

Text: Heb 5.5-10

Last week I told you about a chiasmic structure of thought in Hebrews 5. The term “chiasm” comes from the Greek letter Chi, which looks like our X.

When you have a chiasmic structure, you have at least three points where there is parallelism (a favorite device of Hebrew writers).

The first and last points are parallel, the middle points are parallel, and so on. Let’s look at the passage and then consider how they points the text makes are parallel.

Read Heb 5.1-10, text 1-4

- A The old office of high priest (5.1)
- B The solidarity of the high priest with the people (5:2–3)
 - C The humility of the high priest (5:4)
 - C’ The humility of Christ (5:5–6)
- B’ The solidarity of Christ with the people (5:7–8)
- A’ The new office of high priest (5:9–10)¹

Our points last week were:

1. We want someone who can act for us (1)
2. We want someone who can act *as* us (2-3)
3. We want someone who can act under God’s approval (4)

This week we will work our way backwards through that list, but point to Jesus Christ.

1. We HAVE someone whom God approved and appointed (5-6)
2. We HAVE someone who suffered for us (7-8)
3. We HAVE someone who became our source of eternal salvation (9-10)

Ok, that’s all very dry and academic. Let’s personalize this a bit.

There is a story in the Bible about a man who sinned against another man. He had his reasons, even justifications. The man he offended against had also offended him. The man decided he couldn’t take it anymore, so he stole something from the other man and fled.

¹ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), 111.

Amazingly, he fled right to a place where he ran into another man who knew both men.

This other man was a well-known Christian who counseled the fugitive, brought him to Christ and then worked to restore the relationship.

Do you know who I am talking about?

Paul is the Bible teacher. Onesimus is the offender. Philemon is the man sinned against.

Onesimus, when he became a Christian, knew that he had a legal obligation to Philemon, his *owner*, and possibly even his *relative*.

He knew he had to make things right with Philemon. But he was afraid to make things right simply on his own — Philemon could severely punish him, even have him killed.

But Onesimus went back, trusting two things: 1) the fact that Philemon was a Christian, and 2) he held in his hands an intercessory letter from the apostle Paul.

We are like Onesimus. We owe our life and breath to the One who created us, but we think we can live the way we want and give nothing to God.

When we recognize our offense against our Creator, we also realize we need someone to intercede for us. We need an intercessor. We need a Priest.

What We Have Found in Our Eternal Priest

Proposition: Through our eternal priest, we have the only way back into God's fellowship.

I. We HAVE someone whom God approved and appointed (5-6)

A. The closest correspondence between Christ and Aaron: God's appointment (5a)

1. In the priests of the OT, Israel had a priest appointed by God: Aaron (and his sons)
 - a. God clearly marked out Aaron for this privilege
 - b. In the contest with Korah and the others, God established this forever

2. The priesthood of Christ is likewise by God's appointment "so also"
 - a. In v. 4, the writer refers to this as an "honor" for Aaron
 - b. In v. 5, Christ "did not glorify himself"
 - 1) Even the title, "Christ," speaks to humility: "anointed one"
 - 2) The Anointed One *receives* the anointing, he is not "self-anointed"

Salvation is part of an eternal *plan* of God: we are not left to our own devices.

B. The Scriptural foundation of Christ's appointment

1. The appointment of Christ to the throne already established (5b)
 - a. In prophecy (Ps 2.7)
 - b. In Hebrews (1.5)
 - c. To the throne (see Heb 1.2-3)

"a declaration of appointment, not of parentage"²

- Our Lord Jesus is the eternal Son of God, but the argument of Hebrews rests on the works of Christ and response of God
- Appointed Son when he ascended on high

But also...

2. The appointment of Christ to the temple now understood (6)
 - a. Quoting Ps 110.4, another Messianic psalm

"Both texts declare the decrees in accordance with which Jesus was installed in his office and invested with power."³
 - b. A foundational verse for the theology of Hebrews
 - 1) Not used by any other NT writer

² Lane, 118.

³ Lane, 118.

2) Quoted three times in Heb

3) Alluded to eight times

c. Implied in the prologue (1.3 “he had made purification of sins”), made explicit here

In Israel, some rabbis expected two Messiahs, “the Messiah of Israel” [from David] and “the Messiah of Aaron” [from Levi]⁴

But we now depart from Aaron with two words: “forever” and “Melchizedek”

C. The eternal aspect of Christ’s appointment

1. More will be made of Melchizedek later, but now we consider a new “class” or “order” of priest

“κατὰ τὴν τάξιν, ἐπιεικῶς, ‘according to the style of.’ Comp. 7:15, ‘after the likeness (ὁμοιότητα) of Melchisedek.’”⁵

2. And note this: forever... this is an enduring priesthood

So, we HAVE someone God approved and appointed...

II. We HAVE someone who suffered for us (7-8)

A. Much discussion of these verses in the commentaries

1. The prayers and supplications tend to call up Gethsemane (and possibly Golgotha)

a. Note “loud crying and tears”

b. Also “to the One able to save Him from death”

2. This recalls especially Gethsemane, and perhaps the cries from the cross...

I want to develop this more next week, so consider for now the following points

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 123–24.

⁵ F. W. Farrar, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, With Notes and Introduction.*, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 74.

B. The priestly action of his prayer life

1. He “offered up both prayers and supplications”

a. Compare verse 3 “he is obligated to offer *sacrifices* for sins”

b. “Offer” and “offered” are the same word: a priestly word

Lane calls the use of this term “deliberate”⁶

2. Constable says Gethsemane and Golgotha “illustrate this”

“However Jesus’ entire passion ministry is probably in view here.”⁷

a. The prayers in the garden and on the cross displayed his human identification with us (*he suffered*)

b. These prayers are part and parcel of his intercession for us

c. But his whole ministry was one of prayer

Mk 1.35 ¶ In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.

d. Consider this intercession

Lk 22.31-32 ¶ “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat;³² but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

How earnest do you think Jesus was in this prayer?

C. Not only action, but answer: “he was heard”

1. Various trans.

a. KJV: “he feared”

b. ESV: “his reverence”

c. NET: “his devotion”

d. NAU: “his piety”

⁶ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 119.

⁷ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Hb 5.7.

2. His offerings — “prayers and supplications” — were accepted

Regardless of the specific prayers, his whole ministry was offered up to God, and was accepted.

Consider his intercessory prayer in the upper room:

Jn 17.20 ¶ “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

That offering was accepted by God.

D. His suffering taught him obedience though he was a Son

1. It is a common thing for suffering to teach

The Gk words for “learn” and “suffer” have a similar sound. There is a secular Greek proverb based on them:

μαθήματα παθήματα – “sufferings are teachings”

2. It is a natural thing for a son to learn through suffering

3. But our text doesn’t say “a Son” but “Son” without the article

a. He stands as “the Son” in his “Sonship” — “You are my Son” (v. 5)

b. A better trans. might be “Son though he was”

c. Son though he was, he learned obedience

We HAVE someone who suffered for us

III. We HAVE someone who became our source of eternal salvation (9-10)

A. Now we turn to “having been made perfect”

1. Jesus was fully mortal and *could die*

a. He didn’t deserve to die

b. No sentence of death lay over him

c. But he could die

2. Jesus in now, in his humanity, made perfect: "Jesus is no longer subject to death."⁸

- a. Brought to completion
- b. Come to his proper end or goal

Having been made perfect, then...

B. He became our source of eternal salvation

1. It comes from him
2. He led us through the valley of Shadow to show us the way

In a way, salvation means dying to yourself and your own way

C. He stands for us in the order of Melchizedek

This brings us back to that tantalizing figure, which he will fully explain later.

Here, we find a priesthood better than Aaron's

- Appointed by God
- But offering a better sacrifice
- Accepted in a better order

Conclusion:

Proposition: Through our eternal priest, we have the only way back into God's fellowship.

Is He your priest? Do you love him with all your heart?

Do you order your life around him and his will?

⁸ Allen, *Hebrews*, 323.