

58-04-04.wpd --Forever the Priest We Need
priest, Incarnation, mediator, sin, salvation
Heb 4:14-5:10

We needed a perfect Priest, and God's Son filled the need perfectly.

INTRODUCTION: (text read as Scripture Reading)

--**Title....** Humans down through the centuries in every culture have always had some sort of religious system with a form of *priesthood*. As humans, we seem to have a built-in knowledge that we need help in having *a relationship with God*. The problem is that because priests are also human, they fail. Fallen humanity needed a priest that only the Incarnation could provide. **HOM.idea**. How so? *First...*

I. Jesus Was a Perfectly Human Priest (re-read v.4:14-16)

- A. When we choose a representative, we want someone familiar with our situation and our needs. [Choosing a Union Rep: workers don't pick an executive in the management to represent them, but a fellow worker! OR Electing a President: we wouldn't put a Communist who recently immigrated from China into office, would we?]
- B. When the disciples witnessed Christ's Ascension, they probably had two facts about Jesus combining to form one idea:
1. *First*, they knew that the Jesus they had walked with for 3 years was a real human, in fact, a Jewish human, like them.
 2. *Second*, they knew that this same human Jesus was now going to be in Heaven with God the Father.
 3. Those 2 facts added up to a brand new concept:
 - a. "*We now 'have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens.*" (all other priests were *earthly, temporary, and fallible*)
 - b. But this new concept included another factor that guaranteed 100% success: This high priest's identity is "*Jesus the Son of God.*"
- C. What does this do for us? It strengthens *faith* and *prayer*--
1. Faith: "*let us hold firmly to the faith we profess*" (Not only is our need for a priest fulfilled, but filled by One we can absolutely trust.)
 2. Prayer: "*Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*"

TRANS: Human *union reps* and human *elected officials* are *human*, so they qualify to lead us, but they can also fail us. But Jesus is our perfect

representative, because He is not only human "*tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.*" **We needed a perfect Priest, and God's Son filled the need perfectly.** *Secondly...*

II. Only God's Son Could Fulfill This Position (re-read v.5:1-6)

- A. Every priest who came before Christ was not just *temporary*, but was a "make-do" *substitute* for the real thing we needed: WHY?
1. Because, as a sinner, he was subject to error in being a representative "*in matters related to God*" (Preachers like me can be wrong! What any preacher says must be checked with Scripture.)
 2. AND, as a sinner, the priest that served before Christ came had "*to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.*"
- B. Regardless of their *temporariness* and *fallibility*, God still uses human ministers, because they are "*able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since*" they themselves are "*subject to weakness.*" (BUT God has not changed *His policy and procedure* in appointing them: **v.5:4**, *No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was.*)
- C. Christ Himself had to go through God's selection process: **v.5a**, *So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest...*
1. We know that Jesus was the 2nd Member of the Trinity. BUT His Incarnation made it possible for God to establish a genuinely human Father-Son relationship within the Trinity: **v.5b**, But God said to him, "*You are my Son; today I have become your Father.*"
 2. Also, God had a special call to Jesus that bypassed the soon-to-end priesthood inherited by Aaron's descendants, and put Christ into a priestly order that was without end: **v.6**, *And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."*

TRANS: A place in this mysterious order of priesthood was *prophesied* for the Messiah in a verse in the Psalms quoted by **v.6**. Only one person could enter that position, because whoever did so would keep it forever. It was a priesthood without end. And this introduces our *last point...*

III. Jesus Holds a Priesthood That Will Last, v.5:7-10

- A. (Non-Christians have trouble understanding the Divinity of Jesus. We struggle with His humanity) This part of the passage helps us

see just how human Christ was "*During the days of Jesus' life on earth.*"

1. He anticipated His death with intense emotion, just like many humans do-- "*he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death...*"
2. Not only did God the Son have to pray humanly, but His work on the Cross would not be complete without the Resurrection, which was somehow contingent on the success of His prayers ("*and he was heard because of his reverent submission.*")
3. God the Son had to learn humanly how to obey God, and He learned it not the easy way [supernatural knowledge and willpower], but the hard way, "*from what he suffered*" ("*not my will, but yours be done*" was not only His struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane, but a *lifelong struggle* that He faced as every human does.)
4. Jesus Christ did not come as a ready-made product from Heaven.
 - a. He learned obedience! He learned fervency in prayer! He learned to resist temptation by being "*tempted in every way, just as we are.*"
 - b. He legitimately qualified, as a human, to become our perfect High Priest-- "*once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him*" [perfection in formation, in completion, right up to His last breath: "*It is finished.*"]
 - c. THEN AND ONLY THEN was Jesus "*designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek*"-- our *eternal* High Priest, administering an eternal salvation....

CONCLUSION:

--**We needed a perfect Priest, and God's Son filled the need perfectly.** He's a human high priest. He *knows us*, and *loves us*, and is *on our side*. His humanity should strengthen our faith and build up our confidence in prayer. He's "**Forever the Priest We Need**"

--If you are trying any other way to get close to God, forget it. He told us in John 14:6, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" AND the Father Himself points to His Son, as He did on the Mount of Transfiguration, and says, as He said to the disciples: "*This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.*"

Heb 4:14-16 (NIV) Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. {15} For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. {16} Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Heb 5:1-10 (NIV) Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. {2} He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. {3} This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. {4} No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. {5} So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." {6} And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." {7} During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. {8} Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered {9} and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him {10} and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.