

• *Jesus is the true meaning of the Mosaic system*

**We must have in our minds a basic outline of who the priests were and what they did**

- *Their humanity*
- *Offer gifts and sacrifices*
- *Sympathetic*
- *Sinners – a major blemish on the system*
- *Appointed by God according to the rules of the Mosaic law*

**The Old Testament priesthood was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ**

(i) *Jesus had a calling*

We have already read an appeal that we should depend on Jesus our sympathetic high priest<sup>□1</sup>. Now our letter wants to show how the priesthood of Jesus is in fact the fulfilment of the priesthood that was part of the law of God given to Israel through Moses. Jesus is the true meaning of the Mosaic system. The priests of the tribe of Levi were a 'shadow' of Christ. The gospel is the fulfilment of the law. It replaces it and abolishes it.

**1. First, we must have in our minds a basic outline of who the priests were and what they did.** This is given to us in Hebrews 5:1-4. (i) We learn of the humanity of the high priest. Each high priest was 'chosen from among men'<sup>□1</sup>. No angel, no woman, only a man could be high priest. (ii) Our writer speaks of the work of the high priest. <sup>1</sup>*For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of other people in relation to God. So he presents gifts to God and offers sacrifices for their sins.* 'Gifts' and 'sacrifices' cover every kind of offering given to God in the Mosaic ritual. There were some gifts that were not sacrifices (e.g. tithes). The high priest represented the people and gave God what he wanted in a way that made the people acceptable to God. (iii) Verse 2 speaks of the high priest's main qualification: <sup>2</sup>*He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness.* The reason why the high priest was sympathetic was that he himself was a human being. He was ministering to people like himself. (iv) The weakness of the high priest was so severe that it was a major blemish in the system. For the high priest was himself a sinner! His weakness was **sinful** weakness. <sup>3</sup>*Because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.* (v) The high priest had to be 'appointed'. Not anyone could decide to be a high priest. There were regulations about who could be a high priest, and he had to be 'appointed' by God according to the rules of the Mosaic law. This is mentioned in verse 1 but then the writer says more: <sup>4</sup>*And no one takes this honour for himself but he takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.*

**Next, we see how the Old Testament priesthood was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.** *So also Christ...!* Jesus had many of the characteristics that have just been mentioned. (i) He had a calling from God to be a high priest:

<sup>5</sup>*So also Christ did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. Instead he was appointed by the one who said to him,*  
*'You are my Son,*  
*today I have become your Father';*  
<sup>6</sup>*as he says also in another place,*  
*'You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.'*

Our writer quotes Psalm 2<sup>□1</sup> and Psalm 110<sup>□2</sup>. The first citation points to the royal Son of God who was 'begotten' by God the Father. The reference is to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. That was the point where the incarnate divine Son of God was put into position as the risen Saviour, from that point on to act as the divine-and-human head of the people of God.

□1 4:14-16

□1 5:1

□1 in 5:5  
 □2 in 5:6

The second citation recalls the time when David had a miraculous preview of a priest who would be altogether greater than the priests of the Mosaic system, and would resemble Melchizedek in his uniqueness. The main point in this is that Christ was **appointed** the risen Priest-King who interceded for and reigns over the people of God.

(ii) *In the weakness of human nature but without being sinful*

(ii) Christ came in the weakness of a human nature. Just as the ancient Aaronic high priests were human with fleshy weakness, something similar was true of Christ. *7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications...* A key word here is 'flesh'. Jesus did not sin but he came in the weakness of a human nature. He knew all about weariness and sorrow, tiredness and temptation, disappointment and grief. He was Son of God in power after the resurrection, but Son of God in weakness 'in the days of his flesh'.

(ii) *Jesus needed to pray*

(iii) Jesus needed to pray and did so with great intensity. *In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his devotion to God.* Our writer is thinking especially of the praying of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. His praying was energetic and noisy! He was in great agony. At one point he asked whether it might be possible to save the world without going through the agony of the crucifixion and the sin-bearing that would be involved. The answer was 'No' and Jesus said, 'Your will be done'. Yet in another sense he prayed to be saved from death and the answer was 'Yes'. The resurrection was God's answer to Jesus' prayer.

*Sympathetic because he was a human being who endured in an extreme form the struggle and temptations and battles in prayer that we experience*

In all of this Jesus was fulfilling the pattern of priesthood that was to be found among the high priests of the Mosaic covenant. He became a sympathetic Saviour because he was a human being who endured in an extreme form the kind of struggle and temptations and battles in prayer that we experience. He remembers it all still and it is these very experiences that lead Jesus to be sympathetic to our struggles in the pathway to glory. The Old Testament priesthood is to be seen as a shadow of Jesus.



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