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# Words of Truth

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## Hebrews 5:1-2

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The chapter in our study has changed, but the context has not. We are still talking about our great, compassionate high priest Jesus Christ. The first word in this chapter ties to the previous chapter. Here are the two passages we are going to look at in this article: *“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity”* (Hebrews 5:1-2).

Under the Law of Moses there was a high priest (Leviticus 21:10) also known as the chief priest (Numbers 3:32). The priests of God, under the Law of Moses, were sanctified (Leviticus 8:1-9:24). The priests of God, under the Law of Moses, were appointed to deal with matters pertaining to God (Deuteronomy 10:8, Deuteronomy 21:1-9, and I Chronicles 23:13). The priests of old offered gifts and sacrifices for sins (Exodus 30:1-10, Leviticus 4:1-35, and Leviticus 7:1-38). The Jews that were knowledgeable regarding the Law of Moses would have known these things. There was still a high priest in the first century (Acts 4:6).

We have already studied about Jesus being our great high priest. First century Jewish Christians needed to understand that Jesus replaced the system of the priesthood they were accustomed to. His priesthood is greater. His priesthood is eternal. In addition to those truths, what Jesus did and does as our high priest was and is greater than any other man. Later in this epistle, we will read this about our great high priest: *“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises”* (Hebrews 8:1-6). What is outstanding about the above quote is the establishment of the fact that Jesus couldn't do what He did/does if He were still among men. That was something Jews needed to adjust to in understanding.

A high priest being from among men helped that high priest to have compassion. Jesus is in Heaven at the time these things were written and He is obviously still there. However, Jesus did live in the flesh and because of that He is equipped with compassion for what it is to live in the flesh. We have already studied those facts (Hebrews 2:9-18 and Hebrew 4:14-16). His life in the flesh enabled Him to have compassion on the ignorant.

So, what does it mean to have compassion on the ignorant? We know that ignorance is not an excuse or license for sin (Acts 17:16-31). When ignorance leads to sin, repentance and conversion must take place to correct that sin with God (Acts 3:11-26). There has long been a difference between sins of ignorance and those that sin presumptuously (Numbers 15:29-31). A rebellious person is evil (Proverbs 17:11). Such a person was dealt with swiftly under the Law of Moses (Joshua 1:18). Similarly, a rebellious person is cast out from among the saints under the law of Christ (II Thessalonians 3:6-15 and Titus 3:9-11). Our Father in Heaven doesn't hear the prayers of such individuals (Proverbs 28:9, Isaiah 1:1-20, Isaiah 59:1-3, John 9:31, and I Peter 3:12). Now, let's consider Jesus' compassion on the ignorant.

The word translated "compassion" in Hebrews 5:2 does not appear in any other New Testament Scripture. Part of the definition of that term reads: "of one who is not unduly disturbed by the errors, faults, sins of others, but bears them gently" (Strong's # 3356). We see that in our Savior Jesus Christ (Matthew 9:35-38). We might do well to think of this word "compassion" as "forbearance" (Romans 3:24-25) with all that comes with the subject (i.e. Romans 2:1-4). To understand His compassion on the ignorant, consider how Jesus dealt with Saul [Paul] (Acts 7:51-8:3, Acts 9:1-20, and I Timothy 1:12-16). Jesus understands weakness.

The word translated infirmity in the passage we are studying means: "Feebleness (of mind or body); by implication, malady; morally, frailty: — disease, infirmity, sickness, weakness..." (Strong's # 769). Jesus was surrounded by infirmities of the flesh while He was on earth (Matthew 8:5-17, Luke 5:15, Luke 8:1-2, John 5:1-17, etc.). He knows that the human body is frail. He knows what those weaknesses can do to man. Therefore, He has compassion for what it means to live with the struggles of physical life in this world.

Taking into consideration all that we've studied in this chapter and the previous chapters, we can conclude that Jesus knows what we face and is understanding because of that. On the night of His death, during His own time of mental anguish (Matthew 26:30-46), He told the disciples that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41).

Having said all of that, we must be sure not to think that our understanding high priest can be taken advantage of. As much as He knows how difficult life in this world can be, He also knows you can live this life without fault (Hebrews 7:19-28). He gave His life to wash us from our sins with His own blood (Revelation 1:5). That was His part. Our part, once cleansed from our sins, is to stay clean (I Thessalonians 4:7 and I Timothy 5:22).