

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS – PART FIVE

The idea of Jesus as our High Priest has already been mentioned several times to prepare us for this chapter in which the writer finally gets to explain the idea fully. He has been like a young child with a big secret who cannot help dropping hints of the great moment to come when he can finally reveal the whole truth. At the end of chapter two he explained that Jesus could be the High Priest who offered sacrifice for the sins of the people because He was truly a man who even faced temptation.(2:17,18) At the start of chapter three we are urged to consider Him as the Apostle from heaven and the High Priest from earth on whom our faith rests.(3:1) By the end of chapter three the writer has added another vital piece of information. Jesus could represent us in heaven because He had faced temptation without sinning. We can be confident in His mercy because He knows what temptation is like.(3:14-16)

High Priests were not self appointed. Aaron was called and appointed by God. He understood about sin because he himself was just as much a sinner.(Exod.32; Num.12 and 20) He had therefore to offer sacrifice not only for the rest of the people but for himself.(5:1-4)

Jesus was also appointed not by Himself but by His Father in heaven. The writer quotes again from Ps.2:7 which described how God would send His Son to earth and the Christ to be King in Jerusalem despite governments rejecting Him. He refers also to Ps.110:4 which builds on this promise with the intriguing clue that He would be according to the order of Melchizedek, whose role in the life of Abraham would be explained further in chapter 7.(5:5,6)

The first responsibility of a high priest, and of every priest was to pray, to communicate with God in heaven on behalf of people including himself. Having heard from God he was then to speak to the people what God had said, which should always start with what He has already said in His word. He was therefore to be a teacher who prayed first. There is record of a number of times when Jesus prayed to His Father especially before big decisions in His life.(Lk.6:12) Sometimes it was one or two sentences.(Matt.11:25,26; 15:36) Sometimes it took all night.(Matt.14:23) At other times there were miraculous consequences.(Lk.9:28) On occasion we have the whole record of His prayer. John17 is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus and is often known as His high priestly prayer because it sums up all that a high priest would desire for those he represents. On occasion we are given insight into the deep emotions involved.(Lk.22:39-46) As the High Priest He wanted His fellow priests to pray with Him. Through His prayers, the writer of Hebrews tells us, Jesus learned both obedience and the meaning of suffering. 'Resting' includes these vital discoveries.(5:7-10)

The illustration of Melchizedek will continue through the next two chapters but understanding it will be hard if the message has to be delivered to the spiritually deaf. As new Christians we were hungry for everything God had to say, like babies wanting milk. Somehow as time passed something has gone wrong. No longer do we listen to God's

voice in His word and in prayer. Instead of moving on to solid food we continue to demand spiritual milk, the basics over and over again. Milk is fine for a new baby because it is easily digested but it becomes boring as we grow up. Just as a baby should move on to a more varied diet, we should be discovering that there is a whole Bible to explore. Growing babies learn to feed for themselves as we need to be learning how to study, even if we are alone. The next step for a child is to learn how to cook for himself, as we should be discovering how to find answers in the Bible for ourselves with God as our Teacher. Finally the new cook becomes brave enough to invite others to dinner as we begin to dare to teach others what we have found as we have searched the scriptures. Then we might even give cooking lessons. A baby will put all sorts of things in his mouth even if they are poisonous. Growing up means we learn to discern. Growing in Christ means we can work out for ourselves what God's plan is or what may be harmful to us in our Christian walk. Staying on spiritual milk and becoming bored with it may be the reason for 'drifting away' which the writer warned about in chapter 2.(5:11-14)

#### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Who appointed high priests in the Old Testament? What was their role? How were Aaron and Jesus similar as high priests? How were they different?(v.1-4)
2. Again look up Ps.2:7 and consider how it relates to Jesus being appointed as High Priest. Look too at the story of Melchizedek in Gen.14 and the comparison of him to Jesus in Ps.110:4. How is the reference to Melchizedek helpful in understanding in what way Jesus was different as High Priest? What can we learn from this chapter about God's plan for us as priests?(I Pet.2:9; Rev.1:6)(v.5,6)
3. Review some of the prayers of Jesus in the gospels and discuss how they showed Him serving as the High Priest. How should they help our own understanding of prayer as God's priests?(v.7-10)
4. Why would being hard of hearing be a problem to a priest in the Bible? What is the danger of being spiritually hard of hearing? To what does the writer compare his readers? What is wrong with still being on spiritual milk after years as a Christian? What consequences will this have in daily life? What spiritual diet is absolutely essential if we are to be Bible teachers? How can we move from milk to solid food spiritually?(v.11-14)