

CHAPTER 7

HEBREWS – SECTION 2, A-D

II. Christ's superiority over Aaron (4:14 – 10:18)

A. Christ the superior mediator, beginning *inclusio* (4:14-16)

**Guthrie (p. 121) notes a form of *inclusio* here, with a prologue in Heb 4:14-16 and an epilogue in Heb 10:19-23. Both sections have these points in common:

- 1) Hold the confession (4:14; 10:23)
- 2) Draw near to God (4:16; 10:22)
- 3) Our great high priest (4:14; 10:21)
- 4) Confidence (4:16; 10:19)

Passage is transitional to next section on the high priest; it picks up the thought of 3:1-6 (note 3:1, high priest).

v. 14, Since Jesus is in heaven, he is more effective mediator

“Jesus the Son of God”—contra Joshua in 4:8 (first use of “Son of God” in Hebrews)

v. 15, Cf. 2:17-18, better mediator because he has shared all our infirmities, without sin

“Tempted,” here and in 2:18

χωρίς *choris*, “apart from” Kent: “none of His temptations arose out of a sinful disposition”; cf. Adam; of course, he never did sin (1 Pet 2:22)

v. 16, Come to Christ when tempted to stray

B. Aaron's and Christ's priesthods compared, 5:1-10

1. Aaron's priesthood, 5:1-4

v. 1, Taken from men; appointed in behalf of men

Gifts: grain offerings, drink offerings, fellowship offerings

Sacrifices: bloody offerings (for sins)

v. 2, Able to deal gently

Ignorant; sins of ignorance vs. sins of presumption; cf. Num 15:27-31

He is surrounded by weakness

v. 3, Offer [sacrifice] for people and for himself

Day of Atonement—Lev 16 (Day of Atonement expanded in Heb 9)

v. 4, This office not by nature of personal worth, but appointed by God from family of Aaron;
Exod 28, Lev 8

2. Christ's priesthood, 5:5-10

Christ has all the good qualifications, and he lacks the drawbacks, of the Aaronic priests.

vv. 5-6, Appointed by God

Quotes Ps 2:7, messianic king

Psalm 2:7,

I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:
He said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.

Ps 110:4, messianic priest-king, order of Melchizedek

Psalm 110:4,

The LORD has sworn
and will not change his mind:
"You are a priest forever,

in the order of Melchizedek.”

(Melchizedek in the OT only in Gen 14:18-20; Ps 110:4; in the NT—Heb 5:10 and ch. 7)

Special appointment: Christ of Judah, not of Levi

vv. 7-8, Ability to sympathize and help, because he suffered and learned obedience

Pronoun in v. 7, verb in v. 8—ὅς . . . ἔμαθεν; *hos . . . emathan*—“who . . . learned”

With requests & supplications & strong crying & tears

Gethsemane: Luke 22:41-44; perhaps the crucifixion itself (Luke 23:14; Mark 15:44 = Matt 27:46; Matt 27:50)

Able to save him from death; probably referring to resurrection (not plot of Satan to kill prematurely; John 10:18)

To learn obedience by experience

vv. 9-10, The perfect high priest

Having been perfected; cf. 2:10

Eternal salvation; theme developed later

Because of his character and accomplishments, therefore designated by God as high priest; contrast with Aaronic priesthood

C. Danger of rejecting Christ’s priesthood (5:11 - ch. 6) (Warning #3)

If ignoring the way of reconciliation to God through the OT priests led to condemnation, to ignore Christ, the greater high priest, is to exclude oneself even more finally from God’s salvation.

1. Rebuke for spiritual immaturity, 5:11-14

v. 11, Dull of hearing; cf. 6:12, dull in general

vv. 12-14, Elements of the beginning of the elements of God; cf. 6:1, word of the beginning of Christ

Milk: good in 1 Pet 2:2; bad in 1 Cor 3:2

2. Encouragement to spiritual maturity, 6:1-3

vv. 1-2, The foundation (milk):

Conversion: “Repentance from dead works” (KJV, ESV); “from acts that lead to death” (NIV); cf. 9:14

Faith upon God

Ceremonies: Teaching of baptisms (βαπτισμός, contrasting Jewish and Christian washings); John 3:25-26; Acts 19:1-5

Laying on of hands, Acts 8:17; 19:6 (discussed in the *Didache*)

Last days: Resurrection of the dead

Eternal judgment

v. 3, This we will do (future indicative)

If God permits (3rd class condition, possible-probable)

3. Folly of apostasy, 6:4-8

Main sentence: “It is impossible . . . for them to be brought back to repentance.”

vv. 4-6, Modified by seven participles; the first five participles state the conditions for the permanent condemnation to exist; the final two participles state the reason for this condemnation. The use of the first five participles is most crucial for the interpretation of this passage.

“For **it is impossible** for the ones once having been enlightened (φωτισθέντας *photisthentas*), and having tasted (γευσσάμενους *geusamenous*) the free heavenly gift, and having become (γενηθέντας *genethentas*) partakers of the Holy Spirit, and having tasted (γευσσάμενους *geusamenous*) the good word of God and of the powers of the coming age, and having fallen away (παραπεσόντας *parapesontas*), **again to renew [them] unto repentance**, having crucified again (ἀνασταυροῦντας *anastaurountas*) to themselves the Son of God and having subjected [him] to public exposure (παραδειγματίζοντας *paradeigmatizontas*).” (word-for-word translation)

Conditional use of the participle (all 5 “ifs” must apply)

Wallace prefers adjectival use for all 5 participles: “It is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened . . . and have fallen away.” (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* 633); the resulting meaning is the same.

1) Having been enlightened once (ἄπαξ *hapax*; cf. 10:32, possibly regeneration)

2) Having tasted the heavenly gift

Taste, Acts 10:10; Heb 2:9

Heavenly gift, Christ, John 4:10

3) Having shared in the Holy Spirit (3:1, 14; cf. Matt 7:22-23)

4) Having tasted the word of God and the powers of the coming age

Word of God, 1 Pet 1:25; 2:3

Powers, Heb 2:4

5) Having fallen away (παρπέσοντας *parapesontas*)

LXX of Ezek 18:24; 20:27

Complete and final repudiation, Heb 10:26-27

Result: impossible . . . to renew unto repentance (infinitive)

Reason: the final two participles:

- “Crucifying up to themselves the Son of God”
- “And making a public exposure (of him)”

Expose to public ridicule; cf. Num 25:4, public hanging

4 views of this passage (cf. Kent, 111-14):

(1) Arminian view: saved persons who are subsequently lost

Problems with other passages showing perseverance: e.g., Heb 7:25; 8:12; 10:14

Big problem: impossible to renew—goes against Arminian doctrine

(2) Christian chastisement view: saved persons who backslide

As in 1 Cor 11:30

Reduces severity of penalty; refers to inability to “start over again” or undo harm that was done; may refer to physical death

(3) Traditional Reformed view: professed believers who are not actually regenerated and do not persevere

Similar to rocky ground in Matt 13:20-21

(Note application to covenant children—danger of falling away; responsibility)

Problems:

Seems to weaken the force of the first four participles

Indicates cannot be saved later

Yet this view seems appealing, and in harmony with other Scriptures and with experience

Good argument for traditional view – OT parallel of Israelites in wilderness (experience blessing of being in covenant community without personal faith; came under the curses of the covenant); see Dave Mathewson, “Reading Hebrews 6:4-6 in the Light of the Old Testament,” *WTJ* 61:2 (Fall, 1999) 209-25.

Note: we cannot judge individual cases

(4) Hypothetical view: true Christians who would depart from the faith (if that were possible) (cf. Guthrie)

Recognizes force of all five participles without reducing any

Hypothetical aspect still useful, shows logical results of ideas or trends, were they to go unchecked (cf. 6:9); used for warning

Kent offers also as hypothetical Jas 2:10, “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.” Another example would be the first verses of 1 Cor 13

vv. 7-8, Illustration of good vs. bad ground

Fits with Jesus' parable (see view #3 above)

Cf. the unforgivable sin, or the sin unto death

4. Encouragement to faithfulness, 6:9-20

vv. 9-10, Confidence in the Hebrew Christians

εἰ *ei*, "if, since, although," concessive clause ("although")

vv. 11-12, Encouragement to persevere

v. 12, νωθροί *nothroi*, cf. 5:11, "lazy"

Follow mature Christians (13:7, 17)

Now inheriting the promises

vv. 13-18a, God's sure promise, the incentive to persevere

vv. 13-14, Quote from Gen 22:16-17 (note literal infinitive absolute; εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω *eulogon eulogeso*, "blessing I will bless")

Promise to Abraham in Gen 12, 15, 17 (e.g., covenant ritual in Gen 15)

v. 15, Abraham obtained the promise, contra 11:13
birth of Isaac? Mt. Moriah? cf. John 8:56

vv. 16-18a, God's sure oath (Gen 22:16)

v. 16, Men's oaths

v. 17, God's oath; μεσιτεύω *mesiteuo*, "confirm, guarantee," not ASV
"interpose"

v. 18, Purpose of God's oath and promise

vv. 18b-20, Figures of Christ's dependability

v. 18, City of refuge (Num 35; Deut 4:42 LXX; Josh 20:9)

v. 19, Anchor

On the other side of the veil; firm spot for anchor (mixed metaphor)

v. 20, Forerunner

Unlike OT priests, he enables us eventually to enter holy of holies

Melchizedek brings back to 5:10, before warning; and it leads to next section

D. The order of Melchizedek, ch. 7

[For relevant fragments found among DSS, Cave 11, see M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, “11Q Melchizedek and the NT,” *NTS* 12 (1966) 301-26 (referred to by Guthrie, *TNTC*, p. 40, n. 2).]

1. General description of Melchizedek, vv. 1-3

Taken from Gen 14:18-20; Ps 110:4 (earlier references in Hebrews – 5:6, 10; 6:20)

v. 1, Name Melchizedek, Heb. q3d3x y1k4l5m *mal'ki tsedeq*; lit “my king is righteous”; *tsedeq* (“righteous”) a common part of names of kings in Jerusalem, cf. Josh 10:1 (Adoni-Zedek, “my lord is righteous”), perhaps a dynastic title.

Salem, ,2l6v *shalem* = Jerusalem (Ps 76:2; parallel: Salem = Zion); related to “peace”

Priest of most high God

Met Abraham; blessed Abraham

v. 2, Abraham tithed to Melchizedek

Interpretation of names

v. 3, No father, mother, genealogy, beginning or end

Refers to biblical record, not person himself

Not a theophany: similar to the Son of God

“Remains a high priest forever,” cf. v. 8, testified that he lives

Reasons for not being a theophany:

- 1) “Resemble” in v. 3
- 2) Ps 110:4 and Heb 7, “after the order of Melchizedek” differentiates the two
- 3) Melchizedek had permanent position and residence; theophanies are temporary manifestations
- 4) Name common; cf. Josh 10:1, “Lord of Righteousness,” but a sinful man
- 5) Without father, genealogy, etc.; still remains as far as text is concerned; cf. Heb 4:4 quoting Gen 2:2, no end of 7th day recorded, “evening and morning”

[The following order of notes is not entirely in the biblical order. Verses are arranged more topically.]

2. Melchizedek’s order superior to Levi’s, vv. 4-28

(1) Superior in tithes, vv. 4-6a, 8-10

v. 9, ἔπος *epos* (“word”); ὡς ἔπος λέγειν *hos epos legein* (lit. “as a word to say”); “to qualify speech that might sound too assertive *so to speak, one might almost say*; or perh. to effect a climax *to use just the right word*” (BDAG 388); NIV and ESV “one might even say”

(2) Superior in blessing, vv. 6b-7

Blesses God and Abraham; bread and wine, cf. the Lord’s Supper and the institution of the new covenant

(3) Superior in foundation, vv. 11-19

Levi built on law of Moses

Christ & Melchizedek, foundation on power of life

v. 16, σάρκινος *sarkinos*, fleshy, physical

Cf. σαρκικός *sarkikos*, fleshy, sinful (1 Cor 3:3; v. 1 uses *sarkinos*)

No perfection possible via Levi (vv. 11, 18-19a)

Melchizedek order can bring perfection (vv. 11, 19b)

(4) Superior in ordination, vv. 20-22

v. 22, “To the same degree” (KJV “by so much”); cf. v. 20 “to the degree” (KJV “and inasmuch”)

v. 22, ἔγγυος *enguos*, “guarantor” (better than “mediator”; KJV, “surety”)

Note διαθήκη *diatheke* (17 times in Hebrews; cf. *TDNT*), “will” or “testament” in 9:16-17; otherwise “covenant” in rest of Hebrews

(5) Superior in unchangeableness, vv. 23-25

v. 24, ἀπαράβατος *aparabatos*, *on* (hapax; masc. & fem.); NIV “permanent”

Without successor? Not according to usage. Better: “permanent, unchangeable” (BDAG 97); an unchangeable priesthood

(6) Superior in perfection, vv. 26-28