

How is Jesus a Better High Priest Than Aaron?

[Hebrews 5:1-6](#)

Hebrews, Day 16

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

*“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;*

as he says also in another place,

*“You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”*

- Hebrews 5:1-6, ESV

I've now reached that age when I sometimes see new versions of things come out and I think, "Well, what was wrong with the old one?" Sometimes, of course, nothing is wrong with the old version. It works fine, and we really don't need to upgrade. However, if you had an infection in your leg, you would probably want modern medical treatment and not the old-school kind from the days of the Civil War. Bloody, dirty saws anyone?

The author of Hebrews was writing to believers who were being tempted to believe they didn't need Jesus' high priestly ministry because God had already given His people the priesthood of Aaron. They were tempted to think, "Well, what was wrong with the old priesthood? After all, God did call and consecrate Aaron and his sons as priests, right? And don't they offer sacrifices for sin, too? Why do we really need Jesus? Is He that much better?"

The pressure of rising persecution was pushing these Jewish believers to think this way, and the author of Hebrews wants to pull them back from the brink and restore them to a better perspective on Jesus. Throughout this book, he's been arguing for the superiority of Jesus - over angels, over Moses, etc. Now, he is turning his attention to the superiority of Jesus over Aaron.

Aaron was indeed chosen and appointed by God. But so was Jesus. Aaron was sympathetic toward the people, for he knew their weaknesses, just as Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses. But here is where the similarities end: Both men chosen and appointed by God and both men sympathetic.

Priests in the line of Aaron are weak and subject to sin themselves. Jesus is strong and never sinned. Aaronic priests must offer sacrifices for their own sins before they can offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. Jesus has no need for a sacrifice, so the sacrifice He offers is solely for the sake of His people. Finally (in this section), Jesus is an eternal priest, appointed to His office forever, whereas all priests in the line of Aaron die and pass their office to another.

Hebrews will continue to explore these themes more deeply in the coming chapters. It's already clear in just a few short verses that going back to the Aaronic priesthood makes about as much sense spiritually as going back to Civil War-era medicine. In fact, Civil War-era medicine is a wiser choice, because at least it offers some hope of survival. The priesthood of Aaron offers no real hope for forgiveness and salvation, as we will see in the coming chapters.

Any other alternative to Jesus falls woefully short of His majestic perfections. In Him, we lack nothing, and everything else falls pitifully short. Let us press on in faithful confidence in our eternal High Priest, the Son of God who never fails!