

# Jesus — High Priest According to the Order of Melchizedek

Several churches in a large, western city provide leadership training for Christian leaders. One church teaches error. The pastor says that Jesus did not come to forgive us of our sins but to give us a positive self-image. Yet, church leaders come because the church is very large and they want to know how to grow the size of their own churches. Another large church in the area provides leadership training too. It is a biblically solid church. Pastors come from all over the world to learn about evangelism, counseling, men's and women's ministries, and church government - elders and deacons. As a result, many pastors go back home, and encourage their congregations to change to an eldership form of church government because they believe it is biblical. Later many churches run into trouble in the leadership team. Why does this happen? The usual reason is that their leaders were not qualified to be elders. Shared ministry in some churches results in power groups and alliances.

**QUALIFICATIONS.** Too often we evaluate people from the outside. If he or she looks like a leader, behaves like a leader, is eloquent of speech and exudes warmth, we believe that person would make a good spiritual leader. Additional requirements frequently include their financial contributions, outside political connections, professional position, internal church connections and/or family history. These are the criteria or qualifications churches frequently use when selecting leaders. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:7-9 are merely given "lip service." As a result, models of holiness are not really considered as selection criteria. Biblical knowledge is usually a secondary consideration compared to business skills and spiritual gifts of organization. In

many churches, the pastor is the Bible expert and the leadership looks to him for spiritual guidance as well as theological and Bible knowledge. By implication, theological and biblical knowledge are considered to be unimportant in choosing lay leaders.



Abraham and Melchizedek

The prophet Samuel had been directed by God to select a new king to replace Saul. King Saul was disqualified, and so Samuel was sent to select one of Jesse's sons as the new king. When Samuel arrived at Jesse's home, he saw Eliab, the oldest son, and thought to himself, "Wow, this is the one!"

**But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the**

## *Basic Qualifications For Ministry Compared*

<i>High Priest</i>	<i>Church Leaders</i>
Be a male                      Lev. 21:17	Be a male                      1 Tim. 3:2
Be a Levite                    Lev. 21:17, 21 Ezra 2:62	Be an older Christian        1 Tim. 3:6
No physical defect        Lev. 21:17-21	High Spiritual Example    1 Tim. 3:1-7 Titus 1:7-9

LORD looks at the heart.” (NASB) 1 Samuel 16:7

THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.” (NASB) Heb. 5:1-6

Today, we tend to look at outside appearances too, and modify the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:7-9. Excuses are made and men are selected who are not ready, because a quota must be met or someone feels an obligation. We cannot look at a person’s heart, but 1 Timothy and Titus give us a spiritual microscope to do just that - to look at a man’s or woman’s spiritual heart.

**JESUS’ QUALIFICATIONS.** The Jewish readers of Hebrews must have struggled with Jesus’ qualifications when they read that Jesus was a “merciful and faithful high priest” in Hebrews 2:17. Since childhood, they were taught that only males, who were Levites without any bodily defects could qualify to minister as a high priest. But Jesus was a not Levite. He was male and He was perfect, since He never sinned (Heb. 4:15). Jesus was already ministering in the role of a high priest, with some exceptions.

**APPOINTED BY GOD.** So the author of Hebrews says,

For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, “THOU ART MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE”; just as He says also in another passage, “THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO

His first point is that a high priest is selected by God to minister for God. The ministry of the high priest was to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins, to help the misguided and the weak. A man did not select himself to be a high priest. It was God who selected the first high priest (Exodus 28:1-2). He was Aaron. So also Christ did not choose Himself - God did! It must have been a shock to these New Testament Christians to be reminded by an Old Testament passage that God had already chosen Jesus as a high priest, too! Melchizedek was not a Levite, yet he was recognized by God as a high priest. God had appointed Jesus just as He had recognized Melchizedek and appointed Aaron!

Spiritual leaders in the church need to have a sense of being called or appointed by God. This was true of the elders in the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17, 28) who were selected by the Holy Spirit. They are directly accountable to God first and last. In response, a godly leader will then fulfill his responsibilities to the leadership and congregation.

**SINLESSLY PERFECT.** Jesus was sinlessly perfect. The Levitical high priests were sinners. This was proven by the struggle He endured before His death and His return to life.

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. (NASB) Heb.

The Spirit is talking about Jesus' loud, strong crying in the Garden of Gethsemane. The word Gethsemane means "oil press." What a picture! Jesus was being pressed. He faced death and He was struggling. The Spirit tells us in Hebrews that He was heard because of His "piety." He learned perfect obedience as a man. Jesus' humanity is in view here. Scripture has focused in on the man Jesus Christ. He is also God, but it is His humanity that is in view here. As a man, Jesus was made perfect or "complete" (*teleioo*). The message is that He is our Savior and High Priest.

**CONCLUSION.** Jesus qualifies to be our Savior. He qualifies to be our High Priest. Jesus is our great high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This was an important truth for the Hebrew readers, and it is an important truth for us today. We will discover later in Hebrews that our times of worship, our church life, and our spiritual walk would be very different today if Jesus were not our High Priest. We will learn more of the role our spiritual leaders have in our spiritual lives. I am thankful that Jesus is our high priest.