

Wednesday Night Bible Study on Hebrews
Wednesday, June 17, 2020; Heb 6:13-20 and 7:1-10

Prayer:

6:13-20: Our secure hope

Verses 13-18: specific about the oath the Lord made.

Verses 19-20: Jesus as High Priest

7:1-3: preeminence of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The Portrait of Melchizedek

7:4-10: preeminence of the Melchizedek Priesthood, Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek

John Piper:

There is one Person whose worth and honor and dignity and preciousness and greatness and beauty and reputation is more than all other values combined — ten thousand times more — namely, God himself. So, when God takes an oath, he swears by himself.

If he could have gone higher, he would have gone higher. Why? To give you strong encouragement in your hope. What God is saying in swearing by himself is that it is as impossible that he will break his word of promise to bless us as it is that he will ever despise himself.

God is the greatest value in the universe. There is nothing more valuable or wonderful than God. So, God swears by God. And in doing that he says, “I mean for you to have as much confidence in me as it is possible to have.” For if more were possible, Hebrews 6:13 says, he would have given us that. “Since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself.”

Now this is our God, the God who is reaching as high as he can reach to inspire your unshakable hope in him. So, flee to God for refuge. Turn from all the superficial, self-defeating hopes of the world, and put your hope in God. There is nothing and no one like God as a refuge and a rock of hope.

[Devotional excerpted from “When Does God Swear?”¹](#)

¹ https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/when-god-swears-by-god?utm_campaign=Daily%20Email&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=79790464&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8TdpK57emvIs2AAo8mR-Zm7_z8syDyOJqedUq7im7s8WLMlniGF9ZwSasy5v2qRnn72IMB6bPjPwenpewVwr9kdfVX-A&_hsmi=79790466

6:13-20: Our secure hope

Verses 13-18: specific about the oath the Lord made.

Verses 19-20: Jesus as High Priest

- The preacher had just been writing about us imitating those who went before us. Now He goes back to Abraham and the promise to Abraham.
- This verse (verse 13) assumes that we know about a promise that God made to Abraham
 - We find this in Gen 22:16. In this passage Abraham is asked to sacrifice Isaac and begins to before the Lord stops him. Luke 1:73 also references this.
- Verse 13 shows that there is no one or no thing greater than God. God did not swear by the earth, God created the earth.
- Verse 14 quotes this Old Testament passage from Gen 22:17
- Verse 15 is referencing how long Abraham had to wait to attain the promise of having children.
 - This spans Gen 12:4 through 21:5
 - Abraham was 75 years old when he was given the first promise and then 100 years old at the birth of Isaac.
 - →That is a long time to wait for a promise. How am I doing with things like that? How long can I wait for a promise from the Lord or from someone else? A few chapters after this Jacob waited seven years for his Leah (who was supposed to be Rachel). Then Jacob served another seven years for Rachel. Joseph spent 13 years or close to in an Egyptian prison (Gen 37:2; 41:46).
 - Abraham waited for the promise and was blessed
- Verses 16ff continue this thought.
 - People swear by something greater than themselves, same idea as verse 13
 - An oath is also given
 - God guaranteed this with an oath
- Verse 18 is very Theological: God cannot lie
 - →it follows that we can be encouraged by the hope set before us
- Verse 19: the hope is an anchor
 - An anchor holds something in place
 - This is an anchor for our soul. This is holding our soul in place in the Holy of Holies which is with God in Heaven
 - This has implications for eternal security

Swindoll:

The word picture of an anchor is used often in ancient literature, but it's used only once in the New Testament in picturing hope as an anchor for our soul. Lots of hymns and gospel songs make use of this anchor metaphor. Every one of them comes back to Hebrews 6:19: "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul . . ."

There's something beautiful in this word picture that I would have missed without the insight of one very capable scholar:

The picture is that of an ancient sailing vessel finding its way through the narrow entrance to a harbor. This was one of the trickiest maneuvers the captain of a ship had to make. As his ship moved

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through the opening, he had to guard against a gust of wind running it onto a reef or a sandbar. The skeleton of many a ship could be seen on the rocks, giving testimony to the fact that its captain had failed his navigation test.

*To minimize the risk, the olden-day skipper would lower the ship's anchor into a smaller boat, which would then be rowed through the narrow entrance of the harbor. The anchor would then be dropped and this ship, with sails down, would be pulled past the obstacles, through the narrow opening and into the safety of the harbor.*¹

The point of all of this, of course, is not anchors and skippers, ships and harbors. The point is this: That is exactly what Jesus Christ does when the bottom of life drops out. Look closely at the verse: This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil. (v. 19)

The imagery of that verse may not be clear at first glance. Let me put it in today's terms. In the days of the Tabernacle, the Hebrews gathered around it and within it as a place of worship. Within the Tabernacle were veils; behind the innermost veil was the holiest place on earth, the place we might call the "God-room." In this God-room, the light (it was actually called the shekinah) of God resided. It's my understanding that the light of God was a brilliant, blazing radiance that shone down into the God-room. Within that room was an ark, or a small chest, much lower and smaller than most pulpits. On top of that chest was a grail, with golden cherubim on either end (angel-like creatures with their wings folded in front of them). That entire piece of unique furniture was too holy for words.

Once a year, the high priest of the Israelites would enter that God-room with a small pan of blood which, precisely as God required it in the Law, he poured out on the grail (which was called the "mercy seat") there between the golden cherubim. God, witnessing the spilling of the blood and pleased with the sacrifice that had been made correctly by the priest, graciously forgave the Hebrew people for their sin. It was an annual event, the most sacred of all events. The Hebrews must have held their breath as the high priest went in with the pan, poured the blood, and came out of this room where God dwelled. The first-century Jews who read this word veil in Hebrews 6 understood all that. Look closely:

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (vv. 19–20)

In other words, our Savior has gone through life, has taken all of life's beatings and buffetings, and has gone before us. And now? Now He pulls us toward Himself! He invites His followers within the veil. He says, "Come in. Find healing for your stress fractures. Find here the rest that you need, the relief from the burdens and buffetings of doubt."

Doubt, you see, will always try to convince you, You are all alone. No one else knows. Or cares. No one else really can enter in and help you with this. In Hebrews, however, the writer says that Christ is a constant priest—not once a year, but forever. He lives in the God-room. He is there, sitting alongside the Father, representing your needs to Him. And, child of God, there is nothing so great for you to endure that He does not feel touched by it and stay by you through it.

6:19 *within the veil.* I.e., in the presence of God. Believers have as strong encouragement as Abraham had in his time, because Jesus has already entered into the presence of God and assures us of our entrance into heaven as well. Christ has gone ahead into heaven, and as our *hope/anchor*, though out of sight, He holds us secure, especially in times of storm. Other nautical concepts in this book are found in [Hebrews 2:1](#); [Hebrews 3:6, 14](#); [Hebrews 10:23, 38](#).

—Ryrie Study Notes

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- Verse 20 transitions back to Melchizedek
- I want to remember the context. The author has been challenging the Hebrew people not to fall away. They have gone through some troubles. So now he has challenging them of the strong hope they have in Christ has the High Priest.

God cannot lie: Num 23:19; Titus 1:2

[26:31-35](#) The inner veil separated the Holy Place (which contained the Altar of Incense, the lampstand, and the table for the bread) from the Most Holy Place, or Holy of Holies (which contained the *ark* and the *mercy seat*). Josephus reported that the veil was four inches thick, was renewed every year, and that horses tied to each side could not pull it apart. It barred all but the high priest from the presence of God, but when it was torn in two at the death of Jesus of Nazareth (see [Mark 15:38](#)), access to God was made available to all who come through Him (cf. [Hebrews 10:19-22](#)).

—Ryrie Study Notes

7:1-3: preeminence of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The Portrait of Melchizedek

The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

It seems more natural that the author meant that Melchizedek belonged to an order in which there was no end to the priesthood of those engaged in it. (He later said in 7:8 that Melchizedek “is declared to be living.”) If this is correct, Melchizedek may have been an angelic being who reigned for a time at Salem (i.e., Jerusalem). If so, the statement that he was “without beginning of days” would not mean that he was eternal, but simply that he had a pretemporal origin. Nor would this concept of Melchizedek as an angel elevate him to the same level as God’s Son, since the author painstakingly asserted the Son’s superiority to the angels (1:5-14). There is indeed evidence that, at Qumran, Melchizedek was regarded as an angelic personage. If this is the case in Hebrews, then the Son of God is the High Priest in an order in which Melchizedek is simply a priest.²

- Now we are back to Melchizedek which the preacher has been intermittently writing about
- Melchizedek was King of Salem
- He was priest of the Most High God
- He blessed Abraham after the slaughter of the kings
 - Gen 14:18-20

²Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:798). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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- Abraham gave 10% of the spoils. He literally gave a tithe
- Salem means peace
- Verse 3: Melchizedek:
- Dr Rydelnic shares:
- Melchizedek had a father and a mother. This passage is just saying he is a type. He is like Jesus.
- There is one way he would not have had parents and that is if he was the preincarnate Christ.
- Dr Rydelnic does not believe he was the preincarnate Christ. He thinks Melchizedek was a type. He was like Christ will be.
- According to this Melchizedek remains a priest forever. I think the author is comparing him to Jesus here and Jesus is a priest forever.

7:3 *Without father . . .* This does not mean that Melchizedek had no parents or that he was not born or did not die, but only that the Scriptures contain no record of these events so that he might be more perfectly likened to Christ.

—Ryrie Study Notes

ESV Study Notes:

Heb. 7:1–2 *The author summarizes the brief account of Melchizedek found in [Gen. 14:18–20](#), highlighting important interpretative points. Elsewhere in the OT, Melchizedek is mentioned only in [Ps. 110:4](#); however, Judaism around the time of Christ did speculate about him (e.g., in the Qumran scroll 11QMelchizedek). **translation of his name.** In the OT (and in later Judaism) the meaning of a name could indicate a person's relationship to God (e.g., [Gen. 17:5](#); [25:25–26](#); [32:28](#)). **Melchizedek.** The Hebrew name means “king of righteousness” (Hb. melek, “king”; tsedeq, “righteousness”). **Salem** is Melchizedek's city (Hb. shalem, [Gen. 14:18](#)), and is from the same root as the Hebrew for “peace” (shalom).*

Heb. 7:3 *Some have suggested that Melchizedek was a preincarnate, temporary appearance of the eternal Son of God. As this passage indicates, however, Melchizedek was not in fact the Son of God but someone **resembling the Son of God** (lit., “having been made like the Son of God”); he was an ordinary human being who was “king of Salem” (v. 1). **He is without father or mother or genealogy probably means simply that this information is not given anywhere in Scripture** (in contrast to the Levitical priests, whose genealogies are recorded). The next phrase should probably be understood in the same way—that is, Melchizedek had **neither beginning of days nor end of life** recorded in Scripture; he suddenly appeared in [Genesis 14](#) and then disappeared. As far as the OT narrative is concerned, it shows no end to his priesthood, so in that sense he **continues a priest forever**. Thus Hebrews seems to view Melchizedek as an ordinary man, who was a “type” or foreshadowing of Christ (see note on [Rom. 5:14](#)). In this way, Melchizedek is comparable to the eternal high priesthood of the righteous Son of God, who is truly the king of righteousness and who brings true peace.*

The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary:

7:1–10

The Nature of Melchizedek's Priesthood

Because Scripture declares David's lord to be a priest like Melchizedek (Ps 110:4, in Heb 5:6), a Jewish interpreter would naturally ask, In what ways is he like Melchizedek? The writer's point is to show that Jesus' priesthood is greater than and so supersedes the Levitical priesthood of contemporary Judaism. Psalm 110 invites the reader to look for traits of the ultimate king in Genesis 14.

7:1. Here the author summarizes Genesis 14:17–24, in which the Canaanite priest-king of the city that later became Jerusalem blessed Abram. (The identification of Salem with Jerusalem is corroborated by Ps 76:2 and Egyptian execration texts, and assumed in Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the rabbis.)

7:3. One Jewish interpretive principle was that what was not mentioned did not happen. (Philo especially, though not exclusively—cf. the rabbis—exploited this technique. Thus, for instance, Philo argued that the wise man's family consisted of his virtues, because at one point Moses listed virtues instead of listing all ancestors. Similarly, because Cain's death is not mentioned, Cain did not die [for Philo, Cain represents deathless folly]. This technique of arguing from silence was applied selectively, of course, because most possible details were not mentioned in a text.) The writer of Hebrews can thus argue that Melchizedek, for the purpose of the comparison, was without parents, because Genesis 14 does not mention them, and Genesis supplies parentage and genealogy for other important representatives of God. To Greek readers, to be without beginning or end was to be divine (e.g., an argument by the philosopher Thales).³

7:4-10: preeminence of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek

Josephus ***Josephus**. A first-century Jewish historian who lived through the war of A.D. 66–70; his works (*The Jewish War*, *Antiquities of the Jews* and *Against Apion*, and his autobiography, the *Life*) are useful sources of information concerning first-century Palestine. Intended for a Diaspora audience, his writings are quite Hellenized.

Dead Sea Scrolls ***Dead Sea Scrolls**. Writings from a strict Jewish sect (usually agreed to be Essenes) that lived in the Judean desert, near modern Khirbet Qumran. The writings include the War Scroll, the Community Rule, the Damascus Document, the Thanksgiving Hymns, the Genesis Apocryphon, the Temple Scroll and commentaries on and expansions of various biblical books.

rabbis ***Rabbi**. Jewish teacher. Sometime after A.D. 70 the term became a technical one for those ordained in the rabbinic movement, which probably consisted primarily of Pharisaic scribes. (To accommodate customary usage this commentary sometimes applies the term to Jewish teachers of the law in general, although such common usage may have technically been later; it also applies the term to the teachings of Jewish legal experts collected in rabbinic literature.)

³Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Heb 6:20-7:3). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

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- Now the commentary continues. The author is saying that Melchizedek was pretty great. Abraham tithed to him
- Verse 5: the descendants of Abraham are commanded to collect a tithe from the people, the other descendants of Abraham.
 - The author is talking about the Levites. The priests collected Tithes.
- Num 18:21, 26; 2 Chr 31:4f: the Levites were paid through the tithe
- Verse 6: in a mathematical way the author is talking about how Melchizedek who had no genealogy collected a tenth from Abraham and then blessed Abraham. He blessed Abraham who had the promises

7:6 The proof that the Melchizedekan priesthood (and Christ's) is superior to the Aaronic, or Levitical, priesthood is that Levi's great-grandfather Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, and that Levi, though unborn, was involved ([Hebrews 7:9](#)).

—Ryrie Study Notes

- Verse 7 sums it up: the lesser is Abraham and he is blessed by the greater which was Melchizedek
- Verse 8 is difficult: the priesthood died with the priest, but Melchizedek may maintain his priesthood. See Ryrie and other study notes:

7:8 *In this case.* Refers to the Levitical priests. *in that case.* Refers to Melchizedek and his priesthood. *he lives on.* Nowhere in the record is it said that Melchizedek lost his priestly office by death, in contrast to the Levitical priests who died generation after generation.

- —Ryrie Study Notes

- Verses 9-10 tie this together: Levi who was the tribe of the priest paid tithes (being in his great grandfather's loins) paid tithes to him.
 - Melchizedek was paid tithes by the great grandfather of the priests who were supposed to give tithes. The High Priests themselves gave tithes to Melchizedek!

ESV Study Note:

Heb. 7:4 **tenth of the spoils.** *Abraham tithed to Melchizedek ([Gen. 14:20](#)). **Patriarch** here means “father of a nation or people.” This is a reminder that all Israel traces its lineage through Abraham (see [Heb. 7:9–10](#)).*

Heb. 7:5–6 *In the Mosaic law, God commanded the Israelites to tithe to the Levitical priesthood (e.g., [Num. 18:21–24](#)), who are themselves fellow descendants of Jacob/Israel and of Abraham. Abraham **had the promises** (see [Heb. 6:13–15](#))—these promises also encompass the offspring of Abraham (see note on [7:9–10](#)).*

Heb. 7:7 *The **superior** person (Melchizedek) **blessed the inferior** (Abraham), thus the Melchizedek priesthood is superior to Abraham and all his descendants (implicitly including the Levitical priesthood).*

Heb. 7:8 **he lives.** *Melchizedek is a “priest forever” ([Ps. 110:4](#); cf. [Heb. 7:3](#)), hence the Melchizedek priesthood, being eternal, is superior to the mortal Levitical priesthood ([vv. 23–25](#)). The author is probably not arguing that Melchizedek never died, but that he is a type of Christ in*

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that nothing is stated in the biblical text about his death (see note on [v. 3](#)), and so the figure of Melchizedek forecasts the risen Jesus.

Heb. 7:9-10 *Levi himself ... paid tithes (to Melchizedek) through Abraham. The author's reasoning is that the offspring of Abraham (esp. Levi), who share in Abraham's promises (see note on [vv. 5-6](#)), also share in Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek, and therefore the Levitical priesthood is inferior to the Melchizedekian priesthood.*