

HEBREWS

“NO TURNING BACK”

Hebrews Lesson 11

Ice Breaker: How much do you like changes at work, school, or in relationships? What was your best experience with change? What was your worst?

INTRO: Most people resist big changes... it creates too much insecurity and adversity. The writer of Hebrews wrote this letter to a group of people who had made a radical life change... they left Judaism to follow Jesus. This was not like changing churches, this was like defecting to a different country... and they were facing massive amounts of both insecurity and adversity. He takes his readers back to the roots of Judaism to reassure them they had not betrayed their faith; Judaism had always been intended to lead them Jesus and His Kingdom.

READ: Hebrews 6:12 - 7:1-10

12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience **inherit what has been promised.**

13 When **God made his promise to Abraham**, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, **14** saying, **“I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.”** **15** And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

16 Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. **17** Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. **18** God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we who have fled to take hold of the hope** offered to us may be greatly encouraged. **19** **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.**

1 This **Melchizedek** was **king of Salem and priest of God Most High.** He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, **2** and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, **his name means “king of righteousness”;** then also, **“king of Salem” means “king of peace.”** **3** **Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.**

4 Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! **5** Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. **6** This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, **yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7** **And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. 8** In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, **by him who is declared to be living. 9** One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, **10** because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

Q: Verses 12-14 speak of a promise made to Abraham that we can inherit (if we're not lazy). This promise represented a huge change. What is the promise and what does it change?

- The promise is recorded in Gen. 22:17-18. It is a promise to give Abraham a vast number of descendants (faithful people) that will bless all the nations of the earth.
 - Gal. 3:7-9 *“Understand, then, that **those who believe are children of Abraham**. The Scripture foresaw that **God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham**: ‘All nations will be blessed through you’. 9 So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”*
- This promise brought hope! (vs.18)
 - The promise is there is a new kingdom; and anyone, from anywhere can defect into it.

Q: According to verse 19-20, where is our hope supposed to be anchored?

- Our hope is with Jesus, behind the curtain, in the inner sanctuary.

What does all this imagery mean?

- The inner sanctuary refers to the temple in Jerusalem.
 - God was symbolically separated from man by a curtain (Ex. 26:31-33; Lev. 16:2).
- When Jesus was crucified, the curtain was supernaturally torn in two, symbolizing that man could now be with God (Matt. 27:51).
- If we have defected from the world to the Kingdom, our hope is anchored to Jesus Himself who sits at the right hand of God.
 - Col. 2:20-3:4 *“Since **you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world**, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? 22 **These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.** 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their **self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.** 3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 **For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.** 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”*
- We have hope based on our relationship with God, not our ability to observe ritual and practice religion.

Q: In vs. 20 we are told that Jesus has become a high priest in the order of Melchizedek. Who was Melchizedek?

- Chapter 7, verses 1-10 tell us about Melchizedek.
 - In vs. 1-2, we are told His name and title.
 - Sounds very much like Isaiah's Prophecy about Jesus in Is. 9:6-7; King of Peace – Prince of Peace.
 - In vs. 3 we are told He was never born, never died, and He is still a priest forever, like the Son of God.

- In vs. 6-7 we are told He was greater than Abraham.
 - Since the Jewish priesthood came from Abraham, that means he was a greater high priest than any of the Jewish high priests.
- In vs. 8 we are told He is still living.
- Sounds like Jesus to me!

Q: If Melchizedek was Jesus appearing (theophany) before He became man, what is the implication?

- Jesus was always actively working on behalf of people, even before the old covenant and law were given.
 - Paul talks about this in Romans 1,2, & 3.
- It means there was a priesthood that existed before the Jewish priesthood, and Melchizedek was the High Priest.
 - Heb. 8:5 ***“They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.”***
- It means Jesus is a part of God’s original priesthood... the one that exists in Heaven!

Q: Why does the author go to such lengths in vs. 4-10 to prove that Melchizedek is greater than the Jewish priesthood?

- To prove that Judaism was a part of something much bigger!
- Judaism was supposed to lead people to Jesus by showing them they couldn’t be good enough at religion to earn God’s approval.
 - Gal. 3:23-25 ***“Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. 24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”***

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT: *Answer the following questions as best you can, then get with your discipler/discipleship group and discuss your answers.*

1. The Hebrew Christians had to embrace some big changes in order to move from religion to relationship with Jesus. What change is God asking you to embrace?
2. Where would Jesus say your hope is anchored? Is it in God’s promise or your performance?
 - a. What does your answer say about which you are more into: religion or relationship with Jesus?
3. The nature of God’s purpose has never changed... to bring you into His Kingdom. What (specifically) did God do in your life to bring you to His Kingdom?