

## Hebrews: On Behalf of Men in Relation to God (Hebrews 5:1–14).

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (11/27/2016)

### Introduction

1. God requires that we devote ourselves to diligent and careful pursuit of His rest in living out our conquest of Canaan. That task is difficult because (1) we have a natural tendency to resist obedience to God and (2) the nature of the request itself is impossible for us to perform. Thus, striving to enter His rest requires understanding and carefully applying His gracious provisions which enables us to obey (as per Phil. 2:12, 13).
2. The humanly impossible task of the full experience of Canaan rest is clearly evidenced in Israel's failure. The mistake that many make in reading this text is to assume Israel's failure was due to her not following the rules and not trying harder. The truth missed is that the failure to enter creation rest (Canaan) was necessary in order to bring in Christ's salvation rest—the “another day”—to reality, the rest that we must not miss.
3. Paul's urgent plea (4:11) is followed by the explanation of the power of God's Word (v. 12). Seven characteristics of this revelation are brought out: (1) it is the Word of *God*; (2) it is *living*; (3) it is *powerful*; (4) it is *effectual*; (5) it is *penetrating*; (6) it is *regenerative*; and (7) it is *revealing*. This makes the Word, by itself, extremely dangerous, for it can either help you to holiness, or fully expose you in “*the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*” (v. 13).
4. To encourage us to give heed to this warning, Paul points us to God's gracious provision—“*we have a great high priest*” (v. 14). Here is a great motive to encourage us to “*hold fast to our confession*” because He is “*able to sympathize with our weaknesses.*”

Having shown that Jesus is greater than the prophets, angels, Moses, and Joshua, Paul now shows how Jesus is greater than Aaron and the priests of Levi.

### I. His Credentials

1. The Holy Spirit designated Jesus as a *great (megas)* High Priest (4:14), speaking to His *excellency* and *sufficiency* for the task.
2. Jesus “*passed through the heavens*” (v. 14).
  - a. “*Passing*” speaks of the challenge, difficulty, and opposition of His mission, and “*through,*” its success.
  - b. Most commentators fail to see that the term “*heavens*” speaks to the spiritual nature and warfare of His mission (John 3:13; Acts 2:34; Rom. 10:5–9, *ref.* Deut. 30:11–14; Eph. 2:2; 4:8–10; Heb. 2:14–18).
3. His most glorious qualification in respect to us is that He is *merciful*.
4. That qualification rests on His being tempted in all points like us but doing so “*without sin.*”
  - a. Both Satan and Adam were created without sin; *yet they sinned* when tempted. Why? They possessed free will.
  - b. Jesus was God incarnate, holy in every respect, and unable to sin in any way (John 14:30).

Having such a fully *qualified* High Priest who is *holy* but who is also *merciful*, Paul urges the reader, “*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need*” (4:16).

## II. His Function

1. *Priesthood* defined
  - a. A *priest* is a mediator between God and humans, teaching God’s rules and ways representing them before God when they violate His rules by providing acceptable offerings to secure their forgiveness with God.
  - b. Humans have erred when they violate God’s NT order and discredit Jesus by reinstating human OT priests (*e.g.*, Romanists; see 2 Tim. 4:3, 4; 1 Thess. 5:21).
2. Chapter 5 opens with an explanation of what a priest does—his function (v. 1). However, he must first meet these standards: (1) chosen and appointed by God and (2) being a human male, then (3) acting on behalf of humans in relation to God.
3. The necessity of the priest’s being human (v. 2)
  - a. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant (untaught) and wayward (disobedient).
  - b. He is able to be gentle because he is also beset with weakness.
4. The disadvantages of an ordinary priest (v. 3)
  - a. He is obligated to offer sacrifices for his own sins.
  - b. What is implied is that the priest can fail since he also is a sinner; he can be ignorant and fail to teach others God’s rules and he can sin and rebel against God and His ways. What will the people do who have rebels for priests (Mal. 2:1–17)? God’s gracious solution is Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5, 6).

## III. His Calling

1. The only priests in the OT were those whom God chose and appointed (the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron).
  - a. This presents a particular problem for Christ since He does not qualify, being of the tribe of Judah.
  - b. This problem was remedied by Jesus’ being called to serve as High Priest through another line, the mysterious line of *Melchizedek* (Gen. 14:18–20; Psa. 110:4).
2. Other ways that Jesus differed from Aaronic priests:
  - a. Jesus is the true *Son of God* (v. 5; *rep.* Psa. 2:7).
  - b. Christ’s priesthood lasts *forever* (v. 6).
  - c. Christ was the only priest *delivered from death* because of His proper acknowledgment of God (v. 7). Note: Three terms are used in Greek for *fear*: *deilia*, *eulabia*, and *phoberos*. *Eulabia* is a reverence for God expressed by nervous caution for His will and ways.
  - d. Jesus is superior to all other human priests in His sufferings (vv. 8–10)—the sufferings He endured were those of His sacrifice on the cross. No other priest was able to offer himself. The sufferings were a result of perfect obedience. The perfect obedience produced eternal salvation for all who obey Him (those with faith to enter His rest).