

## Hebrews 6:7-20 to 7:1-10

Last week we concluded our lesson with a section that has been troubling to some Christians for years.

It is Hebrews 6:4-6: **"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,**

<sup>5</sup> **And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,**

<sup>6</sup> **If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."**

Although this passage seems to indicate that a Christian can lose his salvation, in fact, it does not.

Actually, these verses describe the condition of apostasy, a problem affecting the early church.

There had been a great influx of Hebrews into the church, most of whom were genuinely saved.

However, among them there were some that had been attracted to Christ, but had only a head knowledge of Christianity, not being born again.

These Hebrews were in danger of falling away, especially when Christ did not return to set up His kingdom as many were anticipating.

In fact, some had already gone into apostasy, and, as I said, it was those

individuals that verses 4 to 6 refer to.

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And this falling away is also possible today in the church of Jesus Christ, even among those who have no Jewish roots or expectations.

Yes, there are those, and the name of Charles Templeton comes to my mind, who have professed Christ in the past, but have now turned their backs on Him and the Gospel.

And there is also the danger that those who have been born and raised in a Christian home, who have sat under sound preaching all their lives, and have a good understanding of the Gospel

message intellectually, may actually never  
make a decision for Christ.

However, in verses 4-6, I believe the writer  
of Hebrews is specifically referring to  
those who had allied themselves with  
the early Christian church, but being  
unsaved, have now turned their backs on  
Christ and gone back to Judaism.

So, if they were already gone, why does the  
writer even bring up the subject to the  
church?

No doubt he did that to warn those who were  
teetering on the edge of apostasy to  
examine their lives and trust Christ as  
their Saviour.

The bottom line then was, make a commitment  
or you, too, might fall away.

Fence sitting is dangers.

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V 7-8 "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

<sup>8</sup> But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

Here the writer uses a parable to make clear what is in his mind.

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H. A. Ironside gives a good explanation of these two verses that I would like to share with you.

**I quote--**

*"He depicts two pieces of ground; both have been cultivated in the same way; both are warmed by the same sun; both drinking in their share of the same*

*rain; but one produces useful herbs for those for whose sakes it has been tilled, thus partaking of blessing from God.*

*The other brings forth only the fruit of the curse, thorns and briars; it is worthless, and in danger of being completely given up when it's good-for-nothing fruit is burned.*

*What is the difference between these two pieces of ground?*

*In the one case, you have good soil into which has fallen good seed.*

*In the other, there is barren soil and the good seed has not fructified. (I believe he means not borne fruit)*

*The lesson is plain.*

*Here are two Jews, let us say, who have been brought up side by side.*

*Both have been interested in the laws of  
Moses and the teachings of the  
prophets.*

*Both have hoped for the coming of their  
Messiah.*

*Both have entertained the Messianic hope.  
Both have listened to the preaching of  
devoted servants of Christ.*

*Both have become deeply interested in the  
Gospel.*

*Both have been astounded at the mighty signs  
following the proclamation of the new  
message.*

*Both make a profession of Christianity.*

*Both are baptized and take their places in  
the Christian company.*

*One of them bears the fruit of the Spirit in  
his life and becomes a devoted follower  
of the Saviour.*

*The other manifests no evidence of new life at all, and eventually repudiates Christianity and goes back to Judaism. He is not actually cursed as yet, for in the mercy of God he may eventually realize his fearful sin, but it is most unlikely.*

*He has made his choice, and is therefore nigh unto cursing.*

*Now what is the difference between the two men?*

*The one has truly turned to God in repentance, and the incorruptible seed of the gospel has fallen into the prepared soil of an honest upright heart.*

*The other has become intellectually acquainted with and interested in Christianity, but the good seed has*



*fallen upon an unrepentant heart and has borne no fruit."* **End of quote.**

This interpretation of the parable seems to be correct, for the next verse, V 9 says, **"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."**

The writer here assures the Christian congregation that he is talking about apostates, not themselves.

Of course any among them who are not truly saved need to be warned not to delay in going on to full salvation, and the believers need to be encouraged to mature in their faith, but there is no suggestion that true believers could be lost.

So he encourages the saved to grow in Christ.

V 10 **"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.**

<sup>11</sup> **And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:**

<sup>12</sup> **That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."**

He commends them for the gracious spirit they have shown in their service to the saints, but he encourages them to press on, not giving way to a slothful or a lazy spirit, but to be imitators of

those in the past who **"through faith and patience inherit the promises."**

As an example of such a one, he reminds them of Abraham.

V 13-18 **"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,**

<sup>14</sup> **Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.**

<sup>15</sup> **And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.**

<sup>16</sup> **For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.**

<sup>17</sup> **Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:**

18      That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Abraham had been given God's promise:

**"Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee."** But he had not received even the *beginning* of that promise, that is, a son of his own, until he was of a great age.

For most of his life, all that he had to go on was God's Word and oath, but that was enough for him.

Yes, **"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."**

So the Hebrew Christians, and ourselves also, should be encouraged by **"them who**

**through faith and patience inherit the promises."**

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We also should press on and increase in our faith, for we have both a present hope and an eternal hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

V 19-20 **"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;**

<sup>20</sup> **Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec."**

This anchor is not to be cast into the hold of the ship, that is to anchor our faith in a dependence upon our own resources, nor is it to be resting upon the shifting sands of human philosophies, but it is to be fastened

to our Great High Priest, Who is at the mercy-seat, just inside the veil.

♪ *We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
Steadfast and sure while the billows  
roll, Fastened to the Rock which cannot  
move, Grounded firm and deep in the  
Savour's love.*

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V 19-20 **"Which hope we have as an anchor of  
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Melchizedec."**

It has been pointed out by some that the word translated "**forerunner**" is a

nautical term used to designate a small boat.

Apparently the mouths of many Greek harbours were not passable by ships at low tide because of the presence of sandbars.

So it was customary to put the anchor in the forerunner and row it over the bar and cast it into the harbour to secure the vessel until the tide would rise far enough for the ship itself to enter the safe haven.

If storms should come before that time, they would not drift away into the angry sea because they were firmly anchored in the harbour.

In this world, we may have to encounter many rough storms, but the Christian can ride it out because his Anchor is

fastened in the safe harbour to which he  
himself will someday be safely brought.

♪ *When our eyes behold thro' the gathering  
night the city of gold, our harbour  
bright, we shall anchor fast by the  
heavenly shore, with the storms all  
past forevermore.*

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We began today's lesson with the awful  
prospect of the judgment that faces the  
apostate, and now we end Chapter 6 with  
our anchor

♪ *Fastened to the Rock which  
cannot move.*

What will Chapter 7 bring?

Well, we still have a few minutes left in  
our lesson, so let's begin.

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Again we find ourselves rooted in Israel's history.

By now, some may be asking, Why are we spending so much time following an argument that was designed to convince Hebrews of the superiority of Christianity?

Well, actually, it is very important and foundational for Christians to understand and appreciate these things. After all, our faith is rooted in the Old Testament in much the same way that the Lord's Supper grew out of the elements of the Passover Feast.

And not only is our faith rooted in the Old Testament, but, conversely, the Old Testament sacrifices are rooted in Christ, the Eternal One.

So, this is all good background for us.

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The whole theme of the Book of Hebrews, up to this point, is that the Old Testament economy, although good, has been superseded by the New Testament economy, which is far better.

Jesus has been shown to be better than the prophets, the angels, Moses, and now in this chapter, He is to be shown to be a better High Priest of the better priesthood.

However, the writer of Hebrews was treading on holy ground as far as the early Christians were concerned.

They had been brought up under the Levitical priesthood, and so, even as new Christians, they were still much attached to Jewish traditions, and

especially to the priesthood, which they knew to be God ordained.

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Chapter 7 is linked to the last verse of Chapter 6, so let's begin there.

Hebrews 6:20: **"Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec."**

Now, if we are to talk about Israel's priesthood, then why does the name Melchizedec come into the discussion?

Well, Melchizedek was important because God referred to him in connection with His Son, in Psalm 110:4: **"The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."**

And this was significant, because it was a different priesthood from that of the Aaronic priesthood which strictly belonged to Israel.

So, who was this mysterious person, Melchizedec?

To find that out, we must go back to the time when Abram conquered the four kings who had just overrun Sodom and some adjoining kingdoms.

We find the account in Gen. 14: 14-20 **"And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.**

<sup>15</sup> **And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto**

Hobah, which is on the left hand of  
Damascus.

<sup>16</sup> And he brought back all the goods,  
and also brought again his brother Lot,  
and his goods, and the women also, and  
the people.

<sup>17</sup> And the king of Sodom went out to  
meet him after his return from the  
slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the  
kings that were with him, at the valley  
of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

<sup>18</sup> And Melchizedek king of Salem  
brought forth bread and wine: and he  
was the priest of the most high God.

<sup>19</sup> And he blessed him, and said,  
Blessed be Abram of the most high God,  
possessor of heaven and earth:

<sup>20</sup> And blessed be the most high God,  
which hath delivered thine enemies into

thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

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In Hebrews 7, the writer brings out the significance of this man Melchizedec.

V 1-3: "For this Melchizedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

<sup>2</sup> To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

<sup>3</sup> Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but

**made like unto the Son of God; abideth  
a priest continually."**

Now, some have imagined that this man was some sort of supernatural personage, or even the pre-incarnation of Jesus Christ Himself.

These speculations were made because of the words in V 3, **"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life."**

However, I do not believe this to be the case.

Melchizedec was just Melchizedek, a mortal man.

As is clearly stated here in Genesis, he was Melchizedek, King of Salem.

All that we know about him is given to us in the account in Genesis 14 that we have just read.

He makes his appearance on the pages of Scripture this one time only, and then disappears.

This account depicts him as a royal priest reigning in Salem, the city that was afterward known as Jerusalem.

Long before the Levitical priesthood was set up, Melchizedec, just like Job and Abraham, offered sacrifices to the Most High God.

So, why the words in V 3 concerning this strictly mortal man--"**Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life**"?

Well, actually, this is one of the wonderful incidents in Scripture where God is as particular about the information He



leaves out, as He is in other places about the information He puts in.

So, in order that this man could be a fitting type of Jesus Christ, Who is immortal, no beginning or ending of Melchizedec's life was recorded in Scripture.

In the book of Genesis which is simply filled with genealogies, with births and deaths, there is no mention of the parentage, birth, or death of this important man.

So, as far as God's record is concerned, this strictly mortal man was **"made like unto the Son of God; (and) abideth a priest continually."**

Consequently, he is a fitting type of our Great High Priest.

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We also see in V 2 another illustration of the perfect order in God's Word.

We observe here that Melchizedek was first of all **"by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace."**

In other words his name meant King of Righteousness, and the word Salem, being the city he ruled over, meant peace.

So, he was first described as the King of Righteousness, and then King of Peace.

Notice the order given in the inspired word --**"first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace."**

If the order had been reversed, God's beautiful type would have been spoiled,

for you see, righteousness must always come before peace.

That is a principle in Scripture.

Our gracious Lord, as the perfect sacrifice, must satisfy God's righteous judgment against our sin before there could be peace for us.

Romans 3:26: **"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."**

Romans 5:1: **"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

So we see that God is very particular in what He leaves out of scripture, and in the order in which He puts things in.

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In verses 4-10, the writer proceeds to bring out the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedec over the Levitical priesthood.

V 4-10: "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

<sup>5</sup> And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

<sup>6</sup> But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

<sup>7</sup> And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

8       And here men that die receive  
tithes; but there he receiveth them, of  
whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

9       And as I may so say, Levi also, who  
receiveth tithes, payed tithes in  
Abraham.

10       For he was yet in the loins of his  
father, when Melchizedec met him."

First of all, the writer shows the  
superiority of Melchizedec over Abraham  
by pointing out that Abraham gave him  
the tenth part of the spoils.

Also Melchizedec blessed Abraham, and as V 7  
says, "**Without all contradiction the  
less is blessed of the better.**"

So the point made here is that Melchizedec  
is greater than the patriarch Abraham.  
That's all well and good, but how does that  
prove that the priesthood of

Melchizedec is superior to the Levitical priesthood?

After all, Levi was not born until many years after the event mentioned in Genesis 14, so how does that prove anything about Levi and the priesthood, since Levi was not even there to recognize Melchizedek as superior to himself?

Well, the writer of Hebrews makes an unusual observation here.

V 9: **"And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.**

<sup>10</sup> **For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedec met him."**

Now that is something that we don't think about, indeed don't quite understand.

The world's wisdom would never accept the fact that Levi, a descendant of Abraham, was actually present in Abraham's body at the time he met Melchizedec.

However, it is clearly stated in God's Word that this is the case.

How can this be explained to the man of this world?

Well, for now, it can't be.

Perhaps in the future, if science understands our DNA better, they might comprehend this physical truth.

However, I rather doubt that they will ever get that far.

But there is something here even more surprising than the assertion that Levi was physically present when Abraham met Melchizedek.

In these verses, Levi and the sons of Levi,  
are proven to be inferior to  
Melchizedek because Levi "**paid tithes**"  
to Melchizedek.

So then, in God's Word, Levi is credited  
with the actions of Abraham just as if  
they were his own personal actions.

And even though we do not really understand  
this, it is obvious that the writer of  
Hebrews did.

And since, under God's inspiration, he  
successfully used this argument to  
prove his point, then it is apparent  
that the Hebrews to whom he was writing  
also recognized and understood this  
principle.

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Well, you might be saying, I don't really understand it, but at least this principle doesn't affect me.

Well, I don't want to spoil your day, but, actually, this same principle does affect you and me, and we can read about it in Romans 5:19. **"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners."**

Yes, under Adam's headship, we were all credited with his sin even before we had committed our own personal sins. And this revelation is not confined to the New Testament.

King David understood this principle very well, and, under inspiration, wrote about it in Psalm 51:5: **"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."**

He was not intimating that his mother had sinned, but was referring to the fact that he was born a sinner because he was a son of Adam.

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So by the same principle that the writer of Hebrews uses to prove Melchizedek's superiority over Levi, we find that we were in Adam's loins when he sinned, and the guilt and depravity contracted by human nature was passed on to us.

As Romans 5:19 says, we "**were made** (or counted) **sinners.**"

Now, lest I leave this discussion on a sour note, let me read Romans 5:19 in its entirety: "**For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.**"

That's the good news of salvation.

Not only were we "**made sinners**" in Adam, but we can be "**made righteous**" in Christ.

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So the writer of Hebrews has proven that Jesus is better than the prophets, better than the angels, better than Moses, and by this most unusual means, he has proven that Christ is a better High Priest from a better priesthood.

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Next week we will continue this lengthy and convincing argument.

Not only are these truths useful in persuading Hebrews of the superiority of the new covenant, but they are a very stabilizing force in the faith of Christians everywhere.