

Hebrews Chapters 6 - 7

Charles Dailey © 2022 NLT CPS
Updated 12/8/2022 Printed 12/9/2022

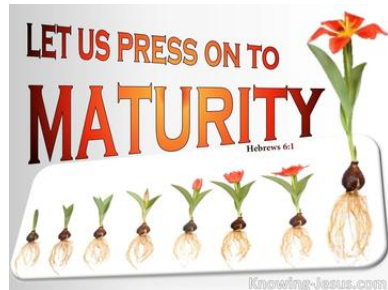
Introduction:

Becoming a believer is not a one-time event, but opens the door to personal growth. The Hebrew writer now addresses the segment of believers who viewed becoming a follower of Christ as a once-and-done event like marriage.

Hebrews
Jesus > Everything

MOVE ON FROM THE BASICS

(6:1) So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God.



- The writer of Hebrews wants to move beyond the basics and get to **maturity**. First on his list is **repentance** from doing **evil** and putting **faith in God**. There are more items in the next verse. Recall how Jesus opened His ministry:

"The time promised by God has come at last!" He announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!" (Mark 1:15 NLT)

- Willingness to **repent** and **placing faith in God** are fundamental to becoming a Christian. No other route exists.

(2) You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (3) And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.

- Believers must discern between:
 1. **baptism** in water (Acts 8:36),
 2. **baptism** in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11),
 3. **baptism** of suffering (Matthew 10:38).
 4. They should be able to distinguish between John's **baptism** (Matthew 3:11) and
 5. **baptism** into Christ (Romans 6:3). This water baptism is the only one baptism remaining now:

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.
(Ephesians 4:5-6 NLT)

- **The laying on of hands** was not always for the same purpose and results. In Acts 6, the Twelve laid hands on the seven and imparted gifts to them. By contrast, in Acts 13, the leading men of the church laid hands on Barnabas and Saul, encouraging them to go on a preaching tour. No power was passed to the preachers being sent.

Summary of 1-3: Believers must press on from the basic teaching about Christ.

SOME WHO HAVE FALLEN AWAY CANNOT BE BROUGHT BACK

(4) For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened -- those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, (5) who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come -- (6) and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of

God, they themselves are nailing Him to the cross once again and holding Him up to public shame.

- This is understood by some as meaning that a believer who has fallen away cannot return to the Lord. However, verse six indicates that the **rejection** of Christ is **still in progress** for that former believer. Something similar was in the ministry of Jesus:

So I tell you, every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven -- except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which will never be forgiven. (Matthew 12:31 NLT)

The Jewish national leaders had just turned down the evidence that Jesus was doing miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. **While** they were doing that, there was nothing greater that could be presented to convince them. So here in Hebrews, the believer-turned-unbeliever must accept the truth of who Christ is and quit nailing Him to the cross again, figuratively speaking.

Summary of 4-6: Some who have fallen away from Christ cannot be brought back.

SOAK UP THE WONDERFUL TRUTHS OF GOD

(7) When the ground soaks up the falling rain and bears a good crop for the farmer, it has God's blessing. (8) But if a field bears thorns and thistles, it is useless. The farmer will soon condemn that field and burn it.

- On a farm, **ground** that **soaks** up the **rain** and **bears a good crop** becomes **blessed** by **God**. When believers **soak** up the truth of Scriptures and bear a **good crop**, they are likewise **blessed** by **God**.
- We can infer from verse eight that a believer who does not bear a **good crop** will be **condemned**.

9) Dear friends, even though we are talking this way, we really don't believe it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation.

- The writer's brush has been wider than necessary for his primary readers. He has confidence that drifting from the truth is not what they are doing. They will reap the rewards of their salvation.

(10) For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for Him and how you have shown your love to Him by caring for other believers, as you still do.

- One mark of an active believer is they are **caring** for others. This is yet another evidence that believers are to be part of a church body where they can "bear one another's burdens." This is **showing love** for the Lord.

HOW TO ACHIEVE OUR HOPE

(11) Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. (12) Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and endurance.

- The Hebrew writer wants believers to continue **loving** other believers as long as they are alive. This guarantees that their own **hope** will be realized.
- Becoming **spiritually dull** and **indifferent** is a product of not showing **love** to others and therefore missing their **inheritance** from **God**.

Summary of 7-12: Ground must bear fruit. Hopefully, the readers are bearing fruit among other believers. Love others for the balance of your life.

ABRAHAM SERVES AS AN EXAMPLE

(13) For example, there was God's promise to Abraham. Since there was no one greater to swear by, God took an oath in His own name, saying: (14) "I will certainly bless you, and I will multiply your descendants beyond number."

- God had made a remarkable **promise** to ancient **Abraham**:

This is what the LORD says:

Because you have obeyed Me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by My own name that I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. (Genesis 22:16-17 NLT)

(15) Then Abraham waited patiently, and He received what God had promised.

- How did **Abraham** respond? He **waited patiently**. Years went by without even a son to begin the family growth, let alone growth as a clan or nation. Eventually there was Isaac, then Isaac had Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons and some of their descendants finally conquered the cities of their enemies. God had His own time schedule. There had to be time for people to be born and raised before they could become a formidable national force.

WHY GOD WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND

(16) Now when people take an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves to hold them to it. And without any question that oath is binding. (17) God also bound Himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that He would never change His mind.

- An **oath** is assurance that the oath-maker will not change his or her mind. They affirm with the understanding of someone greater. It is a **binding** agreement. The exception is God could not swear by someone greater so He swore by His own name. (Verse 13).

(18) So God has given both His promise and His oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to Him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us.

- God has made a **promise** *and* God has taken an **oath**. The two items have one thing in common: **God** cannot **lie**.
- **We who have fled to Him for refuge** is a reminder of an Old Testament rescue for someone who accidentally killed another person:

... designate cities of refuge to which people can flee if they have killed someone accidentally. These cities will be places of protection from a dead person's relatives who want to avenge the death. The slayer must not be put to death before being tried by the community. (Numbers 35:11-12 NLT)

There was **hope** for the manslayer. All he had to do was flee. There is salvation for us when we **flee**.

(19) This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. (20) Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

- The hope that God offers is an anchor for our souls. **William Barclay** comments:

In the ancient world the anchor was the symbol of hope. *Epictetus* says: "A ship should never depend on one anchor or a life on one hope."

Pythagoras said: "Wealth is a weak anchor; fame is still weaker. What then are the anchors which are strong?"

Wisdom, great-heartedness, courage -- these are the anchors which no storm can shake."

The writer to the Hebrews insists that the Christian possesses the greatest **hope** in the world.

- This **hope** leads us ultimately to God's inner sanctuary! Into the Holy of Holies. In the Old Testament, only the **High Priest** could enter and that was on the yearly Day of Atonement. But Jesus has become our **High Priest**.
- Jesus has gone before us as a *forerunner* as many translations have it. **David Guzik** says:

A forerunner (the ancient Greek word *prodromos*) was a reconnaissance man in the military. A forerunner goes forward, knowing that others are going to follow!

Summary of 1-20: Abraham is an example of God keeping His promises. Our High Priest Jesus shows how God enables winners.

THE CASE OF MELCHIZEDEK

(7:1) This Melchizedek was king of the city of Salem and also a priest of God Most High. When Abraham was returning home after winning a great battle against the kings, Melchizedek met him and blessed him. (2) Then Abraham took a tenth of all he had captured in battle and gave it to Melchizedek. The name Melchizedek means "king of justice," and king of Salem means "king of peace." (3) There is no record of his father or mother or any of his ancestors -- no beginning or end to his life. He remains a priest forever, resembling the Son of God.

- **Melchizedek** was both the **king of Salem** and a **priest of God**. **Abraham** gave a **tenth** of the bounty of a successful **battle** to him. **Edward Fudge** writes of him in *Our Man in Heaven*:

This Melchizedek was the subject of much speculation in Jewish circles, including the Essene community of the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls. He is mentioned in Scripture, however, only in Hebrews, Psalm 110 and Genesis 14. Melchizedek was a king-priest, contemporary of Abraham,

and a servant of God. Salem is probably an ancient name for Jerusalem (see Psalm 76:2).

(4) Consider then how great this Melchizedek was. Even Abraham, the great patriarch of Israel, recognized this by giving him a tenth of what he had taken in battle.

- **Abraham** recognized **Melchizedek** as a great man by giving him a **tenth** of his battle booty.

(5) Now the law of Moses required that the priests, who are descendants of Levi, must collect a tithe from the rest of the people of Israel, who are also descendants of Abraham.

- Centuries later, **priests of Levi** received **tithes** from Abraham's **descendants**. The significance is in the next verse.

MELCHIZEDEK WAS GREATER THAN THE LEVITICAL PRIESTS

(6) But Melchizedek, who was not a descendant of Levi, collected a tenth from Abraham. And Melchizedek placed a blessing upon Abraham, the one who had already received the promises of God. (7) And without question, the person who has the power to give a blessing is greater than the one who is blessed.

- **Melchizedek blessed Abraham**, showing that He was greater than **Abraham**. That he **collected a tenth** shows that **Abraham** considered him to be superior. In the next verse, we see the lesson.

(8) The priests who collect tithes are men who die, so Melchizedek is greater than they are, because we are told that he lives on. (9) In addition, we might even say that these Levites -- the ones who collect the tithe -- paid a tithe to Melchizedek when their ancestor Abraham paid a tithe to him.

- **The priests** of the time of Moses were all men subject to death, but **Melchizedek lives on**. Because they descended from **Abraham**, they -- in a sense -- paid **tithes** to **Melchizedek**.

(10) For although Levi wasn't born yet, the seed from which he came was in Abraham's body when Melchizedek collected the tithe from him. (11) So if the priesthood of Levi, on which the law was based, could have achieved the perfection God intended, why did God need to establish a different priesthood, with a priest in the order of Melchizedek instead of the order of Levi and Aaron?

- The **priesthood** of Levi (one of the 12 sons of Jacob) and Aaron (brother of Moses, 300 years later) was **imperfect**. Therefore God established a different priesthood.

MELCHIZEDEK BELONGED TO A SUPERIOR ORDER OF PRIESTS

(12) And if the priesthood is changed, the law must also be changed to permit it. (13) For the priest we are talking about belongs to a different tribe, whose members have never served at the altar as priests.

- The special **priest** the writer has in mind came from a **different tribe** than the Levitical **priests**.

(14) What I mean is, our Lord came from the tribe of Judah, and Moses never mentioned priests coming from that tribe. (15) This change has been made very clear since a different priest, who is like Melchizedek, has appeared.

- **Our Lord** came from the **tribe of Judah**. He was like the priesthood of **Melchizedek** rather than that of Levi.

JESUS WAS A PRIEST OF THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK

(16) Jesus became a priest, not by meeting the physical requirement of belonging to the tribe of Levi, but by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. (17) And the psalmist pointed this out when he prophesied, "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."

- **Jesus became a priest** by meeting higher standards. He overcame the power of physical death and rose from the grave. He said it in Revelation:

I am the living One. I died, but look -- I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.

(Revelation 1:18 NLT)

We know that His life **cannot be destroyed**. David had said the same thing in in Psalm 110:

The LORD has taken an oath and will not break His vow: "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."

(Psalms 110:4 NLT)

(18) Yes, the old requirement about the priesthood was set aside because it was weak and useless. (19) For the law never made anything perfect. But now we have confidence in a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

- The law of Moses was not capable of fixing anything or anyone. It could only reveal the desires of a Holy God.
- We live under a system that enables us to **draw near** to the God who revealed **the law**.

Summary of 1-19: Christ is a High Priest like Melchizedek instead of the tribe of Levi. He is superior to the Jewish priests.

(20) This new system was established with a solemn oath. Aaron's descendants became priests without such an oath, (21) but there was an oath regarding Jesus. For God said to Him, "The LORD has taken an oath and will not break His vow: 'You are a priest forever.'"

- The **priests** under the law did not take an **oath**, but the Great High Priest was commissioned with an **solemn oath** from **God** (verse 17).

GOD SAID THAT JESUS WAS A PRIEST FOREVER

(22) Because of this oath, Jesus is the One who guarantees this better covenant with God. (23) There were many priests under

the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office.

- The **oath** enables **Jesus** to **guarantee** a **better covenant**. Under the law, the **priests** served, retired, and died. So there were many of them over the years.

(24) But because Jesus lives forever, His priesthood lasts forever.

(25) Therefore He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through Him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.

- **Jesus** is from a permanent **priesthood** that does not change as the Levitical priesthood cycled through the generations. Our High Priest is on permanent duty interceding on our behalf.

(26) He is the kind of high priest we need because He is holy and blameless, unstained by sin. He has been set apart from sinners and has been given the highest place of honor in heaven.

- The Levitical High Priest was **stained by sin** because he was mere man. He needed to make an offering for his own sins as well as a separate one for the people whom he represented. Jesus, by comparison, has the highest place of honor in heaven.

THE SACRIFICE OF AND BY JESUS WAS PERMANENT

(27) Unlike those other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices every day. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this once for all when He offered Himself as the sacrifice for the people's sins.

- Not only is Jesus a permanent High Priest, He does not have any personal sin, so He doesn't need to offer **sacrifices** for them every day. He Himself **was** the **sacrifice** and that was a one-time-for-all event.

(28) The law appointed high priests who were limited by human weakness. But after the law was given, God appointed His Son with an oath, and His Son has been made the perfect High Priest forever.

- While the priests at the tabernacle, and later, the temple, were **humans**, Jesus was both **human** and God at the same time.

Summary of 20-28: Christ is a High Priest like Melchizedek instead of the tribe of Levi. He is superior to the Jewish priests and permanent.

This chapter has huge implications for our salvation. Human priesthods have been superseded by a God-given divine and eternal priesthood. How foolish for men to set up a priesthood patterned like that of Israel of old and to intrude upon the work of our Great High Priest.