

**Readings:** *Jeremiah 31: 7 – 9; Psalm 125 (126); Hebrews 5: 1 – 6; Mark 10: 46 – 52.*

Today's reading from the *Letter to Hebrews* continues the exposition of the role of Jesus as our High Priest. It takes up the point made earlier that Jesus shares our human nature, so (like all the earlier high priests) *he can sympathise with those who are ignorant or uncertain because he too lives in the limitations of weakness.*

The reading goes on to remind us that high priests don't appoint themselves. Like Aaron, the first of the Old Testament priests, they are all *called by God*. The author continues by saying that the same was true of Jesus. It was by God's word that he received the glory of becoming high priest. To support this claim our author quotes verses from two of the psalms – Psalm 2 and Psalm 110. These two psalms are directly quoted in several books of the New Testament (Psalm 2 in *Luke, Acts, Hebrews* and *Revelation*; and Psalm 110 in *Matthew, Acts, Hebrews* and *1 Peter*), and in addition there are many places where a New Testament writer appears to base his statement on the themes raised in one or both of these two psalms.

The key verse from Psalm 2 is 7: *The LORD said to me 'You are my Son. It is I who have begotten you this day.'* The key verse from Psalm 110 is 5: *The Lord has sworn an oath he will not change. 'You are a priest for ever, a priest like Melchizedek of old.'*

Both of these verses are addressed to the descendant of David who is king in Jerusalem. Some scholars think they formed part of the coronation or enthronement ceremony for a new king.

They make two claims for this Davidic king – (1) he is the son of the LORD (printed in capitals this word represents the unspoken Divine Name), and (2) he is a priest *like Melchizedek*.

Melchizedek King of Salem (whose name and title, the author in chapter 7 explains, mean 'King of righteousness and peace') appears only once in the Old Testament apart from this psalm. In Genesis 14 he comes, *bearing bread and wine*, to meet Abraham.

Our author sees the two psalms as pointers to Jesus who is both *Son of God* and *a priest of the order of Melchizedek and for ever*.

He will go on in the following chapters to show that the priesthood of Jesus is superior to the Old Testament priesthood and that he has replaced it in perpetuity