

Christ's qualifications as a High Priest

Hebrews 5:1-10

When we look at the requirements according to the law, we see that priests, including the high priest, should be descendants from Aaron. However, when we look at the lineage of Christ, as we find it in Matthew chapter 1 and in Luke chapter 3, we see that He is a descendant of David.

So, according to the law, the Lord Jesus Christ would not be qualified to be a high priest, or even a priest.

But He still is and, even more than that, He is indeed fully qualified to be so.

And not only that, but it was truly necessary that He came. We see that for instance in the verses on the next sheet.

Hebrews 7:11

- Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

The problem with the priesthood from Aaron and his descendants is the fact that many of them became involved in idolatry too.

Therefore, there was indeed a need for a new high priest, one that would walk in the ways of God perfectly and who would teach the commandments of God perfectly.

And there was only one person who could do that: The Lord Jesus Christ!

And He was not going to serve in the earthly tabernacle, which was just an image of the real one, but He is serving in the real tabernacle of God, as we see on the next sheet.

Hebrews 4:14-16

- Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.
- 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.
- Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

In this short passage we have already 3 important things to keep in mind:

- Christ does not serve as High priest in the tabernacle on earth, which is only an image of the true tabernacle, but He does so in the heavens, in the true tabernacle of God.
- Christ was and is sinless, unlike any regular human high priest.
- Christ can indeed sympathize with us as He too was tempted in every area of life just as we are.

Now let's go to the verses for today.

Hebrews 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.

Here we see a very short job description of the regular high priest. As we may conclude from these verses the high priest served as a mediator between God and men in these aspects.

In the next verses we see how he is qualified to do so.

Hebrews 5:2-3

- He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.
- Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins.

Each high priest from among men was a sinner himself and therefore he had not only to bring sacrifices for himself, but he was also not supposed to look down on people who, out of ignorance, sinned against the laws of God.

Being a high priest was not something you could apply for. God had given very clear laws regarding the continuation of this position throughout the generations.

In fact, when, in these days, the family name of a Jew is Cohen, he still could be a descendant of Aaron, as the Hebrew word for priest is Cohen.

Hebrews 5:4-5

- And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*.
- 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."

As I already mentioned, you could not just apply for this position, you really had to qualify according to the laws of God.

So, even the Lord Jesus Christ did not become a high priest by his own decision, but He was called to do so by the Father.

While in these verses we see that the Father declared Him to be His Son, we will see in the next verses that God called Him to be our High Priest.

The fact that He indeed is the Son of God is an important qualification for Him being our great High Priest.

Hebrews 5:6-8

- As *He* also says in another *place*: “*You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek*”; 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, though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

Melchizedek was both a king, as well as a priest from God. You can read that in Genesis chapter 14.

What we see here is that the Lord Jesus Christ is being called to the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek, which was from before the time that the priesthood within the Jewish people was established.

And He is called to be a High Priest forever.

As I already mentioned in a previous sermon, Christ had still to go through a learning process while He was on earth in the flesh.

But let's continue.

Hebrews 5:9-11

- And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

These verses make it very clear that Christ became High Priest because He was called to that position by God the Father.

From these verses we also understand that even Melchizedek did not become a priest by his own initiative, but that he too was called by God to this position. In Genesis 14 you can read that Abram indeed recognized him as a priest from God most high.

Also in the church we need to recognize that God puts specific persons in specific positions. We see that for instance in 1 Cor. 12:18 + 28-29 and in Ephesians 4:11.

But let's continue.

His superior calling
Hebrews 7:20-22

- And inasmuch as *He was not made priest* without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: “The LORD has sworn And will not relent, ‘You *are* a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek”), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

It is very important to understand that Christ did not become High Priest just because He wanted to be that. He became our High Priest because the Father wanted Him to be that. And His Father confirmed that by an oath.

And He indeed is the perfect person to be our High Priest.

We already have seen several reasons for that, but we still will look at more reasons for it.

The superior purpose of His calling
Matthew 1:18-21

- Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.
- Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.
- But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.
- "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

Especially in the last verse we see that Christ came into the world for a reason that was far more important than the duty of the human high priests.

The human high priests could offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins, but they couldn't save anybody from their sins. That is something that only Christ can do.

This is also the purpose of the transformation by the renewal of our mind: to take out the garbage of the world and to take in the pure Word of God.

But let's continue.

The superior teacher
John 1:1-2

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.
- All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.
- In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

In order to get solid teaching, we need the best teacher there is available.

And who else than the living Word of God can qualify for that? After all, He was there from the very beginning and He knows exactly what God's plan for His creation is.

In John 5:26-27 we read the following:

“For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, “and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

But let's continue.

His superior sacrifice
Hebrews 7:26-27

- For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Every human high priest had to first offer sacrifices for his own sins, before he could do that for other people.

This is very specifically mentioned in Leviticus chapter 16, which deals with all the sacrifices for the Day of Atonement. This happened every year on the 10th day of the 7th month.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not have to do this. He never sinned, so He never had to offer any sin or guilt sacrifice for Himself.

The only sacrifice for sin He brought was the sacrifice of His own body for our sins and He had to do that only once for all time.

But let's continue.

His compassion for those who depend on Him (John 6:37-38)

- “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.
- “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

These verses again show us from a different aspect why Christ is the superior High Priest.

From other priests and high priests, we read in the Scriptures that they abused their office. An example of that you can see in 1 Samuel 2:12-25 regarding the sons of Eli the priest.

Later, especially when Israel was under Roman control, things became even worse.

But let's continue.

Superior in His Kingship
Revelation 19:16

- And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Like Melchizedek Christ also is both king and priest.

But Christ is that on a completely different level as we can see from these verses from Revelation.

Let's continue.

His superior intercession
Hebrews 7:24-25

- But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.
- Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

As the superior High Priest Christ is indeed interceding for His disciples and He does that continuously.

To know this should be a real encouragement for us, just as the promise He gave us in the verse on the next sheet.

His superior authority
Matthew 28:18-20

- And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
- “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.

This is what we call: The Great Commission.

But it also includes a great promise for us in the last part of these verses.

None of the leadership in any church can be with you always.

But our great High Priest not only can do that, but He even promised to do that.

You’re never alone in your life as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let’s go to a summary of the qualifications of the Lord Jesus Christ as the superior High Priest.

The Lord Jesus Christ
our perfect High Priest

- **The Son of God.**
- **Tempted as we are but without sinning.**
- **The living Word of God / the perfect teacher.**
- **Brought the perfect sacrifice once and for all.**
- **Compassionate towards those who depend on Him.**
- **Is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.**
- **Serves forever as our High Priest in Heaven.**
- **Intercedes for His disciples with the Father.**
- **Has been given all authority in heaven and on earth**

Just keep in mind: The Lord Jesus Christ is the only person who has all these qualifications.

Therefore He is fully qualified to be our perfect High Priest.

Shall we pray?