any way. Sadly, many a priest or pastor justifies their own sin while harshly judging others. This reality signifies that this kind of priesthood is for a limited time until the perfect high priest would come (Hebrews 8:13).

The fact that the high priest is also in need of redemption is seen in the fact that he first must offer a sacrifice for himself, before he offers a sacrifice for the people. In fact, the prescribed sacrifice for himself and his family was larger than the one for the people (Leviticus 16:6). To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). Religious authority may commit more serious sins because they should be representing the LORD and His Word (James 3:1). People sometimes think of religious leaders as holier than the laity. We are all cut from the same cloth. Leaders are just more accountable

**Commented [PW1]: Leviticus 9:7-8 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, "Draw near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people, and bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded."

<sup>8</sup> So Aaron drew near to the altar and killed the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself.

**Commented [PW2]: Ezekiel 18:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.

**Commented [PW3]: Hebrews 10:4-7 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

<sup>5</sup> Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me;

<sup>6</sup> in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

<sup>7</sup> Then I said, "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book."

**Commented [PW4]: Leviticus 17:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

**Commented [PW5]: Exodus 28:30 (ESV)**

<sup>30</sup> And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the LORD regularly.

**Commented [PW6]: Romans 3:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

**Commented [PW7]: Hebrews 8:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

**Commented [PW8]: Leviticus 16:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> "Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house.

**Commented [PW9]: Luke 12:48 (ESV)**

<sup>48</sup> But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

**Commented [PW10]: James 3:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that he who teaches will be judged with greater strictness.

because of the position given to them. The same sanctifying blood that saves you saves the missionary, evangelist, or preacher and teacher. They are set apart and should be honored as such (1 Timothy 5:17), but at the same time we should recognize the inherent weaknesses in man and the struggle we all have with the sin nature.

**Commented [PW11]: 1 Timothy 5:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

This system God established tells us something about the heart of God that was brought out in the last chapter. We serve a compassionate God. Some people think God is so eager to condemn the He would set up angels as high priests. They would judge by the letter of the law so strictly and swiftly that no one would survive. That is not the compassionate God we know. Jesus said that God sent Him into the world to save it, not condemn it (John 3:17). He will be just and firm, but not before giving each soul every possible chance to "draw near" and receive His abundant grace and mercy.

**Commented [PW12]: John 3:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

*<sup>4</sup> And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.* Hebrews 5:4 God told Moses that his brother Aaron was to be the first High Priest and that his family would be priests for the nation from that time forward (Numbers 3:10). Some people thought this wasn't fair. Why should this family hold all the authority? Korah pulled together a group of discontents and challenged the choice of Aaron (Numbers 16:1-3). They implied Moses was lying when he told them God's choice was Aaron and his family. Then God told everyone through Moses to get away from the tents of these men who had challenged God's choice. The earth opened up and swallowed those men (Numbers 16:32). Now you might ask, "What about that compassionate God you just described?" If you read the whole account, you'll wonder why God was so patient and put up with Korah for so long. I share that account to explain the background to what the author was saying in verse 4, "no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God."

**Commented [PW13]: Numbers 3:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> And you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall guard their priesthood. But if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death."

**Commented [PW14]: Numbers 16:1-3 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now Korah the son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men.

<sup>2</sup> And they rose up before Moses, with a number of the people of Israel, 250 chiefs of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well-known men.

<sup>3</sup> They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

After that incident, God told Moses to have all the leaders of Israel to put their rods, along with Aaron's, into the tabernacle before the Lord. The next morning, Aaron's rod had blossomed and had almonds (Numbers 17:8). It was life from death that confirmed God's choice of the high priest, and so it is with Jesus, our resurrected Lord.

**Commented [PW15]: Numbers 16:32 (ESV)**

<sup>32</sup> And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods.

We have many pastors in ministry today who were not called. They have no spiritual life. They have taken the honor upon themselves. Their career often ends in moral failure. I have read of some who privately confess they don't believe the Bible is God's Word. Today, it is even necessary in some organizations that call themselves a Christian church to denounce Scripture before they can be considered for a pastoral position. They don't believe the account of Korah, so why would they have a fear of the Lord?

**Commented [PW16]: Numbers 17:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds.

There may be something more implied in this verse. At the time it was written, the office of high priest was appointed by Rome, and that was determined by a number of factors, including financial bribery. The author may have been contrasting the deplorably corrupt state of Judaism that these Christians were thinking of returning to

as opposed to the holy, gracious, and selfless sacrifice of Jesus that qualified Him to be our great high priest.

<sup>5</sup> *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";* Hebrews 5:5 The Messiah did not even lay claim to the position without the appointment by God. The author quoted Psalm 2:7. When we studied 1:5 we saw that the "today" was the day of resurrection (Acts 13:33). Once Jesus had become our perfect sacrifice and conquered death and hell, He was appointed High Priest by God, just as Aaron was appointed so long before. The Psalm the author is quoting also describes the Son as the King.

One reason for the Essene movement was a belief that the whole temple system had been corrupted. Essenes believed God would bring a new "teacher of righteousness" that would cleanse the corruption and renew the whole temple system. They also believed God would send a new king. I imagine it was easy for many Essenes to see Jesus as the One they were waiting for, One who fulfilled both priestly and kingly roles. The Apostle Paul and the author of Hebrews put the Scriptures together that showed this was God's way of bringing their hopes to pass. The discoveries in Qumran included mention of Melchizedek who was both priest and king. I wonder if the author of Hebrews knew some of those in the Hebrew church had Essene influences.

Next, the author makes his case again by quoting from another Messianic Psalm. We can see he was appealing to their Jewish background to show them what a mistake it would be to go backward. <sup>6</sup> *as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."* Hebrews 5:6 Jesus quoted from this psalm as well (Mark 14:62). It begins, *The LORD says to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."* Psalm 110:1 Jesus asked how David could call his son Lord? (Matthew 22:42-45) The first LORD in the verse is the God of Israel, YHWH . The second Lord means "a master." It was prophesied that the Messiah would come from David's line, but to the Jewish mind, the father was always considered greater than the son. How could David call a descendant his Lord? The answer is the virgin birth.

It is the third verse of that psalm that the author quotes. The Messiah is to be a priest forever, not in the line of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek. We'll look into that in chapter 7. Suffice now to say that Jesus is on a whole different level than the sons of Aaron, though he experienced human life. He is an eternal priest. He is seated at the right hand of God. That, by the way, was another claim Jesus made even to His accusers before the crucifixion (Matthew 26:64). Jesus was so sure this psalm would be fulfilled that He proclaimed it to those He knew would be infuriated by it.

<sup>7</sup> *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.* Hebrews 5:7 This seems to be speaking of the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was in such anguish that He sweat drops of blood (Luke 22:44). He knew

**Commented [PW17]: Hebrews 1:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"?"

**Commented [PW18]: Acts 13:33 (ESV)**

<sup>33</sup> this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'

**Commented [PW19]: Mark 14:62 (ESV)**

<sup>62</sup> And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

**Commented [PW20]: Matthew 22:42-45 (ESV)**

<sup>42</sup> saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David."

<sup>43</sup> He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

<sup>44</sup> "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"?"

<sup>45</sup> If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?"

**Commented [PW21]: Matthew 26:64 (ESV)**

<sup>64</sup> Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

**Commented [PW22]: Luke 22:44 (ESV)**

<sup>44</sup> And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

the torment He was about to endure. He also knew that only the Father could guide Him through death to victory over death and hell (Acts 2:24).

Skeptics have asked how the disciples could have recorded Jesus' prayer if they were sleeping. Some have speculated that John Mark was nearby and told what had happened to the disciples. Then again, the disciples only recorded a small part of those hours of prayer. This is the only place in Scripture that tells of those loud cries.

The focus of the author is Jesus' power to intercede. No one else was saved out of death through their own intercession. The word "from" in Greek can rightly be translated "out of" in this case. He wasn't asking to be saved from death for He came to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 10:28). He was asking to be saved out of death. He frequently spoke of His upcoming persecution and death (Matthew 16:21).

This verse says that He was "heard because of His reverence." It seems to be referring to Jesus' submission to the will of the Father saying, "Not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) And if that is the case, what power do our prayers have when we reverently submit to God's will even if it is not what we would naturally desire?

<sup>8</sup> *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.* Hebrews 5:8 There are a number of ways in which we could view this verse, but there is one thing of which we can be certain. It does not mean that He went from disobedience to obedience. Disobedience is sin, and the author tells us Jesus never sinned (Hebrews 4:15; 7:26). On this passage, H.A. Ironside comments, *"It is not that His will had to be subdued, but that from the moment when He assumed humanity He entered into new experiences. He who had always commanded learned practically what obedience meant."* (H.A. Ironside *Expository Commentary – Hebrews* p. 71)

Obedience can cause us to suffer, but then we see the good fruit of obeying and we learn that it is best for us in the long run. That must have been true at times in Jesus youth just as it is in our own experience. Certainly, Jesus did not wish to drink the cup the Father had given Him to drink, yet, through being obedient, He could see the incredible fruit that it bore (Hebrews 2:9,10). Suffering that we endure because we are obedient teaches us the importance of obeying God at any cost.

Sons were expected to represent their father. The firstborn was especially honored as he would carry on the father's legacy and responsibilities. But sons learn and grow. Jesus was said to grow in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:40, 52). He matured like any other human does, but without sinning. He was fully God and yet fully man.

This ability to relate to us completely, and yet having never given in to sin, is what made Him the perfect sacrifice and our perfect high priest. Being sinless, He could choose to take our sins upon Himself and accept the penalty for them. Being fully man, He can understand our weaknesses and struggles in our fight against sin. <sup>9</sup> *And being*

**Commented [PW23]: Acts 2:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

**Commented [PW24]: Matthew 20:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**Commented [PW25]: Matthew 16:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

**Commented [PW26]: Luke 22:42 (ESV)**

<sup>42</sup> saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

**Commented [PW27]: Hebrews 2:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

**Commented [PW28]: Luke 2:40 (ESV)**

<sup>40</sup> And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

**Commented [PW29]: Luke 2:52 (ESV)**

<sup>52</sup> And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

*made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, <sup>10</sup> being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.* Hebrews 5:9-10

We saw the use of this word "perfect" in chapter 2. <sup>10</sup> *For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.* Hebrews 2:10 It was through the obedient suffering of the cross and the resurrection that Jesus became our perfect source of eternal salvation.<sup>4</sup> Obeying Him is to do His will and His will is that we know Him as the Lord and savior of our souls (John 5:39,40). His commands are that we love God with our all and love one another. That is a sign of His life in us (1 John 4:7).

I can't encourage you enough to get to know one another in this body of believers. How can we love one another if we don't spend time getting to know one another? I am so encouraged by the joy the deaconesses share, the great spirit in the women's study, and the people that have stepped up to help with the various ministries of the church. Get involved. If you are a part of this body of believers, where do you fit? We don't all have the same passions and calling, but we do all have commonality of Jesus as Lord and the calling to be a part of this body of believers. In those callings we connect with one another and grow in love (John 15:12).

I want to save discussing the priesthood of Melchizedek until chapter 7. We should see that **just as Aaron's dead rod came to life and produced fruit proving that he was God's choice to be the high priest, so Jesus' resurrection from death declared Him to be the Son whom God has chosen as our eternal great high priest (1 Peter 1:3).**

This wonderful passage shows us that we have great high priest. We are invited to draw near to Him in our time of need; and if you are human, you that that is all the time. Amen? He wants you to lean on Him and know that He understands. At this very moment He is interceding to the Father on your behalf. Human priests or pastors have faults and limitations. Jesus has none. He accomplished everything that was required of God's justice that you might draw near to God. When Jesus died, the curtain before the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom, picturing for us that Jesus has given us access to the Father (Matthew 27:51). Don't take it for granted. Spend time with Him in prayer. Realize that you have a great high priest who is always inviting you to confidently draw near to the throne of grace.

Questions:

- 1 What do the last verse of chapter 4 teach us?
- 2 What does "draw near" mean?
- 3 Why was the high priest human?
- 4 What was the evidence of God's choice for high priest?

- 5 What two verses did the author point to for Jesus as God's choice to be the high priest?
- 6 How did Jesus apply Psalm 110?
- 7 Why was Jesus heard?
- 8 How are we to understand verse 8?
- 9 Why did the Messiah have to be a man?

**Commented [PW30]:** (The words "eternal salvation" are only found together in this verse.)

**Commented [PW31]: John 5:39-40 (ESV)**

<sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,  
<sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

**Commented [PW32]: 1 John 4:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

**Commented [PW33]: John 15:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

**Commented [PW34]: 1 Peter 1:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

**Commented [PW35]: Matthew 27:51 (ESV)**

<sup>51</sup> And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

10 What makes Jesus the perfect high priest?

11 Will you draw near?

