

EXPLANATION OF 58TH BIBLEBOOK

HEBREWS 5 (A.D. 64)

OUTLINE

5:1-4.	Every high priest must be appointed by God and be a merciful and sympathetic person	1
5:5-10.	Jesus Christ qualifies for the high priesthood in another order	2
5:11 - 6:3.	Exhortation to pursue spiritual maturity	5

Hebrews 5 teaches the prerequisites of an appointed high priest in Israel (5:1-4). Likewise Jesus Christ was called by God to be the King¹ and the High Priest². During his life He did the work of a High Priest: He represented his people with God through prayers and He suffered being the sacrifice of atonement. Through his humble obedience and resurrection He became the source of eternal salvation for his people. Thus He was designated by God to be the High Priest-King in the order of the righteous king (Melchizedek) (5:5-10).

An exhortation to pursue spiritual maturity and develop a value system through the solid food of the Bible (5:11-14).

5:1-4. Every high priest must be appointed by God and be a merciful and sympathetic person.

(1) The author presents the qualifications of every high priest.

a. The first qualification of a high priest: to mercifully identify with people.

A high priest must be able to identify with the weakness of the people he represents, sympathize with them and deal gently with them (5:2-3).

5:1. Every high priest is received (selected) from among men and is appointed on behalf of men in matters related to God, in order to offer *once for all* gifts and sacrifices for sins.³

The writer has especially in mind the yearly sacrifice presented on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest was required to discharge the sacrificial functions (cf. 9:7).

5:2. Being able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since (because) he himself⁴ is surrounded by weakness.⁵

Since the reign of king David the high priests came from the family of Zadok. David divided the Levites into groups corresponding to the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari⁶. An important high priestly line is: Kohath, Aaron, Eleazar, Zadok. Aaron was a descendent of Kohath⁷. Eleazar was a descendent of Aaron⁸. Zadok was a descendent of Eleazar⁹. With the help of Zadok and Ahimelech king David organised the divisions of priests¹⁰. *The last high priest in the line of Zadok was Onias III, who was assassinated in 171 B.C.*¹¹ During the 240 years from the fall of the house of Zadok to the destruction of the second temple in 70 A.D. there were very few high priests in Israel who manifested the personal qualities required by God for the fulfilment of their sacred office. *These high priests came from the liberal party of the Sadducees* who supported the political and cultural Hellenization (making Greek) of Judea.

‘Able to deal gently’ means that the high priest should not be filled with indignation, irritation or exasperation against the sinners and their sin, but bear with them in sympathy and make expiation for their sins. Aaron is credited with exemplary forbearance in face of the repeated provocation and envy of those on whose behalf he served as high priest¹².

“Those who are ignorant and are going astray” is probably a hendiadys, i.e. “Those who go astray through ignorance” (about what the Bible says).”

¹ Psalm 2:7; 110:1

² Psalm 110:4

³ **5:1.** Every (πας)(a--nm-s) high priest (ο αρχιερευς)(n-nm-s) is received (selected) (λαμβανομενος>λαμβανω)(vppnms) from among (εξ)(pg=preposition genitive) men (ο ανθρωπος)(n-gm-p) and is appointed (καθισταται>καθιστημι)(vipp--zs) on behalf of (to represent) (υπερ)(pg) men (ο ανθρωπος)(n-gm-p) in matters (τα)(danp=determiner/definite article accusative neuter plural) related to (προς)(pa) God (ο θεος)(n-am-s), in order (ινα)(cs=conjunction subordinating) to offer *once for all* (προσφερω>προσφερω)(vspra--zs) gifts (το δωρον) (n-an-p) and (τε και) sacrifices (η θυσια)(n-af-p) for (υπερ)(pg) sins (η αμαρτια)(n-gf-p).

⁴ Note the difference between:

αυτος-αυτη-αυτο = pronoun = he/ himself ο αυτος-η αυτη-το αυτο = the same (verse 2)

ουτος-αυτη-τουτο = demonstrative pronoun used as adjective and substantive = this (verse 3)

⁵ **5:2** Being able (δυναμενος>δυναμαι)(vppnm-s)(n=middle/passive deponent) to deal gently (to have feelings in the right measure) (μετριπαθειν>μετριπαθεω)(vnpa) with those who are ignorant (αγνωουσιν>αγνωεω)(vppadm-p) and are going astray (πλανωμενοις>πλαναω)(vpppdm-p), since (because) (επει)(cs) he himself (αυτος-η-ο)(nnpnms) is surrounded (encompassed, NIV: subject to) by (περικειται>περικειμαι)(vipp--zs) weakness (η ασθενεια)(n-af-s).

⁶ 1 Chronicles 23:6

⁷ 1 Chronicles 23:13

⁸ 1 Chronicles 24:1

⁹ 1 Chronicles 24:3

¹⁰ 1 Chronicles 24:3

¹¹ 2 Maccabees 3:34

¹² Numbers 14:5; Numbers 16:22,47f; Psalm 106:16

The law prescribed sin-offerings for people who succumbed to the moral weaknesses that are common to mankind - for people who sinned unintentionally¹³. The high priest may sympathise with people who erred through ignorance, because he himself was prone to the same weaknesses.

However, *there were no sin-offerings for those who sinned defiantly and intentionally*¹⁴. Aaron was in no condition to make priestly intercession to God for the people on whom he had brought the great sin of idolatry¹⁵. It was Moses who went into the presence of God to make atonement for their sin and procure God's forgiveness for them¹⁶. And the high priest, Joshua, had his unfitness for the office of high priest removed by the cleansing pronouncement of God himself¹⁷.

5:3. And because of this he (a high priest) must offer (sacrifices) for sins, as on behalf of the people, so also on behalf of himself.¹⁸

Every high priest during the Old Testament period had to present a sin-offering for himself as well as for his people¹⁹. In contrast, the High Priest of Christians was sinless and had no need to offer a preliminary sacrifice for himself (7:27)!

b. The second qualification of a high priest: to be appointed by God.

Because Israel was to be a theocracy and not a democracy, a high priest must be called and appointed by God and not by man to his office. He must represent people before God in matters related to God, e.g. offer gifts and sacrifices that make atonement for their sins (5:1,4).

5:4. And not anyone takes this honour upon himself; but he is called by God, just as also Aaron (was called).²⁰

No man can set himself up as a high priest, because he must be called by God! *No man can hold this office validly when he is appointed by some earthly political or religious authority!* After the assassination of the high priest Onias III, Jason and Menelaus were appointed to the high priesthood by the wicked king Antiochus IV (175-163 B.C.), to whom the book of Daniel refers to as 'the little horn'²¹.

The Hasmonean dynasty ruled over Judea from the Maccabean rebellion in 167 B.C. to 37 B.C. During the greater part of this period the Hasmoneans ruled over an independent Jewish kingdom. But in 63 B.C. Judea became a vassal state of Rome. The Hasmonean high priests were also appointed by kings. After the fall of the Hasmonean house, the high priests were appointed successively by Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.), Archelaus (4 B.C. – 6 A.D.), Roman governors (6-41 A.D.) and members of the Herod family (41-66 A.D.). The last high priest, Phanni, son of Samuel, was appointed by popular ballot during the war against the Romans (67-70 A.D.). *Judaism became more and more a man-made religion that is also controlled by man.*

Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, occupied his office by God's appointment²² and so did his heirs and successors²³. **Samuel** was not of Aaronic descent, but exercised an intercessory and sacrificial ministry like that of the Aaronic priests by a direct and special call from God²⁴. Note how Moses and Samuel are identified in such a special role²⁵.

Thus, if the author of Hebrews is to maintain that Jesus Christ is the High Priest of his people, then he *must produce comparable evidence that Jesus Christ had been called by God.*

5:5-10. Jesus Christ qualifies for the high priesthood in another order.

(2) The author presents the qualifications of Jesus Christ in reverse order.

a. The first qualification of Jesus Christ: called and appointed by God.

5:5. So Christ also did not glorify himself by becoming a high priest. But he (God) said to him, "MY SON (and no-one less) you (are)! (For emphasis the predicate is put before the subject!²⁶);

¹³ Numbers 15:28

¹⁴ Numbers 15:30-31

¹⁵ Exodus 32:1-6

¹⁶ Exodus 32:11-14,31-32

¹⁷ Zechariah 3:3-5

¹⁸ **5:3.** And (καί)(cc) because of (δια)(pa) this (ουτος-αυτη-τουτο)(npafzs) he (a high priest) must (has to, is obligated to) (οφειλει>οφειλω) (vipa--zs) offer (προσφερειν>προσφερω)(vnpa) (sacrifices) for (περι)(pg) sins (η αμαρτια)(n-gf-p), as (καθως)(cs) on behalf of (περι)(pg) the people (ο λαος)(n-gm-s), so (ουτως)(ab) also (και)(cc) on behalf of (περι)(pg) himself (αυτος-η-ο)(npgmzs).

¹⁹ Leviticus 16:6

²⁰ **5:4.** And not (ουχ)(ab) anyone (τις)(apinm-s=adjective pronominal *indefinite* nominative masculine singular)=(no one) takes (λαμβανει>λαμβανω)(vipa--zs) this honour (of being a high priest)(η τιμη)(n-af-s) upon himself (εαυτος-η-ον)(npgmzs *reflective sense*); but (αλλα)(ch) he is called (καλουμενος>καλεω)(vppnm-s) by (υπο)(pg) God (ο θεος)(n-gm-s), just as (καθωσπερ)(cs) also (και) Aaron (was called).

²¹ Daniel 7:8,20-21,24-25; Daniel 8:9-12; Daniel 11:21-45

²² Exodus 28:1ff; Leviticus 8:1ff; Numbers 16:5; 17:5; 18:1ff; Psalm 105:26

²³ Numbers 20:23ff; Numbers 25:10ff

²⁴ 1 Samuel 6:3ff

²⁵ Jeremiah 15:1; Psalm 99:6

²⁶ cf. John 1:1 "GOD (and nothing less)(the predicate) the Word (the subject) was!"

Today I have begotten you (NIV: I have become your Father).”²⁷

Jesus Christ did not assume the high priestly office with its dignity by his own initiative. He was called to it by God, who acclaimed him as his Son in the words of Psalm 2:7, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” In Hebrews 1:5 it was explained that the word ‘today’ refers to the day of *Christ’s enthronement* - the day when the Most High God gave public notice that he had *exalted the crucified Jesus as “both Lord (κυριος)²⁸ and Christ/Anointed (χριστος)²⁹* to his throne. On that day He handed to Jesus the sealed scroll containing the main events in salvation history³⁰. The same God who acclaimed Jesus Christ as his Son (not his physical, spiritual or figurative son, but his ontological, supernatural, trinitarian and eternal Son) has also acclaimed him as perpetual High Priest.

5:6. And so also he (God) says in another (place), “You (are) a priest for ever, according to the order (rank) of Melchizedek.”³¹

The Jewish Qumran community (about 100 B.C. to 70 A.D.) made a distinction between:

- ‘the lay Messiah’ (the political Messiah of Israel, the prince/king of the house of David)
- and ‘the priestly Messiah’ (the spiritual Messiah of the house of Aaron).

The author of Hebrews argues that Jesus Christ, who was acclaimed by God as the King in Psalm 2:6-7 (cf. Psalm 110:1) was also acclaimed by God as the High Priest in Psalm 110:4. Christians do not acknowledge two persons as the Messiah, but one, and that One is both King and High Priest. But if the Messiah of David’s line is the high priest as well as the king, he cannot be a ‘high priest in the order of Aaron’, because Aaron belonged to the tribe of Levi and David belonged to the tribe of Judah (cf. 7:14). However, there is a Scripture that speaks of another priestly order and designates the Davidic King as High Priest of this order - the order of Melchizedek.

In the lifetime of Abraham (2167-1992 B.C.) Melchizedek makes his appearance in Genesis 14:18 as ‘king of Salem’ (probably Jerusalem)³² and ‘priest of God Most High’³³. When centuries later (about 1007 B.C.) Jerusalem fell into the hands of king David and became his capitol city³⁴, he and his heirs became successors to Melchizedek’s kingship, and probably also (in a titular capacity) to the priesthood of God Most High.

Throughout *the period of the kings (1032 B.C. – 586 B.C.)³⁵*, the chief priesthood in the Jerusalem temple was exercised by the Levitical priesthood (the family of Zadok), which is quite distinct from the Davidic line. They never laid claim to the succession of the order of Melchizedek.

Under the Hasmoneans (167-37 B.C.), from Jonathan Maccabaeus (143 B.C.) onwards, the chief priesthood and the chief civil power in Israel were combined in one person. But also the Hasmoneans had nothing to do with Melchizedek. Many pious Jews and especially the community at Qumran refused to recognize their usurpation of the high priestly office. They hoped that one day the legitimate line of Zadok would again be invested with the high priestly office in a purified temple in a new Jerusalem. But also these Jews did not envisage a union between the anointed priest and the anointed king of the new age.

The writer to the Hebrews is the first to apply Psalm 110:4 to prove the divine call of King Jesus Christ to the high priestly office!

b. The second qualification of Jesus Christ: a merciful High Priest.

5:7. (Jesus) who in the days of his flesh (i.e. his life on earth), *once for all* offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries, and tears to the one who could save him from death. And he was heard because (his) godly fear.³⁶

²⁷ 5:5. So (in this manner) (ουτως)(ab) Christ also (και)(cc) did not (ουχ)(ab) glorify (εδοξασεν<δοξαζω)(viaa--zs) himself (εαυτος-η-ον) (n-pamzs) by becoming (γενηθηναι>γυνομαι)(v-nao) a high priest (ο αρχιερευς)(n-am-s). But (αλλα)(ch) he (God) (ο)(dnms / aprnm-s relative) said (λαλησας>λαλεω)(v-paanm-s) to (προς)(pa) him (αυτος-η-ο)(n-pamzs), “MY (μου)(npg-xs) SON (ο υιος)(n-nm-s) (and no-one less) (the predicate) you (συ)(the subject)(are) (ει)(v-ipa--ys)! (For emphasis the predicate is put before the subject!); Today (σημερον)(ab) I (εγω)(n-pn-xs) have begotten (γεγεννηκα> γεννωω)(vira--xs) you (σε)(n-pa-ys) (NIV: I have become your Father)(NOT in a physical/biological or spiritual or symbolic sense, BUT in a metaphorical, metaphysical, ontological, trinitarian and eternal sense).”

²⁸ Psalm 110:1. Luke 2:11. Cf. Mark 1:1-3 where κυριος means JaHWeH (LORD)!

²⁹ Psalm 110:4; Luke 2:11. Acts 2:36. χριστος means Anointed.

³⁰ Revelation 5:1-14

³¹ 5:6. And so (in this manner) (καθως)(cs) also (και)(cc) he (God) says (λεγει>λεγω)(v-ipa-zs) in another (ετερος-α-ον)(ap-dm-s) (place)(Psalm 110:4), “You (συ)(n-pn-ys) (are) a priest (ο ιερευς)(n-nm-s) for (εις)(pa) ever (ο αιων)(n-am-s), according to (κατα)(pa) the order (rank) (η ταξις)(n-af-s) of Melchizedek.”

³² cf. Psalm 76:2

³³ Hebrew: El Elyon, who is identified with JaHWeH in Genesis 14:22. Melchizedek was king of Salem (Genesis 14:1-19) in the time Abraham (2167-1992 B.C.), when he was 75 years old and in 2092 B.C. travelled from Haran to Canaan (Genesis 12:4).

³⁴ 2 Samuel 5:4-7

³⁵ Total period of kings from Saul to Zedekiah = 446/447 years (1032 BC – 586 B.C.)

³⁶ 5:7. (Jesus) who (ος)(apnrm-s relative) in (εν)(pd) the days (η ημερα)(n-df-p) of his (αυτος-η-ο)(n-pgmzs) flesh (η σαρξ)(n-gf-s) (i.e. his life on earth), *once for all* offered (προσενεγκας>προσφερω)(v-aanm-s) up prayers (η δεησις)(n-af-p) and (τε και) petitions (η κητηρια)(n-af-p) with (μετα)(pg) loud (strong) (ισχυρος-α-ον)(a--gf-s) cries (η κραυγη)(n-gf-s), and tears (το δακρυον)(n-gn-p) to (προς)(pa) the one who could (δυναμενον>δυναμαι)(v-pnam-s) save (σωζειν>σωζω)(v-npa) him (αυτος-η-ο)(n-pamzs) from (εκ)(pg) death (ο θανατος)(n-gm-s). And he was heard (εισακουσθεις>εισακουω)(v-parnm-s) because of (as the result of) (απο)(pg) (his) godly fear (reverent submission) (η ευλαβεια)(n-gf-s).

Jesus Christ had the ability to sympathise with his people. He was a merciful and faithful High Priest, made like his brothers in every respect and able to sympathise with their temptations (2:17-18) and weaknesses (4:15). This qualification is now elaborated.

All kinds of tests and trials befell him “in the days of his flesh” (in the days of his earthly life)³⁷. This expression emphasises the condition of his human nature before his resurrection: he was like every other human being, except for sin. “In the days of his flesh” does not imply that he terminated his human nature when he was exalted into heaven. He was exalted into heaven in his glorified and Spirit-controlled resurrection body (human nature)³⁸.

He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears. Jesus probably cried more often, but the reference is here to his prayer and tears in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was there that Jesus said, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done”³⁹. These words do not express that Jesus was unwilling to die and prayed to be delivered from death. It also does not imply that his prayer was not heard! These words are further explained, when Jesus said, “Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”⁴⁰. Jesus was certainly willing to die⁴¹, but in his weakened human nature *he identified completely with his followers* who would also later ‘drink the cup of suffering’⁴². The point to be emphasized in the narrative of Luke 22 is not so much that the prayer of Jesus was heard, as that it needed to be heard - Jesus needed heavenly aid to drink the appointed cup. His weakened human nature needed the strengthening of his heavenly Father.

His words in Gethsemane echo the words of the first part of Psalm 22. “He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears” might well describe the supplication and complaint of the first part of Psalm 22 - when he was crucified. “He was heard” echo the words in the second part of Psalm 22 – He was resurrected from the dead to reign as King over the heathen nations (verse 23-24). The author of Hebrews does not go into the question of Christ’s resurrection. Here he proves that Jesus was qualified to be our High Priest, because throughout his agony and suffering, prayers and tears, his trust in God the Father never failed. What gives reality to *the priesthood is that it is no external office: inherited, usurped, or granted by favour. His priesthood was an inward vocation, the commitment and dedication of his heart, soul, mind and body.*

He was heard because of his ‘godly fear’ (εὐλαβεία), which is a ‘reverent awe and humble submission’ in the presence of God. The word is close to ‘godliness’ (εὐσεβεία), which is the attitude of recognising the path of the Father’s will and following it to the end!

The fact that the cup of suffering was not removed qualifies Jesus Christ all the more to sympathise with his people when they are faced with the mystery of trials, suffering and unanswered prayer. Christians know that their High Priest was tested by temptations and trials in the same way and did not seek a way of escape by supernatural means of a kind that they do not have at their disposal⁴³. No one may say, “Because Jesus was the Son of God it was different, easier, for him.” *Jesus Christ did not recourse to miraculous means to relief his hunger in the desert; to escape his trial before the Jews and Romans; or to suffer the agony and pain of being crucified. He refused that angels rescue him⁴⁴!*

5:8. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.⁴⁵

It is the most natural thing in the world for human children to learn obedience by suffering.⁴⁶ *Human fathers ‘discipline’⁴⁷, rebuke⁴⁸ and punish⁴⁹” their children in order to produce holiness and a harvest of righteousness (12:5-11).* But here the author is not speaking of an ordinary human son, but of the Son of God. Although he was the Son of God he was granted no exemption from the common law that *learning obedience comes by suffering!*

³⁷ John 1:14. God sent Jesus Christ to earth “in the likeness of sinful flesh to condemn sin in the sinful flesh” (εν ομοιωματι σαρκος αμαρτια και περι αμαρτιας κατεκριναν την αμαρτιαν εν τη σαρκι)(Romans 8:3). Jesus was like sinful man in every way, except for sin!

³⁸ Romans 1:2-4; 1 Corinthians 15: 42-45; Philippians 2:21

³⁹ Luke 22:42

⁴⁰ John 18:11

⁴¹ John 10:18

⁴² Matthew 20:23

⁴³ Jesus did not call upon the help of twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53) or on his divine nature. He willingly stuck to his human nature (John 10:17-18).

⁴⁴ Matthew 26:53

⁴⁵ **5:8.** Although (καπερ)(cs) he was (ων>ειμι)(vppanm-s) a son (ο υιος)(n-nm-s), he learned (εμαθεν>μανθανω)(viaa--zs) obedience (η υπακοη)(n-af-s) from (αφ)(pg) what (ων)(aprgn-p relative) he suffered (επαθεν>πασχω)(viaa--zs).

⁴⁶ *Learning obedience by suffering*, i.e. using a whip/lash (η μαστιξ) to scourge/spank a disobedient or recalcitrant child. “Discipline” (Proverbs 1:3; 3:11-12; 13:18; Hebrews 12:6). “Rod, stick, staff (Hebrew: shebet) “(Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 20:30; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15; Psalm 89:32-34; John 2:15).

⁴⁷ παιδεια

⁴⁸ ελεγχω

⁴⁹ μαστιγωω

In what sense did Jesus learn obedience by suffering? Ordinary human beings learn obedience by the unpleasant consequences which follow disobedience. But not so with Jesus Christ.

- Early in his life he learned obedience by listening and asking questions in a group studying the Bible⁵⁰.
- While other people confessed their sins and were baptised with water as a sign of washing away their sins, he asked to be *baptised with water* without any consciousness of personal sin. Instead he resolved to place himself unreservedly at God's disposal for the accomplishment of God's saving purpose. He resolved to fulfil all righteousness. "In order to fulfil all righteousness" means to conform to all that God requires⁵¹. He learned obedience by submitting to God's way for his life. That is why he speaks of '*drinking the cup of suffering*' as '*a baptism of suffering he needs to undergo*'.⁵² By doing so, Jesus associated himself deliberately, willingly and publicly with sinners.
- Throughout his life by what he suffered he learned in practice what obedience to God involved. In the conditions of human life on earth he suffered hunger, thirst, homelessness, rejection, etc.
- Up to the time that "he was numbered with transgressors"⁵³ on the cross, *he did not rebel against the path of God's will and he did not flee from it!* Instead he gave himself to his torturers, who plucked out his hair and spat in his face⁵⁴. The sufferings of Jesus⁵⁵ was the inevitable price of his obedience!

Thus *Jesus Christ learned obedience by his reverent submission to the path of God the Father's will, following it to the end and by submission to the suffering it brought!*

Jesus Christ was never imperfect in his being, person or character. He was always 100% God and 100% Man and 100% sinless. (He did not need regeneration). But he needed to be perfectly qualified for his divine task. In his human nature *he 'was made perfect' in the sense that he 'was perfectly qualified' to be the Author and Mediator of the salvation of his people.*

The Christians for whom the letter to the Hebrews was written, found that their *faith and obedience exposed them to trials and suffering*, which they could escape by renouncing their (Christian) faith or by drawing less attention to it. They were faced with the question: "Should they try to avoid suffering by falling back into Judaism, but then risk losing everything? Or should they press on and gain perfection?" The author urges them to press on (6:1) and in spite of suffering to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

5:9. And *once for all time* attaining the end or purpose (of his mission) / being made perfect (complete, competent)(to be the Pioneer/Source of salvation), he became the Source (Author) of eternal salvation for all who *continue to obey* him.⁵⁶

5:10. being designated (named) by God (to be) High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek-.⁵⁷

Through obedience/submission to suffering Jesus Christ attained the end or purpose/was made perfect/complete/fully qualified⁵⁸ (for his mission) (2:10) and became the Source of eternal salvation. His suffering made him fully qualified to be the 'Leader, Pioneer, Founder'⁵⁹ (2:10) or the 'Source, Cause, Author'⁶⁰ (5:9) of the eternal salvation of his people. His way of humiliation led to his exaltation⁶¹.

The salvation of Christians is eternal, because it is based on the sacrifice of Christ, once for all accomplished, never to be repeated, and permanently valid.

This salvation is made available to the obedient - thus another encouragement to persevere in their loyalty to Christ, in whom alone salvation is to be found.

This Christ was designated by God to be High Priest in the order of Melchizedek. He was called and appointed by God.

⁵⁰ Luke 2:46-47

⁵¹ Matthew 3:15

⁵² Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50. *While Christians are first baptised with the Spirit (regenerated) and receive the baptism with water as a visible sign of their baptism with the Spirit (Acts 1:47-48), Jesus Christ submitted first to the baptism with water as the visible sign of his resolve to submit to the baptism of suffering (his sacrifice of atonement on the cross)(Mark 10:38-39). The baptism of Jesus with water has nothing to do with regeneration and he was also not "immersed in" suffering, but was "overwhelmed by" suffering.*

⁵³ Luke 22:37

⁵⁴ cf. Isaiah 50:5-6

⁵⁵ John 19:1-3 cf. 2 Timothy 3:10

⁵⁶ **5:9.** And (καί)(cc) *once for all time* (aorist tense) being made perfect (complete)(in his obedience) (τελειωθεις>τελειωω)(vppnm-s) he became (εγενετο>γινομαι) (viad--zs) the author (cause, reason, source) (ο αιτιος)(ap-nm-s) of eternal (αιωνιος-α-ον)(a--gf-s) salvation (η σωτηρια) (n-gf-s) for all (πας)(ap-dm-p) who *continue to obey* (υπακουουσιν>υπακουω)(vppadm-p) him (αυτος-η-ο)(npdmzs).

⁵⁷ **5:10.** being designated (titled, named) (προσαγορευθεις>προσαγορευω)(vppnm-s) by (υπο)(pg) God (ο θεος)(n-gm-s) (to be) High Priest (ο αρχιερευς)(n-nm-s) according to (κατα)(pa) the order (η ταξις)(n-af-s) of Melchizedek-.

⁵⁸ τελειωω

⁵⁹ ο αρχηγος

⁶⁰ ο αιτιος

⁶¹ as in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

5:11 – 6:3. Exhortation to pursue spiritual maturity

a. The immature and the mature.

5:11. The exposition (explanation) concerning this (namely: the high priesthood of Jesus according to the order of Melchizedek) (there is) much to be said and hard to explain by us (obligation on us), because you have become slow (lazy) with respect to hearing.⁶²

At this point he admonishes the Hebrew Christians for their lack of spiritual growth. Later he continues his exposition of Melchizedek (7:1). Melchizedek was a subject of much speculation among later Jews and later Christians. Some Jews regarded Melchizedek as the prototype of the great priest of the age to come, but in a way that distinguished him from the Messiah of Psalm 110:1. *As a result of the polemic with the Christians, Judaism tended to take a less favourable view of Melchizedek.* Judaism concluded that because Melchizedek had blessed Abraham before he blessed God⁶³, God took the priesthood away from him and gave it to Abraham!

Why is the priesthood of Melchizedek so important? Because these Jewish Christians tended to slide away from the distinct Christian truths about Christ as the only High Priest (Prophet and King) back into distinct Jewish truths, into emphasizing Moses and the Law, the Levitical priesthood, the temple worship, the sacrifices and the natural nation of Israel. The only antidote against backsliding is moving forward – growing to maturity as Christians!

5:12. And *although* you ought to be teachers by this time, you again have a need of someone to teach you the elements of the ‘ABC’ (beginning) of the sayings (revelations) of God and you have *turned into the state of constantly* having need of milk, not of solid food.⁶⁴

By this time you ought to be teachers. God intends all Christians to be ‘teachers’ – an aspect of maturity. Christians may distinguish between three kinds of teachers:

- The people called to fulfil *the office of a teacher* in the Church⁶⁵.
- The people given a *spiritual gift of teaching*⁶⁶.
- Each and every Christians commanded to *teach others*⁶⁷, in the sense of sharing and passing on to others what you have learned and become convinced of, whether to an individual, to a small group or to a larger group of people. That is why sharing (quiet times) in small groups is so important!

You need someone to teach you the elementary truths or ‘ABC’ of the biblical revelation of the Christian faith (cf. 6:1-2). You need ‘milk, not solid food’. ‘Milk’ is a symbol of carnal and worldly thinking⁶⁸ and also a symbol of the easy teachings in the Bible. In contrast to carnal/worldly thinking, there is ‘spiritual wisdom’⁶⁹. And in contrast to the simple teachings, there is ‘solid food’⁷⁰

- advanced teachings: for example, the teachings in the letter to the Hebrews about the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament and for example the teachings of the letter to the Romans about justification through faith!
- and teaching about ‘the whole will of God’⁷¹ (a comprehensive mature view of the message of the whole Bible).

5:13. Anyone who partakes of (lives on) milk, (being) unacquainted with the teaching of righteousness, is still an infant.⁷²

⁶² **5:11.** The exposition (explanation) (ο λογος)(n-nm-s) concerning (περι)(pg) this (ου)(aprgm-s=adjective pronominal *relative* genitive masculine singular)(namely: the high priesthood of Jesus according to the order of Melchizedek) by us (obligation on us) (ημιν)(npd-xp=noun pronoun dative 1st person plural) (there is) much (πολυς πολλη πολυ)(a--nm-s) to be said (λεγειν>λεγω)(vnpa) and hard to explain (δυσερμενευτος-ον)(a--nm-s), because (επει)(cs) you have become (γεγονατε>γινομαι) (vira--yp)(the perfect signifies the state or condition) slow (lazy) (sluggish, slow, dull)(νωθρος-α-ον)(a--nm-p)(used of the numb limbs of a sick lion and in Proverbs 22:29 it means ‘lazy, indolent’) with respect to hearing (η ακοαις)(n-df-p).

⁶³ Genesis 14:19f

⁶⁴ **5:12.** And (και)(cc) *although* (because)(γαρ)(cs) you ought (owe, are indebted)(οφειλοντες>οφειλω)(vppanmnp)(*concessive* meaning) to be (εινα>ειμι)(vnpa) teachers (ο διδασκαλος)(n-nm-p) by (δια)(pa) this time (ο χρονος)(n-am-s), you again (παλιν)(ab) have (εχετε>εχω)(vira--yp) a need (η χρεια)(n-af-s) of someone (τινα)(apiam-s= adjective pronominal *indefinite* accusative masculine singular) to teach (διδασκειν>διδασκω)(vnpag) you (υμας)(npa-yp) the elements (fundamental principles/truths)(το στοιχειον)(n-an-p) of the ‘ABC’ (beginning) (η αρχη)(n-gf-s)(*descriptive* genitive) of the sayings (revelations)(το λογιον) (n-gn-p) of God (ο θεος)(n-gm-s) (that is the collective writings

of

the Old Testament probably in the light of the New Testament revelation given by Christ) and (και)(cc) you have *turned into in the state of* (γεγονατε>γινομαι)(vira--yp)(the perfect signifies the state or condition) *constantly* having (εχοντες>εχω)(vppanmnp) need (η χρεια)(n-af-s)

of

milk (το γαλα, γαλακτος)(n-gn-s), not (ου)(ab) of solid (στερεος-α-ον)(a-gf-s) food (η τροφη)(n-gf-s).

⁶⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-12; Matthew 23:10; James 3:1

⁶⁶ Romans 12:7

⁶⁷ Matthew 28:19; Colossians 3:16

⁶⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:2

⁶⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:6-15

⁷⁰ Hebrews 5:12

⁷¹ Acts 20:27

⁷² **5:13.** Anyone (πας)(ap-nm-s) who (ο)(dnms / apmm-s *relative*) partakes of (lives on + genitive) (μετεχων>μετεχω)(vppanm-s) milk (το γαλα) (n-gn-s) (the elementary teachings), (being) unacquainted with (unskilled, untried, ignorant, lacking experience) (απειρος-ον)(a--nm-s) the teaching (word)(ο λογος)(n-gm-s) of righteousness (η δικαιοσυνη)(n-gf-s)(the righteousness accomplished by Christ), is still (εστιν>ειμι) (vira-zs) an infant (one who views spiritual things from the viewpoint of a child)(ο νηπιος)(ap-nm-s).

Anyone who lives on milk is an infant. He is still a Christian ‘baby’. He may be a born-again Christian⁷³, but has not yet grown to maturity. Significant changes have not yet taken place in his life⁷⁴. Note that the Jews during the Old Testament period were still immature “children subject to guardians and trustees and locked up until faith in Jesus Christ should be revealed”, while the believers during the New Testament period have become mature “sons of God”⁷⁵.

He is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. In this context it refers to the teaching about Melchizedek and the permanent High Priesthood of Jesus Christ. *The Hebrew Christians avoided this topic, because if they were really convinced about this teaching, they would have to sever their ties with the Jews and Jewish thinking, because the Jews clung to Moses and legalism instead of to Jesus and grace!*

The mature would have to believe that the Old Testament priesthood with its sacrifices and the Old Testament ceremonial law (the distinguishing mark of being Israel) had once for all been fulfilled and was therefore cancelled and abolished⁷⁶! This would bring them in conflict with the Jews with their Judaism and it might bring Jews to persecute Jewish Christians⁷⁷.

The immature are still ‘unacquainted with the teachings of the Bible, ‘unskilled’, ‘lacking in experience’. They are ignorant about what the Bible really teaches.

They lack the teaching or principle of righteousness’. Because they do not completely understand the righteousness that Christ *acquired, imputes and imparts*, they also do not understand the right way to live as Christians. The teaching about righteousness means that God has declared the believer in Christ 100% forgiven (righteous) on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice of atonement. From now on until his second coming Christ regards and treats the believer as 100% forgiven (righteous) in his eyes. It means that through his Holy Spirit he is constantly making the believer in Christ (as to his personality, character and behaviour) more and more what he already is with regard to his position in Jesus Christ.

5:14. But solid food is of (for) the mature, of those who through the exercise have trained the faculties with reference to the distinction of (moral) good and (moral) evil.⁷⁸

The mature need solid food. These mature are Christians, who not only are spiritually mature and understand the most important teachings of the Bible, but have also accepted the adult responsibilities of Christians.

The mature need to exercise and train. Mature Christians train up to a point of being fit. They exercise and practise until something becomes a habit and they gain certain skills. Their senses or faculties learn to make moral and spiritual distinctions between good and bad. They build up a standard of values, of what is right and wrong in God’s eyes, so that they can pass discriminating judgement on moral situations as they arise.

Some people say that the words in 1 Thessalonians 5:20, “Test everything. Hold on to the good” gives Christians a license to test everything, including non-Christian religions, Eastern meditation, occultism, moral perversion (for example, sex before marriage, drugs, smoking, alcohol, etc.) and ultra-sports that threaten lives. But the very next verse, 1 Thessalonians 5:22, says, “Avoid every kind of evil”. Thus *a Christian may test only what is NOT evil, and must hold on to whatever is good!*

⁷³ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1

⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:2-4

⁷⁵ Galatians 3:15 – 4:7

⁷⁶ Matthew 5:17; Ephesians 2:14-15; Colossians 2:14

⁷⁷ Acts 13:45; 18:6; Revelation 2:9; 3:9

⁷⁸ **5:14.** But (δε)(ch) solid (στερεος-α-ον)(a--nf-s) food (the advanced teachings in the Bible)(η τροφη)(n-nf-s) is (εστιν>ειμι)(vipa-zs) of (for) the mature (those who have attained the end or purpose)(τελειος-α-ον)(ap-gm-p), of those who (των)(dgmpr=determiner/definite article genitive masculine plural / aprnm-p relative) through (δια)(pa) the exercise (practice, constant use, habit)(η εξις)(n-af-s) have trained (γεγυμνασμενα>γυμναζω)(vprpan-p) the faculties (το αισθητηριον)(n-an-p) with reference to (προς)(pa) the distinction (η διακρισις)(n-af-s) of (moral) good (καλος-η-ον)(ap-gn-s) and (τε και) (moral) evil (κακος-η-ον)(ap-gn-s). (The *perfect tense* emphasises that the training had produced a certain standard of fitness).