

## **A Study in Hebrews**

### Study Four

#### Hebrews 6:7-7:14

##### Day One

7 Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God.

8 But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

vs. 7&8 – These two verses are part of my list of governing values—those things that motivate me to action in my life (see <http://www.purposequest.com/articles.htm>). This particular governing value states:

**I am productive** - The root word of executive is "execute." It's not enough to be busy, but I must execute correct plans and procedures that will produce the desired fruit and results. The writer of Hebrews cautioned us not just to drink in the goodness of God, but to produce results with and from that goodness. I want to produce more than I use and engage in activities that will bring increase and glory to God and to those with whom I'm working.

Do you have a set of governing values? If not, why not go to the link above, look at my values and then develop your own. It's a simple process and will bear fruit for many years to come.

Are you as productive as you would like to be? As you need to be? Are you busy or busy with things that matter and are most important to you? To recapture your time and life isn't impossible, but it will take work. Once you develop your values, activities related to those values must show up in two important places: your checkbook and your calendar.

##### Day Two

9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation.

10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.

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

v. 9 – The author now turned to a more conciliatory tone, having confronted the readers with stern words. It reminded me of what Paul wrote to the Romans:

Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off (Romans 11:22-23).

The writer was confident that the Hebrew readers would enjoy and walk in the things that accompany the saving message of Jesus and not the things that go with dead doctrines.

v. 10 – Amen! God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and love for His people. Dear reader, if you are discouraged today, I urge you to take these words to heart. God hasn't forgotten you. He is watching and He has recorded all that you have done for Him and His people. You will be rewarded. I have often said that God has a big book and a sharp pencil, and He has "written down" everything so that you will be rewarded. If you have trouble seeing this, then read the story of Mordecai:

That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. "What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked. "Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered. The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had erected for him. His attendants answered, "Haman is standing in the court." "Bring him in," the king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?" So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor, have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!'" "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended." So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!" (Esther 6:1-11).

One day, when you least expect it, God will reward you for your faithful service. Be encouraged today!

vs. 11&12 – We need faith and patience to inherit what God has promised us. We must not become lazy, but remain diligent. Paul wrote:

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up (Gal 6:9).

The writer urged us to imitate those who did what he was instructing us to do. That is why we should read the life stories of those who had faith and endured. That is also why we need to hear testimonies of those who had faith and were rewarded. Have you become lazy? Then stir yourself to action and continue doing the good deeds you once did. Trust that God will reward you.

### **Day Three**

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.

v. 13 – In the previous verse, we were urged to learn from those who had obtained God’s promises through faith and patience. In this verse, we are directed to Abraham. While church history can provide many examples of faith and endurance, the Bible still provides the best examples. Did you know that it is possible to be mentored and coached by a biblical character? It is.

If you are attracted to a certain person in the Bible, there is a reason you are. Read everything that the Bible says about them, then read what the commentaries say. During your times of meditation, visualize those characters and let them “speak” to your particular situation, ministry or crisis. You will begin to think and act like them because the Spirit, who is now present in your life, was present in their life to make them the person you are studying.

v. 14 – God swore an oath by Himself since there was no one greater by which He could swear. It is of note that Abraham did not seek the promise; God approached Him. Everything begins and ends with God. The same is true for Joseph, Moses, Samuel, and David. But once the promise came, their lives were changed and they were tested beyond what they ever imagined.

v. 15 – Abraham couldn’t do anything but wait. The writer does not mention the time when Abraham did not wait, that being when he took his wife’s maid Hagar and got her pregnant. That decision has had a great impact on history, for the son of that liaison, Ishmael, is the father of the Arabs, enemies of the Jews. I have a friend who wrote a song with a line that states, “There’s only one thing worse than waiting on God and that’s wishing that you did, wishing that you did.” So true!

v. 16 – I don’t use oaths at all, so this verse is a bit hard for me to understand. I have seen people vow (“I swear to God”) and be lying through their teeth. I have almost

always seen their lies exposed, come to think of it. So if you do swear in the name of God, be careful. God is listening.

### Day Four

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.

v. 17 – God promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham and He confirmed that promise with an oath. God wanted to impress Abraham’s heirs with the solemnity of His vow.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11).

When God spoke to Abraham, there was no written record of His previous work that Abraham could refer to. Abraham could only take God at His word and God vowed that what He said was true. That is a pattern for you and I to follow. While we now have God’s written word, God personally backs up His word. My faith isn’t in what God said, but it is in the God who said it. He will do what He said He will do.

v. 18 – The two things here are His promise and His oath. If God had sworn by the heavens and earth, someone could say that the heavens and earth will pass away. Instead he swore by Himself and He lives forever, able to oversee His promises without any hindrance. We can put our trust in Him because He is able to do what He said He will do.

Even though we must wait to see the promises of God, we can be greatly encouraged. If something isn’t happening according to our timetable, it isn’t because God can’t perform it; it is because God chooses not to at this time. That is why we are urged to trust Him.

v. 19 – The hymn “On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand” has the great line from this verse: “In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.” The veil is a reference to the natural veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the tabernacle and temple. There was a veil between heaven and earth, but Jesus removed that veil, symbolized by the veil of the Temple ripping apart when Jesus died (see Matthew 27:51).

Then after the way to heaven was opened, Jesus took His place behind that former veil at the right hand of the Father to watch over the work He had done. No one can ever re-hang that curtain. It is torn down forever and we have access to God. Thank you, Jesus.

v. 20 – As the high priest went behind the veil once a year to offer the blood of forgiveness, Jesus now “lives” behind that veil. He is doing the work that the earthly high priest did imperfectly and irregularly. Jesus is the great High Priest, always making intercession on behalf of those who are His “behind the veil.” My anchor does indeed hold behind the veil, not because of what I have done, but because of the blood of Jesus.

### **Day Five**

7:1 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!

v. 1 – Here we see the name Melchizedek mentioned once again. Melchizedek made a very quick appearance in the early chapters of Genesis, and it is surprising that he should receive so much attention in this letter:

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything (Genesis 14:18-20).

But this is a classic case of Scripture interpreting Scripture, which is always the most reliable way to understand what the Spirit intended when He inspired the writers. Many believe that Salem was the region or city of Jerusalem. Melchizedek was a priest; how he became a priest and who appointed him is unclear. He just appeared on the scene and blessed God’s man Abraham.

v. 2 – Abraham tithed off his spoils to Melchizedek. I have heard some say that tithing is Old Testament and part of the Law. But Abraham predated the Law and he tithed. And the writer of Hebrews did not comment that the tithe no longer applies to God’s people. If it predated the Law, then there is a good chance that it should continue after the Law as well.

Melchizedek had multiple titles, just like Jesus did. When I tithe, I tithe to Jesus, not to my church. I am giving to honor Him for who He is, not to get some heavenly goodies.

And I am certainly not giving to avoid God's wrath. At times, the tithe sounds like protection money paid to some spiritual mafia, who say, "Pay us or God will break your leg." I tithe because God is glorious and I *want* to do it, not because I *have* to do it.

v. 3 – Melchizedek was similar in his priesthood as compared to Jesus in His. He had no beginning and no end. He appeared on the scene "suddenly" and then he was gone. That makes him a "type" or "shadow" of Jesus in the Old Testament. A type is something that represents some aspect of the ultimate reality, as a shadow represents the general content of the object that is creating it. Melchizedek was a type of Jesus' High Priestly ministry.

v. 4 – Abraham recognized Melchizedek and honored him with a tithe. I tithe not because of my faith in tithing, but my recognition of my High Priest, Jesus. I give because of who He is, not what He can do for me.

### **Day Six**

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.

vs. 5-10 – Remember that the writer was addressing a Jewish audience. The writer made a case that Jesus was a High Priest like Melchizedek. Since Abraham responded to Melchizedek with a tithe, then Abraham the lesser was responding to someone greater. In a way, Abraham was recognizing the superiority of Jesus' High Priesthood over against the priesthood of Levi, Abraham's great grandson.

The message was clear: for a believing Jew to return to Judaism once having been a Christian was a step backward, not forward. It would be a return to an inferior system with an inferior priesthood. Abraham, representing the whole world of Old Testament worship, showed his reverence for the new system to come when he honored Melchizedek with a tithe.

Jesus reigns supreme. There is no one like Him. The writer was confronting any romantic ideas of how the predictable Old Testament system of worship and sacrifice could be superior to anything in the New Testament. That wasn't possible and he reaches back prior to the Law to give an example of how the Law was only a tutor that was to lead us, Jews and Gentiles, to Jesus.

It's all about Jesus, isn't it? We have made it so complicated at times, but it's all about exalting and serving Him. No system, denomination, doctrine or movement can supersede His majesty. There is no alternative to worshipping Him with a whole heart.

I have been guilty of teaching on many things other than Jesus. I have exalted myself, other men and the seeming wisdom of my "insights" over and above Jesus. I preached whole sermons where I didn't even mention His name. But these studies have helped me see the reality of the New Testament and that reality is Jesus, pure and simple. He is the reality of the Old Testament as well. I want to exalt Jesus, talk about Jesus, teach people to trust in Jesus, and direct people to Him for their every need. There were also times when I tried to take the place of Jesus, trying to be for someone else what only He can be. Lord, forgive me for my weakness and failure. Help me to exalt you in work, speech and lifestyle. Amen.

### **Day Seven**

11 If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?

12 For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.

13 He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar.

14 For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

vs. 11-14 – Whoever wrote this letter—and it is my belief that Paul at least collaborated with someone to produce this masterpiece—was thoroughly familiar with Judaism. This was a believing Jew writing to wavering Jews who also believed. Only a Jew could have understood this change of priesthood, but they could have only seen this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This insight is “divine” material indeed.

Peter wrote:

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man,

but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:16-21).

Peter was saying that they actually heard God's voice from heaven when they were with Jesus (see Matthew 17:5-6). But the word of God is more sure than the voice that they heard; that is how powerful the word of God is. When men around heard the voice of God that Peter is referring to, some thought it was thunder and others thought it was an angel (see John 12:28). A voice from heaven can be misinterpreted; that is why the word of God is so important in the life of every believer. It is a solid rock upon which you can trust. We can easily mis-hear a voice from heaven, but the written word, if we submit to its authority, can lead and guide us with certainty.

The writer explained why Jesus needed to be from the non-priestly tribe of Judah. God was doing a new thing and this new thing required a new priesthood. Jesus could not follow the lineage of Aaron for His priesthood, because His priesthood ushered in a new era in God's relationship with mankind.

So what does this have to do with you and me? First of all, we rejoice that our High Priest is Jesus. That means that we are free from the Law and under grace. Second, we are free from the futility of a system that required endless sacrifices and empty ritual. Finally, our High Priest is alive, well and living at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. This was a difficult adjustment for first-century Jews, but their ambivalence is our certainty. Jesus is my High Priest and He is yours, too. Don't settle for anything or anyone of lesser importance. Let Him represent you on high where the Father lives and take full advantage of His heavenly "connections."