

# Hebrews

## Hebrews 6:13 to 7:28 - Our ever present high priest

There's a hint in **Hebrews 6:13-15** as to what the Christians in Hebrews were having trouble with, and what had made them sluggish (5:11), and why they were losing interest and their confidence in a living God (3:12). And also why the author of Hebrews had to write in **Hebrews 6:12**, "We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."

The hint being: did they understand "what had been promised" to them? Did they also grasp that this promise was their inheritance, meaning something already given to them they could experience in their present lifetimes, that was meant to be so real to them it would give them hope and reason to keep trusting God when it didn't feel like he was very real? If so, what exactly **was** this inherited promise they could experience for real, then?

The author of Hebrews called it "**the great salvation**" (2:3). What he meant by that was the two things God had opened up to them in his Son (1:2), both of which are described in **Hebrews 2:17-18**. In verse 17, God made Jesus like us "in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people," and in verse 18, "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."

What God has given us as our promised inheritance in "the great salvation" **is his Son as our high priest**, who does two things for us. He makes atonement for our sins, first of all, just as the high priest in Leviticus 16 did for Israel to remind them that, no matter how badly they'd gone off course over the last year, they had a fresh start on the Day of Atonement.

It gave them good reason to trust God and have confidence in him, because he clearly loved them enough to never give up on them. He was the God of 'endless fresh starts' - always forgiving, always merciful, always faithful. And that was the reminder the author of Hebrews gave to the Christians in his care too, that in Jesus their high priest making atonement for their sins, they could have the same confidence in a God who was utterly forgiving, merciful and faithful to them too. So if they'd drifted off course and got a bit lazy "the great salvation" offered **them** a fresh start too.

The second thing God did in making his Son our high priest was to have him “share in our humanity” (2:14) to be “tempted in every way just as we are” (4:15), so now “he’s able to help those who are being tempted” (2:18) and “deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray” (5:2). To Jesus now we are “family” and “brothers” (2:11), and fellow members of God’s household (3:6). So in Jesus we have an ever present high priest who is utterly understanding and willing to help us out when life is getting us down.

Which all sounds very nice, but what about those times in our lives when things are not going well at all - and God **doesn’t** seem to be doing anything to help us out? Fortunately, the book of Hebrews answers that question, because that was the situation those Christians were in too. So God has already helped us out by having this book written. At this point in **Hebrews 6:13**, then, when it sounds like our fellow Christians back then had lost their ‘oomph’ and were in danger of simply drifting away, or resorting back to obeying the Law of Moses, what did the writer get into next as his answer to their dilemma?

Well, in **verse 12** he’d just told them “to **imitate** those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” That’s his answer. And he gives us an example in **verse 13** of **who** to imitate too: “When God made his promise to **Abraham** saying ‘I will surely bless you and give you many descendants’ it was **after waiting patiently** that Abraham received what was promised.”

And Abraham had to “wait patiently” all right, because he was in his mid 70’s when God promised he would have children, but he had to wait another 25 years until he was 100 for the birth of his first child. So what enabled him to be so patient? Or as **verse 19** phrases it, what “anchored his soul firm and secure” during that long wait for the promise to come true?

Continuing in verse 19, it had something to do with “entering the inner sanctuary behind the curtain where Jesus (verse 20) has entered on our behalf.” The Jewish Christians in Hebrews could easily relate to that, though, because on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 the high priest entered the inner sanctuary of the Holy of Holies behind the curtain (that separated it from the rest of the tabernacle) on behalf of Israel to **anchor their souls firm and secure** too. The high priest’s actions on that day were meant to reassure the Israelites that, despite their weaknesses and drifting off course over the last year, God’s promise to be with them and care for them still stood as firmly as ever. It was just the boost to their confidence they needed to see them through whatever tough times they’d be hit with the following year. So when more problems arose that would sorely test their trust in God, they now had good reason to **wait patiently** on him to answer.

Which is exactly what Abraham did. He was given an amazing promise of children in his old age, but year after year no sign of a child. So what gave him good reason to trust God and wait patiently on him for 25 years to answer?

There's a clue in **verse 20**, that Jesus became "a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek," and the next verse in **Hebrews 7:1**, that "Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High **who met Abraham...**" So two things here: first of all the existence of a priest of God in Abraham's day, and secondly, Abraham met him.

And what did this priest of the order of Melchizedek do for Abraham? He "**blessed**" him, **verse 1**. So here's Abraham meeting a priest of God face to face and receiving a personal blessing from him. But what makes this occasion really stand out is "how great this priest was," **verse 4** - first of all, because Abraham gave him a tenth of all the spoils he'd won in battle (verse 2), and secondly, Melchizedek was not only the "king of righteousness," he was also the "king of peace," **verse 2**. So this was one extraordinary man, but even the word "man" comes into question, because Melchizedek "had no father or mother and no family tree. He was not born nor did he die, but, **being like the Son of God**, is a perpetual priest," **verse 3**.

If we're wondering, then, how on earth Abraham was able to wait patiently on God for 25 years, would this be our answer? Abraham, just like the Israelites, had a high priest **to reassure him too** that God was real and therefore he'd stand by his promises no matter how long it took to fulfill them. The existence of this constant priesthood, therefore, whether it was Melchizedek for Abraham or the high priest entering the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement for the Israelites, had this wonderful purpose of anchoring souls firm and secure.

But what's all this got to do with us? Well, it goes back to **Hebrews 6:19-20**, because the "hope that **we** now have of an anchor for **our** souls, is **Jesus**" who fulfills both these pictures - of Melchizedek and the high priest on the Day of Atonement. Not only did he "enter the inner sanctuary behind the curtain," like the high priest in Israel did, he's also "a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek," who personally met Abraham and blessed him.

So, essential to grasping the "great salvation" that God has opened up to us is Jesus now being the high priest to us that the high priest was to Israel and Melchizedek was to Abraham. But again, what does this mean for us and for those struggling Christians in Hebrews - who were losing sight of, and even losing interest in, what was promised to them in Jesus? The answer by the author of Hebrews is in what Jesus is **now doing** as our high priest.

According to **Hebrews 7:25**, what Jesus as our ever present high priest is now doing is **“saving fully and completely those who come to God through him.”** Which is why **“he lives to intercede for us.”** He lives to see us experience the great salvation IN FULL that his death made possible.

Which was pictured all along by what the high priest did on the Day of Atonement, because in his actions on that day the Israelites were cleansed of **all** their sins and guilt - BUT - it never happened **fully and completely**, because another year would go by and they'd need cleansing all over again. They never got to experience, therefore, what being fully and completely saved was like.

But we can, because God made his Son **“a priest forever”**(7:21) with **“the power of an indestructible life”** (7:16), who **“sacrificed for all our sins once and for all by offering himself”** (7:27). The sacrifice necessary to save us fully and completely, therefore, has been done. A new era has opened up in which we have a perfect high priest - **“holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens”** (7:26) - who lives to anchor our souls firm and secure in the knowledge and daily experience of him **“meeting our every need,”** **Hebrews 7:26.**

Because that's what God appointed his Son and the office of high priest for, pictured by the great Melchizedek meeting Abraham's need - the purpose of which was to encourage and help Abraham to trust God and wait patiently for 25 years for an answer. What Melchizedek did for Abraham, therefore, is now **the true life story we can fall back on** as to what Jesus - OUR Melchizedek priest too - will do for us.

So what would those struggling Christians in Hebrews make of this, then? God was offering them the opportunity to enter his rest, by being able to trust him and wait patiently on him, so that their souls would be anchored firm and secure, no matter what happened to them.

But it meant them doing what we're now doing, making every effort to understand **what our Father has set up for us in his Son.** His Son is the most perfect gift he can give us, so what would you do if you'd found the most perfect gift for someone and you gave it to them? You'd ask them to make every effort to open it, right? Rip the wrapping off to see what's inside.

Which is what the author of Hebrews is saying to those struggling Christians: **“Realize what God has given us in his Son. Keep ripping the wrapping off it so we end up like Abraham, able to wait patiently on Jesus to meet our every need - because an ever living high priest is our promised inheritance too.”**