

[From the Christian Helper.]

Sabbath School Department.

International Bible Lessons.

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

OCT. 5.—Heb. 4: 14-16; 5: 1-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.—Heb. 7: 25.

EXPLANATION OF THE TEXT.

14. An Exhortation to perseverance has just been given and a warning against apostasy. Now follows a strong encouragement to persevere by directing our attention to Jesus as our great high priest. For similar encouragement see 1 John 2: 1, 2. **GREAT.** This indicates Christ's pre-eminence over all other high priests. Some think, however, that amongst the Jews those who had held the office and whose term had expired were still called high priests, and that the heads of the different courses of priests were also called, and that accordingly he who actually filled that office and went into the holiest place was known as great high priest. **PASSED INTO, &c.** Christ has gone to be in the immediate presence of God. An allusion to the high priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies. **LET US HOLD FAST, &c.** Since Christ is yonder let us not be discouraged, let us not renounce our hope, but let us persevere unto the end.

15. But what has Christ's presence in heaven to do with our conflicts, and discouragements, and efforts, and failures, here on earth? This goes on to explain. And the point is, Jesus is not cold, unfeeling, indifferent, but he heartily sympathizes with us in our temptations and troubles. **IN ALL POINTS.** He was tried by every kind of trial. No difficulty or temptation can possibly beset you, but Christ has experienced the very same kind. Though exalted now he does not forget his earthly experience. Hence the encouragement to go to Him; and when you go to Jesus, recalling His own experience, He will understand your need far better than your words can express it. **YET WITHOUT SIN.** Here is not only the doctrine of Christ's sinlessness, but right here the doctrine is practical. It would be useless for us to go to one who, like ourselves had fallen, and therefore needed help as much as we do. But Jesus has felt the full force of all temptations and has conquered them, and therefore can help us on to victory.

16. **THEREFORE.** Because we have a high priest, i. e. one who atoned for our sins and who intercedes for us; because he is in God's presence. His atoning work being accepted and his prayer for us always heard; because he can feel for us; because he has overcome all trials, therefore let us come boldly, &c. **BOLDLY.** Freely, at any time, and just telling exactly what we feel and need. **THRONE OF GRACE.** Grace reigns; constant boundless grace for the believer is there. **MERCY.** Active pity for us under our trials. **IN TIME OF NEED,** i. e. just in the right time, opportune aid.

Ch. 5. The encouragement to perseverance has been based upon Christ's presence in heaven as our great high priest and our consequent privilege of going boldly to the throne of grace. Here follows a description of the Atonement, after which it is shown that Christ not only possesses all the qualifications for that office but also far surpasses the priest-hood, or Aaron and his successors.

v. v. 1-4 describe merely the high human high priest.

1. **FROM AMONG MEN.** Merely human as contrasted with Christ, the Son of God. **FOR MEN.** To represent men. **IN THINGS PERTAINING, &c.** In their religious concerns. A priest's business is to stand between God and the people. **GIFTS AND SACRIFICES FOR SINS.** This expression takes in all the offerings of the old dispensation. "Gifts are the various kinds of thank offerings, sacrifices the various sin and trespass offerings, that were made with slain beasts."—*Stuart.*

2. **ABILITY OF HIGH PRIESTS TO SYMPATHIZE WITH THE IGNORANT AND ERRING FROM THE FACT THAT HE HIMSELF WAS NOT SUPERIOR TO INFIRMITY.** An angel could not fill this office because he could not sympathize with frail humanity. Christ assumed our nature and passed through an earthly experience that he might be our high priest.

3. **THE MERELY HUMAN PRIEST WAS NOT SINLESS AS JESUS WAS, AND HENCE HE HAD TO MAKE OFFERINGS FOR HIS OWN SINS AS WELL AS FOR THOSE OF THE PEOPLE.**

4. **THIS V. CONTAINS ANOTHER ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATION OF THE HIGH PRIEST. "He must be taken from among men," but he must not be ordained by men, nor assume the office himself.**—*Olshausen.* As was AARON. Aaron was called by name, and then the law of Moses determined the manner in which others should succeed to this office.

5. **IT HAS JUST BEEN DECLARED THAT IT WAS AN ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATION OF THE HIGH PRIEST THAT HE SHOULD NOT ASSUME THAT OFFICE FROM HIS OWN CHOICE, OR AMBITION, OR BE APPOINTED TO IT MERELY BY HIS FELLOWMEN. HE MUST SUCCEED TO IT ACCORDING TO GOD'S APPOINTMENT.** Now Christ was not a descendant of Aaron. How then does he meet this qualification of being appointed of God? This Paul shows in these verses. In v. 5 we have the simple declaration that Christ was not an usurper, but entered the office according to the will of Him who in Psalm 2: 7 said of Christ, "Thou art my Son." This statement of the Father respecting our Saviour indicates that Christ's entire exaltation and authority was by the will of God.

6. **HERE WE HAVE A DIRECT PROPHECY FOUND IN PSALM 110: 4 BY WHICH GOD ORDAINS CHRIST TO THIS OFFICE. HENCE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT CHRIST'S APPOINTMENT IS PROVED. FOREVER.** The priesthood of the Messiah was not to change from hand to hand; it was not to be laid down at death; it was to remain unchangeably the same."—*Barnes.* **AFTER THE ORDER, &c.** This indicates Christ's superiority. Melchisedec was not a Levitical priest. He stood alone in the office, having neither predecessor nor suc-

cessor. Moreover he was a king as well as a priest. So with Christ. This resemblance of Christ to Melchisedec is taken up and explained in chap. 7. **TOPICAL ANALYSIS.**

The starting point of the lesson is the exhortation to perseverance, "let us hold fast our profession."

This exhortation is enforced by a consideration of Christ's priesthood, and the points made are these—(1) We have a great high priest, one to intercede for us; (2) *Where is he?* "Passed into the heavens"; (3) *Who is he?* Jesus the Son of God; (4) *What is his character?* Not unfeeling towards us, but full of sympathy; and this ability to sympathize he gained by his own earthly experience in which he was tried by every kind of trial. The conclusion drawn from this consideration of Christ as our great high priest is this,—"Let us therefore come boldly," &c., and having such a privilege as this, to come boldly, let us not give up, but let us hold fast our profession." The subject of Christ's priesthood, has thus been introduced, and chap. 5 opens with a description of the Atonement, and then is shown Christ's fulfillment of the necessary qualifications, and his superiority to Aaron, in that he is of the order of Melchisedec. v. 1 states the duties or functions of the high priest. v. v. 2, 3 shows, that, being fallible himself he is able to sympathize with others, and also that he is needed to sacrifice for his own sins. This fallibility is not essential to priesthood, (Christ never sinned), but was inseparable from the merely human priest. An essential qualification however was, that he should be called of God to the office, v. 4. This qualification was found in Christ's appointment, as witnessed by the Old Testament. v. v. 5, 6.

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