

Sunday September 4<sup>th</sup> 2011  
The Letter to the Hebrews  
Part Fifteen

Review: Before we go any further today let's take one more walk through the Tabernacle.

1). Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. 5:1 ¶ For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. 3 Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. 4 And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.*

a). Hebrews Chapter 4 concludes by telling us that Christ, as our great High Priest, sympathizes with our weaknesses, and we will remember that His sympathy, His compassion for us, has been engendered through His own experience of the anguish and struggle that comes from resisting sin. Something that He has experienced with an intensity that most of us would probably never know - Lu 22:44 *And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

b). Heb 12:3 *For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 ¶ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*

c). Then as a result of this 'understanding' of our struggle we can 'come boldly' to the throne of grace – if we come to the throne of grace having sinned, then we can obtain mercy, through the Lord's forgiveness as we would ask for it 1Jo 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

d). 1Jo 2:1 *¶ My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

e). And if we come to the throne of grace in the midst of trial and temptation we can find 'grace to help' in our time of need so that we may patiently endure during our time of testing - 1Co 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be*

*tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

f). We are never tempted beyond that which we are able to bear, because going to the throne of grace is the way of escape and having received His grace we ‘may be able to bear it’ – This does of course depend upon that which we choose to believe and the level of trust we have in the Lord. Even though we receive His grace we can still choose to sin; we can still choose to believe the lie that it is too much for us to endure.

g). But as always, ‘what does the scripture say?’ - 2Co 12:9a *And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."*

h). His grace is sufficient, it provides all that we need to endure and in the midst of our weakness His strength is brought to completion in us.

i). Enduring temptation and relying upon His grace must of necessity require the dying of our flesh, but just look at the promise that goes with that –

*2Ti 2:11 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. 12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*

j). Heb 6:15 *And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*

2). And so having drawn attention to the compassion of our High Priest our writer then gives comments on the office of high priest as held by men in the earthly tabernacle - Heb 5:1 ¶ *For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.*

a). And here we see both the nature and the purpose of this ministry – the high priest who is taken ‘from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God’ – his ministry then is on behalf of others with respect to their relation to God; he is the one then who mediates between men and God.

b). And his mediation, the things that he has been appointed to that pertain to God, have to do with the offering of ‘both gifts and sacrifices for sins’; with doing what is necessary with regards to the sins of the saved that the righteousness of God might be satisfied so that those on whose behalf he ministers may still receive their inheritance.

c). The word translated ‘offer’ means to carry towards or to and is often used of the priest bringing the sacrifice to the altar.

d). And whereas the word ‘gifts’ refers to gifts in a general sense the word ‘sacrifices’ speaks of blood sacrifices - Heb 9:22 *And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.*

e). Then we see in v2 that the high priest ‘can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness’. And so for the high priest to offer gifts and sacrifices effectively and efficiently he must have a genuine compassion for those on behalf of whom he ministers.

f). The fact that this is a requirement for the office of the high priest is the very reason that we find Jesus having sympathy with our weakness through having been tempted in all points just as we are yet without sin. Compassion and high priestly ministry must go together.

3). Our scripture then continues - *3 Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. 4 And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.*

a). Because of the high priest’s own sin nature he was required to offer sacrifices for his own sin as well as for the sins of the people and in the midst of this he would need to be careful to keep a proper balance between his compassion for others and his abhorrence of sin. There would be no place for him to turn a blind eye or to become complacent about other’s sins because of his own sinfulness. Rather than any complacency on the priest’s part the word translated ‘required’ has in the original language the sense of a moral obligation or duty. Because of his own sinfulness and the sinfulness that was all pervasive amongst the people dealing effectively and compassionately with those in his charge was absolutely necessary.

b). As we might imagine this is not a position to be taken lightly, hence the fact that ‘no man takes this honor to himself’, but is rather ‘called by God, just as Aaron was’.

c). What we would see here then, through the scriptures, is the fact that the priest would need to be set in place by God and only in this way would his ministry be properly founded. This would not make him immune from making wrong choices of course.

d). We can also note that this office is an ‘honor’, something of the highest prestige, from God’s perspective.

e). But the main point of what we read here, because of what is coming next, is that the role of high priest is not a career move, it is not an office entered into because it had a nice robe and a nice hat – rather this role is at the behest of God and He alone can appoint someone to that role.

4). Heb 5:5 *So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."* 6 *As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek";*

a). And here we see that even the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, ‘did not glorify Himself to become High Priest’. The role that Christ has and the role He will have during the Millennial Kingdom are not His because He chose them but by appointment by the Father.

b). *it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."* It was God the Father who said to our Lord ‘you are My Son’ and it was for ‘today’, literally for this day, the Millennial Kingdom, that Christ was begotten.

c). And then we see that Christ’s appointed position of Son goes hand in hand with the role of Priest after the order of Melchizedek during the coming age, and that it was God the Father who has glorified Him with respect to this.

d). And this is not really surprising as the rights of the firstborn include being priest over the father’s house.

e). Now keeping all this in mind let’s make the connection between Christ being begotten and His role as High Priest now and King/Priest in the age to come – the word begotten speaks of the natural process of childbirth and as we know the Lord was born, naturally, to Mary – *Php 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

f). It was as a man that the Lord experienced the struggle against sin, against persecution, despite His innocence; experiencing as a man rejection and betrayal and it is these experiences that have informed His sympathy for our weakness.

g). So we would see then that just as a man would be called of God to be high priest feeling compassion toward others because of his sin nature, so Christ was called of God the Father to be firstly our High Priest and then a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, displaying compassion as a result of His experience. In order to fulfill God’s prerequisite for priesthood, Christ had to suffer – and this of course was God’s plan from the foundation of the world.

h). Although Christ is not ministering according to the order of Melchizedek at the present it would be good for us to see the inextricable link between the two rather than seeing them as somehow disconnected. The whole focus of scripture as we know is the 7<sup>th</sup> Day. It is for this Day that Christ was begotten and it is in this Day that, that which is laid out in type in the opening Chapters of Genesis will be brought to its final conclusion – it is the point to which the whole of human history is inexorably marching. It is little wonder then that the writer of Hebrews makes consistent reference to the Melchizedek Priesthood of the Lord as this particular Priesthood must also be the focus of scripture – Christ does not rule apart from being the great King/Priest. And having said that let’s just remind ourselves of the subject of the Book of Hebrews - *Heb 2:5 ¶ For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.*

i). However, before the commencement of the 7<sup>th</sup> Day the work of the 6<sup>th</sup> day will be completed, which in foundation in Genesis is pictured in the making of the Woman from the body of the Man in order that they may rule together. And it is with respect to the making of the woman in the antitype of the picture in Genesis that Christ's present High Priestly ministry relates. His ministry as High Priest is exclusively on behalf of the many sons who will be brought to glory, those who will also be His Bride, who will be 'kings and priests' - Eph 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

j). This ministry then will be completed in order for the future ministry to commence and in this sense we can see how the latter is a logical progression from the former. They are in no sense in opposition to each other and nor is one more significant than the other, they just relate to different, but consecutive time periods. And we should also note that the prerequisites for Priesthood, whether we are referring to that of Aaron, that of our Lord at present, or our Lord in the future, remain the same.

5). Heb 5:6 *As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek"; 7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, 8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*

a). V7 here is referring to Jesus in His incarnation and what we see recorded is that He 'offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears.....'

b). Prayers = Greek – 'deesis', *deh'-ay-sis* = a special, definite request

c). Taking this word along with the word 'supplications' emphasizes the fact that the Lord was in need of the thing which He asked for.

d). These prayers and supplications were made to God the Father, the One 'who was able to save Him from death'.

e). Now we must be careful here to understand this correctly, because the verse is not saying that which we might immediately see if we take the words purely at face value.

f). Firstly, let's be clear that the prayers and supplications spoken of are not a reference to the prayers offered on the night of the Lord's betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane - Mr 14:36 *And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."*

g). The cup that Jesus had to drink that He speaks of in Gethsemane contained two interrelated things – firstly that He was to be made sin and as a consequence of this the fellowship between the Father and the Son would be broken – it was this break in fellowship that the Lord was asking to be taken from Him.

h). We must be clear that at no time did He ever request to be spared His physical death. This was something that was always absolutely certain –  
Re 13:8b.....*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

i). Mt 16:21 ¶ *From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.*

j). And of course something that was absolutely necessary for the fulfillment of God's plans and purposes.

k). So, if Christ never asked to be saved from physical death how should we understand Him asking the Father 'to save Him from death'?

l). Well we are able to go to the original language for help – there are 2 words in Greek that are translated 'from' – one is 'apo' which means 'from the edge of' and the other is 'ek' which means 'out from within'. And it is the second of these, 'ek', which is used in our verse. Our Lord is not asking then not to die, but to be resurrected out of death.

m). The prayer and supplication are made 'with vehement cries and tears' which would take us to the cross - Mt 27:46 *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

n). No doubt we might remember from an earlier study that the Lord is quoting here from Psalm 22 and although the scriptures make no reference to the Lord quoting any more than is recorded here, the Psalm as a whole does encompass the information we are given in Hebrews 5:7 – perhaps we will read it one more time to refresh our memories - Ps 22:1 ¶ <<To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn." A Psalm of David.>> *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? 2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent. 3 But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel. 4 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them. 5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed. 6 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. 7 All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8 "He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!" 9 But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's*

womb You have been My God. 11 ¶ Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help. 12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. 13 They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion. 14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. 16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; 17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. 18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots. 19 But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! 20 Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog. 21 Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me. 22 ¶ I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. 23 You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel! 24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard. 25 My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him. 26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever! 27 All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. 28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S, And He rules over the nations. 29 All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive. 30 A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation, 31 They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, That He has done this.

o). V7 then concludes with the fact that the Lord was heard for a specific reason - *was heard because of His godly fear.*

p). The word translated 'fear' here is not the usual Greek word 'phobos', but 'eulabeia', which means to act cautiously, to beware, to fear. The picture in the word is that of a cautious taking hold of and a careful and respectful handling. Hence it speaks of a pious, devout and circumspect character, who in his prayer, takes into account all things, not only his own desire, but the will of the Father.

q). This is certainly an apt description of our Lord and maybe it would shed some light on the nature of our own prayers.

6). V8 then continues - Heb 5:8 *though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*

a). The opening phrase, ‘though He was a Son’, should be understood as, ‘though He was the Son of God’. The idea being that even though He is God the Son He was not exempt from the preparation for Priesthood that would come through the practice of obedience in the midst of suffering during His incarnation.

b). As God the Son our Lord knew exactly what obedience was, but not until His incarnation did He have to put it into practice, therefore He learned experientially what it takes to be obedient in the midst of trial and temptation encompassed in the frailty of human form.

c). Our Lord did not have to be disciplined out of any inclination to disobedience, but He did have to experience that discipline in order to bring to completion the process that prepared Him to be our faithful High Priest now as well as the great King/Priest in the age to come. Not only this but the discipline of the process that was brought to completion in Him also marked out the road that all must follow who desire to be a joint heir with Him as king and priest in the coming Kingdom. And this is exactly what we find in the verses that follow.

7). Heb 5:9 *And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, 10 ¶ called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," 11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.*

a). Having been brought to completion through obedience to the process the Lord has now become the ‘author’, the cause of, initiator and provider of, not eternal, but age lasting salvation, ‘to all who obey Him’.

b). Having been brought to completion through obedience to the process our Lord is ‘called by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek’.

c). Called = Greek – ‘prosagoreuo’, *pros-ag-or-yoo'-o* = to address, i.e. salute by name:--call.

d). In other words God the Father has publicly proclaimed that Jesus is a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek as a result of that which He has completed.

e). And it is our great High Priest of whom our writer has much to say – but here we will stop until next week.