

Hebrews

5:11-6:20

Superiority of Jesus' Priesthood

Context

- Some aspects of the superiority of Jesus' priesthood are best explained by looking at the priesthood of Melchizedek, 5:10
 - Cf. Psalms 110:1-4, esp. v.4 "...thou are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

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- The priesthood of Melchizedek is hard to explain to you for several reasons which will now be discussed
- Correcting these characteristics will make it possible to develop further the superiority of Jesus' priesthood
- Having examined what is making it a hard thing to explain, the author returns to the basic discussion (the superiority of Jesus' priesthood in Melchizedek-ian comparisons) in chapter 7

Context

- Their characteristics that are making the discussion of the “Melchizedek-ian” aspects of Jesus’ superior priesthood hard to explain
 1. They had ”become dull of hearing”, 5:11
 - They had “become” not that they had always been this way
 - *Dull* (KJV, ASV) is “lazy, sluggish, or apathetic” or “*poor listeners*” (NASB)

Context

- Their characteristics that are making the discussion of the “Melchizedek-ian” aspects of Jesus’ superior priesthood hard to explain
 1. They had ”become dull of hearing”, 5:11
 - It may be that they had developed a desire to return to the concepts of the Levitical priesthood (warning for them)
 - It may be that they did not wish to expend the energy to think for themselves about anything that may be different from what they had been taught (warning for us)

Context

- Their characteristics that are making the discussion of the “Melchizedek-ian” aspects of Jesus’ superior priesthood hard to explain
 1. They had ”become dull of hearing”, 5:11
 2. They had begun living on “milk”, 5:12
 - Needing instruction in elementary principles of:
 - The “*oracles of God*” (ASV, KJV, NASB95, NASB77), the “*actual words of God*” (NASB)

“Oracles of God” definition

- G3051 (Thayer) λόγιον logion
 - 1) a brief utterance, a divine oracle (most were brief)
 - 1a) in the NT, the words or utterances of God
 - 1b) of the contents of the Mosaic law

Context

- Their characteristics that are making the discussion of the “Melchizedek-ian” aspects of Jesus’ superior priesthood hard to explain
 1. They had ”become dull of hearing”, 5:11
 2. They had begun living on “milk”, 5:12
 - They had simply accepted OT statements uncritically as instructions about Levitical priests instead of examining how the OT institutions (like the priesthood) were a “schoolmaster” to bring them to Jesus
 - That’s only good enough for babies

Context

- Their characteristics that are making the discussion of the “Melchizedek-ian” aspects of Jesus’ superior priesthood hard to explain
 1. They had ”become dull of hearing”, 5:11
 2. They had begun living on “milk”, 5:12
 - The most elementary principle of all OT “shadows” was to show them something about the “substance”, cf. Hebrews 8:5; 10:1; Colossians 2:17
 - The substance is what is ultimately important

Context

- Their characteristics that are making the discussion of the “Melchizedek-ian” aspects of Jesus’ superior priesthood hard to explain
 1. They had ”become dull of hearing”, 5:11
 2. They had begun living on “milk”, 5:12
 3. They had not “used” their senses to discern “good and evil”, 5:14
- In this context, “good” refers to “substance”, “evil” refers to “shadows

Context

- Their characteristics that are making the discussion “Melchizedek-ian” aspects of Jesus’ superior priesthood hard to explain, Psalms 110:1-4, esp. v.4 “...thou are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”
 1. They had ”become dull of hearing”, 5:11
 2. They had begun living on “milk”, 5:12
 3. They had not “used” their senses to discern “good and evil”, 5:14
 4. They had not ”left the doctrine of the first principles of Christ”, 6:1

“Leaving” the first principles of the oracles of God

- The same word is often translated “forgive” as related to sin, sometimes leaving a wife in divorce
 - This would argue against “incorporating more information” while retaining the old
- Must we leave the rudimentary principles of the shadows, or do we leave the rudimentary principles of the substance?
- Leaving the idea of baptism (viewed as an elementary part of the substance) runs the risk of forgetting that we were, in baptism, purged from our sins, II Peter 1:9

“Therefore...”, 6:1

This next part of chapter 6 is related to what has just been said in chapter 5

5. They were still “laying a foundation” based on, 6:1b-2 (in other words they had not left). These 6 things are enumerated in the following verses:

- “Repentance from dead works”
- “Faith toward God”
- “Teaching of [about] baptisms”
- [Teaching] of [about] “laying on of hands”
- [Teaching] of [about] ”resurrection of the dead”
- [Teaching] of [about] “eternal judgment”

5. They were still “laying a foundation” based on, 6:1b-2 (in other words they had not left)

- “Repentance from dead works”

- “Dead works” is a phrase found only here and in 9:14
- The OT is replete with instruction about repentance (change in behavior) that must accompany sacrifice (works commanded), or those works are dead (of no benefit), Malachi 1:6-8; I Samuel 15:22; Ezekiel 18
- The sacrifices and works of the OT were “dead” in that they could not cleanse the conscience of sin, even when repentance from the heart is present

5. They were still “laying a foundation” based on, 6:1b-2 (in other words they had not left)

- “Faith toward God”

- Clearly faith was a part of the OT, **and** of the NT
- Cf. Romans 1:17, “from faith to faith” (I am of the mind that the author is saying that the first “faith” is materially different from the second “faith”)
- “Leave” the first (OT faith) to have the second (NT faith)

5. They were still “laying a foundation” based on, 6:1b-2 (in other words they had not left)

- “Teaching of [about] baptisms”

- Cf. 9:10, “various washings”
- The Greek word is not *baptisma* (neuter) the word regularly used for NT baptism, but *baptismos* (masculine) regularly used for washing vessels, as in Mark 7:4
- The (OT) shadow washing was necessary for them to eventually come to understand the substance washing

5. They were still “laying a foundation” based on, 6:1b-2 (in other words they had not left)
 - [Teaching] of [about] “laying on of hands”
 - Cf. Leviticus 1:4; 3:2
 - As a part of the OT, it was to teach us about substitutionary aspects of Jesus’ sacrifice for us

5. They were still “laying a foundation” based on, 6:1b-2 (in other words they had not left)
 - [Teaching] of [about] ”resurrection of the dead”
 - OT information about the resurrection of the dead was vague, at best
 - Only in Jesus is death *abolished*, II Timothy 1:10

5. They were still “laying a foundation” based on, 6:1b-2 (in other words they had not left)
 - [Teaching] of [about] “eternal judgment”
 - OT judgement was often national
 - NT judgement is individual
 - Focusing only on the national diverts attention from the individual