



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 6:13–20

“One Immutable God and Two Immutable Things”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, again, we want to express to Thee our thanksgiving for the word of God which Thou hast in marvelous grace given to us in order to give light for our feet as we seek to travel through this life that Thou hast given us to live. We thank Thee for the truth that it contains and, especially, as it points in all of its chapters to him, whom to know is life eternal, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the clarity of the word of God, we thank Thee for the Holy Spirit who helps us to understand the difficult places, and we ask, Lord, that Thou wilt enable us to be submissive to his teaching that we may continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of him. We know, Lord, clearly from the word of God that the happiness and the joy and the satisfaction that comes from human life is, ultimately, bound up with the ministry of the Lord Jesus to us.

We thank Thee for this great epistle that we are studying, we constantly marvel at the profundity of it and, also, with the appropriateness of it for us in our walk. We thank Thee for a Savior who not only has accomplished the atoning work, but now sits at Thy right hand in order to secure for us all of the blessings that have been won by the blood that was shed when he died on Calvary's Cross. We pray, Lord, that the ministry of the High Priesthood may, particularly, impress us as we continue our study of the epistle. And, particularly, as we look forward to the next chapters, give us, Lord, a special understanding, an accurate understanding, a special understanding that will be

of great significance for us in our Christian life, for each one of us, we pray. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon our time together. Be with us, each of us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] We’re turning to Hebrews chapter 6 in verse 13 through verse 20, and our subject this evening is “One Immutable God and Two Immutable Things.” And will you listen now as I read these verses? And, again, I’m reading from the New King James Version, there may be a few differences that you may discover as we go through but essentially, what I’m reading is true to the original text that the author wrote.

“For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’”

And, incidentally, if you make a habit of looking at the margin when you come to a text, that is, a citation from the Old Testament, it will help you and in this case it particularly helps us because these are words that were spoken to Abraham as he was offering up Isaac. And so the promise that he’s referring to is this promise and, ultimately, to the Abrahamic promises confirmed at that particular time. Genesis chapter 22, and about verse 15 or 16, as I remember

“And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God.”

Now, incidentally, this expression “thus” is a rather loose rendering of the original prepositional phrase. It can mean simply, “In which” or “wherein” it may even be translated, as it is by some, “such being the case.” So we could render it being that way.

“And such being the case, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promises. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Now, you may remember that when we began the section of the warning in chapter 5 in verse 11, in the immediately preceding verse the author had written, “Called by God an High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.” And then he launched into the warning admonition and the admonition began at chapter 5, verse 11, and went all the way through chapter 6, and it reaches its climax and conclusion in verse 20, where he returns, again, to the idea of our Lord as a priest forever “according to the order of Melchizedek;” And that, of course, he will develop in great detail over the next chapters. But you can see that we have had something of an interruption. And the interruption has been filled by the admonition and warning, that great warning, particularly, of chapter 6 in which so much discussion has taken place.

So now, we come to one immutable God and two immutable things. The bonds of the old life are difficult for new Christians to break; difficult for mature Christians to break. Few believers have not struggled with them; the Hebrews also struggled with the desire to turn back. Many of us have known professing Christians, individuals who have seemed to have a genuine conversion, but who over a period of time have gradually drifted back into the same kind of life that they were leading before they made profession of faith in Christ. And, probably, you’ve had some experience with some individual who will even acknowledge that there was a time when he was interested in spiritual things, but that was a long time ago and the profession that was made is no longer a

profession, it's an admitted rejection of our Lord Jesus Christ. So it's not surprising then to read that the Hebrew professing believers are struggling with the desire to turn back. And the author is very much concerned about it. And one might ask the question, what is the dilemma? Well, the pinch or the dilemma is twofold. No doubt what is primarily involved in it is the offense of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and, perhaps, as one commentator put it, some time ago, “The dazzling seductiveness of outward shows of Jewish worship.”

Now, it wouldn't be surprising to us at all that a person converted in the days of the apostles, out of Judaism, would have a great deal of difficulty with the kind of life that the Christians were forced to live. The first place, the offense of the cross was a true offense. The Apostle Paul talks about it in his preaching, talks about the fact that he's still experiencing the offense of the Cross. That offense is bound up in the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, and anyone crucified by the Romans was crucified as a lawbreaker; in fact, the worst kind of lawbreaker. And so the idea of Christians worshiping someone who had been put to death as a lawbreaker would surely have been cause for stumbling on the part of many. Not only that, Judaism was a very significant kind of religion because it had divine approval for its ceremonies. They are found in the Old Testament, the Law and I'm speaking of the ceremonial law; that is all set forth in the Old Testament. The liturgies that were used by the priests were largely found in the Old Testament. The vestments that they wore are set forth in the Old Testament. There was the great temple, one of the beautiful buildings of its day, the altars, the priests, and all of the things that go to make up the outward show of religion.

Now, the Christians on the other hand, what did they have? They didn't have a temple. They didn't have any altars. As a matter of fact, he'll make reference to that near the end of this epistle in the last chapter. They had no temple, they had no altars, they did not have any vestments, in spite of the fact that many professing Christian ministers today wear garments that suggest that. And so they have special garments derived from the Old Testament, but the Christians had none of that. They met in homes and they carried out a very simple service. It was not an impressive ritual, as the great Day of Atonement or even of the offerings that were prescribed according to Mosaic

Law. All they did was gather and, in the beginning, primarily in peoples' homes, no doubt. But they gathered in peoples' homes and all they did was to read what they knew of the word of God, expound the word of God, as the gifted men who were part of the local assembly. Their worship led up to the observance of the Lord's Table, so that they had prayer, worship, ministry. They sang hymns. In fact, occasionally, in the literature that was non-Christian; reference is made to the kinds of hymns that they sung, that they sang. I believe it was Pliny, who made reference to the fact that they sang a hymn, as if to the Lord God. So you could see that someone who came out of Judaism, with all of the beauty and majesty of that service, and also the history of Judaism, and left Judaism to gather with a largely a poor class of people, who met in homes and observed simply the Lord's Supper, after having been baptized in water, I think, you can see that this would have been a trial for those who were not truly converted.

If you have any question about it, just think for a moment about the fact that if your Protestant church or if your present-day church is a church that meets very simply, that simply preaches the word of God without fanfare, gathers once a week to observe the Lord's Supper, and calls that church or calls that the meeting of the church or calls it the assembly, and makes the claim that the New Testament sets that forth, as the way in which Christians should meet, I'm sure you can sense something of the offense of the Christianity that is found in the New Testament; the Christianity that is governed by the principles that are found in the New Testament because there may not be any buildings. There are no robes. There is no liturgy. There is no special kind of outstanding entertaining music, but simply, the word of God proclaimed. So I can imagine, immediately, that that would have posed a problem for any who had not been truly converted. And, as the days went by, the pressure of the offense of the cross and the kind of meetings that the church did carry out would have caused a problem to them.

I have, in my notes a reference to a comment of a Mohammedan guide, who was guiding a group of professing Christians around one of the buildings that was important in the early church, in the East. And he was commenting upon the fact that this was the reputed place of our Lord's burial,

I believe. And then, in the course of his description of it, he said, “Of course, we, we Mohammedans, have temples, we have majestic temples. But the Christians, you Christians, you have nothing but an empty tomb.” What a comment! Nothing but an empty tomb! Well, that’s the whole point! We do have an empty tomb in the true, true Christian faith. Our Savior has been resurrected. All of those that were buried in their tombs are still in their tombs. Their bones are still there. But you cannot find the bones of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He’s at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

Now, there was another reason for offense or difficulty, and that would be the disparity between the poor visible presence of the early Christians, who were not very impressive people and the glorious invisible future that they proclaimed in their teaching. Now, we have some of that today. We look out on a congregation like you, I don’t mean any personal offense to say, but you’re not a great congregation. In fact, to tell you the truth, Rush Limbaugh’s audience is more impressive looking than you are today. Look at them! Nice, fine young people, dressed well, and all the time he’s up there, [papers rustle] the audience goes out, a magnificent looking congregation. You’re not that much of a congregation. I hope you won’t feel offended! I’m not out there. It would be worse if I were out there. But anyway, you’re not much. And, at the same time, we who are not much according to the standards of the world, we are the ones who proclaim this glorious future, with all of these great blessings as belonging to us and as not belonging to them. So you can see, if there has not been a genuine new birth, a genuine change of heart, it would be difficult for a person to withstand the kinds of trials that he would have in the midst of the worldlings among whom we live. So those two things, I think, are the problem; the offense of the Cross, the great seductiveness of the outward show of Jewish worship and the disparity between the poor visible present, in which they lived and the great future which they were proclaiming.

How would you meet these needs? How would you meet these difficulties? What do you do with reference to them? Well, of course, there are ways in which we can meet them. I think a person who reads regularly the word of God and is stirred by the Holy Spirit to the realization that

this book is an inspired book and not written by men, and on the authority of the prophets and the apostles and above all our Lord, is the truth! That, of course, is the great support that we have.

“Thy word is truth!” And, having been brought to the knowledge of that by the Holy Spirit, we can stand the things that are offenses to the world and are difficulties for us. At any rate, the author, however, meets it specifically in two ways. For one, he addresses the once for all sacrifice, as it fulfills the types of the Old Testament, removing sin forever, in the Melchizedekian priesthood. So he points to our Lord as the Melchizedekian priesthood, who has finished the atoning work, and now lives at the right hand of the throne of God, a priest after the order of Melchizedek, forever an eternal priest.

And then he offers strong consolation of the certainty of the promises because they are grounded in the twofold unimpeachable assurance of the divine word and the divine oath. In other words, there is the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the ministry of the Lord Jesus, and there is the word of God given to Abram and setting forth the fact that Abram and his seed would be the means by which the world would find its blessing, the world of believers, of course, and then that great word spoken by the Lord God and the promises made to Abraham was further supported and guaranteed by an oath, by swearing, on the part of God. The certainty then of those promises being, those being, the possession of those who were Abraham’s seed; that’s the other means by which he meets these needs of the Christians, and he’s going to do it in a marvelous way.

He does this, now, by following the solemn admonition of the danger of individual apostasy that we’ve been talking about for three weeks and the brief encouragement of, “we are persuaded better things concerning you, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner,” chapter 6 in verse 9. The promises are certain, but as in Abrams case, endurance was necessary before the fulfillment is reached. That’s very important for us to realize. These promises are ours, and they are sure to be ours, but we are warned ahead of time, that we are not going to get them immediately. That is, we must patiently wait. And that’s what Abram did, too. He had to patiently wait. And he will go on to talk about that.

Now, there are three grounds of certainty that are suggested in this passage, it seems to me, and the first of these grounds of certainty is the example of Abraham, himself, in verse 13 through verse 15. Let me read it again in order to make it more definitely upon our minds.

“For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’ And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”

Now, where he cited this was in the Genesis chapter 22, when Abraham was offering up Isaac. Now, of course, he’s not giving a new promise, but he’s citing again the fundamental promise given to Abraham so many years before. What shall we say, about twenty years before or so? In fact, more than that, twenty-five years before, and so here again, he confirms the promise again, when Isaac is offered up and God confirms again the Abrahamic promise to Abraham, by saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” And the author calls that a swearing “by Himself.”

Now, think of the life of Abraham for just a moment. The greatest character in the Old Testament is not Moses. The greatest character in the Old Testament is Abraham. And that’s one of the reasons Israel has missed the boat because Israel thinks of Moses as the great character of the Old Testament. Abraham is the great character of the Old Testament. In fact, what our author does here, when he says that Abraham is the greatest character, mentioning him, he takes us back beyond the Law of Moses, and we know that that’s true.

What men’s names are mentioned most in the New Testament? Well, of course, our Lord’s name would be mentioned more than anybody else’s wouldn’t it? Outside of our Lord and references to the phrase, “Moses said,” or “Moses wrote” which simply means “it’s in the Bible,” the greatest mention is made of first, after our Lord, Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, and fourth, Abraham. Abraham’s name occurs more frequently than John, James, Mary and others. So you can even tell



from the New Testament how important Abraham is. The promises were given to the forefather Abraham.

Now, let's just, for a moment, imagine Abraham receiving the promises. Suppose Abraham had said something like this to God. “Suppose I get out of Thy will? What then?” Well, God would answer, as he answers, “I will bless thee.” Abraham, “Suppose my posterity becomes idolaters?” God says, “I will bless thee.” His unconditional promises, remember. Suppose we say, suppose Abraham became a liar? He urges Sarah to lie, breaks his side of the covenant? God, “I will bless him.” It's an unconditional covenant. Suppose his grandson Jacob becomes a crook? God, “I will bless him.” Suppose his greatest son, David, becomes an adulterer and a murderer? God, “I will bless him.” Suppose we were to say, why Lord? God would say, “Because I am God and not man, and, furthermore, though you believe not, I remain faithful.” “But Lord, this is grace without merit?” Well, of course, that's precisely what the whole thing is about. This is unmerited grace. Remember, when God first appeared to Abraham, he was seventy years of age. That's old. Abrams name was “exalted father.” *Ab* is the Hebrew word for father. *ram*, is a verb that means “to be exalted.” Exalted father. He's exalted father, but he doesn't have any children. He's barren; a constant embarrassment, because of the incongruity of the fact that he was named “Exalted father,” and had no children because in that society that was extremely important; both for the woman and for the man.

Now, Abram became very wealthy, and the Orientals are very inquisitive. They often stop with Abraham. You can tell that from Genesis chapter 13, and other places, as they went along the trails, they stopped where they could find a place to stay and have food, and they felt it necessary to entertain strangers. And you can imagine them gathering in Abraham's quarters, and asking him questions, like, since they're inquisitive: “How old are you?” Well, I'm seventy, or whatever it is. “Married?” Oh, yes, I'm married. “How many wives do you have?” Because, in those day there was more than one pleasure for a man, have many wives. “And what's your name?” My name is Abram,

exalted father. Oh! Father of many, no doubt. Congratulations. How many children do you have?  
None. Exalted father.

Dr. Barnhouse has a beautiful little story of this. I'm repeating a lot of what he said. And he said he had a couple of friends in his past or, at least, he heard about these individuals. One of them was named Wrench. And he said, he got awfully tired of people asking, is your first name Monkey? And then he knew a man named Meek. And there are some Meek's around. Used to be one that coached the SMU football team. Meek. And so he got awfully tired of people saying, are you going to inherit the earth?

Now, if you remember, finally, it got to be such a burden that Sarah decided that Abram should have children, so she gave Hagar to him, and Ishmael was born. He was eighty-six years of age at the time. And then thirteen more years, ninety-nine years of age, the Lord God appeared to Abram. It's all in Genesis chapter 17, renewed the covenant with him, and told him he was going to have a son and an heir; and it wasn't going to be by a handmaiden. It was going to be from Sarah. And they giggled over that. Just imagine that? And the covenant was renewed. And, not only did God say that but he said, by the way, you have a new name. It's not going to be Abram. It's going to be Abraham. Now, that means father of a multitude.

Now, here's a man who has been laboring under exalted father, all of this time, and now he's told by God, his name is father of a multitude. So Dr. Barnhouse imagines Abraham coming down, shortly after to breakfast in the morning, and saying, “Folks, I'm going to change my name,” after they've called him Abram. And he said, “I'm no longer to be called Abram.” And since he was the boss, they had to do it. “I'm going to be called, father, not exalted father, but father of a multitude.” And when it was over and the shock was over and they got back behind the tent, they said, “The old man couldn't take it. Imagine it. Ninety-nine years of age and beginning to get ideas.” You can just see, this story is so funny, really, when you think about it.

But the time comes and God performs his promise and the child is named Isaac! Laughter! And they had a laugh over it for the rest of their lives, no doubt, when they thought about it. What marvelous ways the Lord God engages in, in his dealings with us.

Well, all of that, I think, lies behind this, because here, we have the statement in verse 13, “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no other, he swore by himself.” The promise supported by the oath, now, this is the first oath in the Bible; not the last but the first. And the very fact that God swore, now, in an oath, which was a picking up of the old promise made back in Genesis 12, verse 1 through verse 3, implies a delay. After all of this time now, an oath, it’s going to come to pass. God swears that it will. That implies a delay. He doesn’t say, “Now or next week. He simply says it’s going to come to pass. This is fitted to encourage Abram. It’s fitted to encourage the Hebrews because our author cites it with reference to their situation. And it’s fitted, my Christian friend, my brother, my sister, in Christ, it’s fitted to encourage us. Sure, we don’t have what the promises of the word of God set forth as being ours yet, but we’re going to have them. That’s the whole point. And so, of course, we expect that there is a period of time of patience and long-suffering on our part with reference to the promises of God.

The Hebrews have a comment about that swearing that God swore by himself. I mean the Rabbis and others who debated this in rabbinic work, *shemoth*. One of the Jewish people made the comment that if he had sworn by the heavens or the earth, since the heavens and the earth are one day going to be swept away, as the ones we know are going to be swept away, then we would not have the kind of confidence that we would have when he swears by himself. For when he swears by himself, the “I AM,” he always exists and, consequently, the promises will always be ours, always, never-ending, eternal promises when God swears by his eternal being. There are some things that the Rabbis said that were very good, and that’s one of them.

Now, he says he obtained the promise in verse 15, “And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.” When was the promise obtained? In the restoration of Isaac, when he was offered up on Mount Moriah? No. It may surprise you, but no, because as a matter of fact,

Isaac had already been raised when this promise was made. So no, this is not the time at which he obtained the promise. Was it at the birth of Jacob? When Jacob was born and that was, you know, sixty years later, something like that. Abraham lived to be one hundred and seventy-five years old and Jacob was born, I've forgotten exactly how many years after that. Was it at the birth of Christ? Or was it at the grafting in of the Gentiles? At which Abram became the heir of the world because those promises embrace not only Israel, the ethnic seed, but embrace also the Gentiles' seed as well?

Perhaps, the reference is to the fact that when Abram got to heaven that then and throughout the period of time intervening, he has come to understand even more significantly the promise that was given to him. We do read, in the New Testament, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day. And he saw it and was glad.” Precisely when that occurred it's difficult to imagine. But at any rate, he obtained the promise, and it's his. But he obtained it after patient waiting.

Now, the second encouragement or the second ground of certainty with reference to the promises is the encouragement of the promise and the oath. The human oath illustration shows that we also have motivation to persevere. We have a promise confirmed by an oath. Now, in verse 16, he says, “For indeed men swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.” The human oath supports the promise by appeal to a higher authority. Now, we engage in oath taking when we sit down in a court room, and your cause, you're asked to swear on the Bible or swear by an oath to the Lord God. And so what you are doing is you are appealing to a higher authority. And, at the same time, you are silencing contradictions so that now, the truth is the important thing. Phillips, I think, renders this something like, “The oath is an end to all quibbling,” because that means we are dealing now with truth. It would be nice if we could put all politicians on the stand. And what we would no longer hear would be quibbling and saying things that are not meant. Saying things that were at the moment are helpful to them but are not helpful to others causing us to lose confidence in the men who have authority over us in this government of which we are a part.

But the oath is the appeal to a higher authority; something more serious, like two little kids who are arguing. Imagine one of them arguing something like this. Which one is the fastest? Well, I ran a hundred yards in twelve seconds. The other fellow says, I ran a hundred yards in eleven and a half seconds. No, you didn't! Yes, I did. No, you didn't. Yes, I did. No, you didn't. Yes, I did. I swear I did! Well, usually, that pretty well stops most arguing. The idea of the swearing, of course, is to stop that argument.

Now, think of this. God swears that he will fulfill the Abrahamic promises. That's amazing! These promises given to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, confirmed in Genesis chapter 17, actually mentioned in 13, 15, 17 and now, God says, “I swear!”

Now, do you mean to tell me that it is possible for you or me to say he will not fulfill these promises to Abraham? He will fulfill those promises! It's important for us to learn them, study them, find out precisely what they are, but he will fulfill them. Verses 17 and 18, “Thus God.” I made reference to reading the Scripture to something that really belongs with this “Thus” of verse 17, rather than the, “And so” of verse 15. Thus, or “such being the case,” belongs here. “Such being the case, God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability,” the unchangeability, “of his counsel,” his will, “confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things,” that is, the promise and the oath, “two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie.” Do we have to say that? Don't even have to say that but, of course, it's obvious in the fact that he's God, he doesn't lie. “We might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.” Such being the case, what's the content of this oath? It's a promise. He calls it a counsel. God determining, “more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel.” It's a promise, it's a counsel, that is, it's his will, and, also he refers to it as a hope. So what he swears is; he swears that his counsel, his hope, the promise, are going to come to reality. The purpose is expressed in verse 17. “Thus God determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel confirmed it with an oath.” Immutable promises which lead to strong consolation, and the recipients are called heirs. Notice, verse 17, “Thus God, determining

to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel;” so he gives us his promise, he calls it something he’s determined to bring to pass, and he also calls it, a hope.

There’s a marvelous little story that I have in my notes at this point about a Scottish woman who was listening to a man explain the Gospel. And she listened to the man explain the Gospel, and she felt that she had really come to the knowledge of the Lord. And so she went home with her, to her home, with a lot of joy in her heart and she told her son about the fact that the evangelist that she had come in contact with had preached to her the truth of John chapter 5 in verse 24, “Most assuredly I say unto you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent me, has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death into life.”

And after she had talked to the evangelist, he gave her a piece of paper in which he wrote out that verse for her. And she put it in her belongings and she went home. And when she got home, she told her little son about what had happened to her, and how she had been converted, and how he had given her the text, that she apparently didn’t know.

The next morning, according to the story, she woke up and all of the joy that she had before was gone. She was very discouraged, she had lost the joy for salvation. And her son asked what was the matter. And she explained to him. And so he rushed to the Bible and he opened up the Bible to where she had put the verse and he pulled it out and he said, “Metha, it’s here!” And then he got the Bible itself and turned to John 5:24 and found the verse. And he said, “It’s a here, Metha! It’s a here, Metha! It’s still here. The verse!” Well, that is really what we have, isn’t it? Simply put. The truths of the word of God, the great promises found in the word of God, and they are still there. And because they are still there we have the hope that we have.

Now, there’s a third reason for certainty and this is an introduction to what the author’s going to labor in the next few chapters. It’s the exaltation of the great High Priest, Jesus Christ. The entrance that he obtained into heaven, guarantees for those whom he represents their entrance into heaven, one of these days. Listen to what he says in verse 19 and 20, “This hope,” that is, this counsel, this promise.

“We have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

“Which hope we have as an anchor,” and, notice that it says that this hope that we have “enters,” notice the present tense “enters,” “enters the presence behind the veil.” It’s constantly going on and it’s created by the promises and guaranteed by the authority of the word of God. It’s as an anchor. Our hope is fixed like an anchor in the unseen world.

There have been a number of illustrations to try to figure out exactly what this is because when you think about an anchor, a big heavy piece of metal like an anchor, you don’t think of an anchor being thrown up into the heaven. You think of an anchor thrown down into the sea. But the author is, obviously, used this because those people understood anchors and knew when the anchor was holding, they were safe in the midst of the storms. And so this kind of anchor is one thrown into heaven. And that hope, “we have as an anchor the soul, both sure and steadfast, which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Some have illustrated it by the case of a ship that is outside but a small boat has taken the anchor inside into the harbor because the storm is too great for the larger boat to make it through the narrow opening into the harbor. And so the anchor holds within the harbor, although the boat is still outside. Well, perhaps that’s true. We could think of the person who brought it in on the little boat as the captain, and we would have a figure of what our author is talking about. That may be the case. On the other hand, it may be something else. At any rate, the important word here is “Jesus.”

He says, “Where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus.” This is in the original text, this is in the emphatic position, and so, consequently, a great deal of stress is laid upon it. “Even Jesus,” and he has entered as the forerunner. This, of course, is designed to show that the atonement has been concluded and he has begun his session at the right hand of the throne of God, preparing for our coming.

The forerunner? That’s an interesting word. This word, *prodromos*, that is the Greek word that is used there, is a word that was used of light ships. Light ships, in fact, Liddell and Scott, one of the most, one of the best-known of the Greek lexicons, refers to the word as reference to light ships. “The great ship is without the harbor, buffeted by the stormy sea. The smaller boat is sent through the breakwater, as it were, bearing the anchor, which is then cast into the waters of the harbor, securing the ship until it’s time for the entry, also.”

We were talking about that just a moment ago. But that forerunner is a term that was used for the ship, itself. And so the Lord Jesus is referred to here as the forerunner. What is significant about it is that this is not of the tribe of Aaron; because he goes on to say, “The forerunner, even Jesus, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Not of Aaron! That, of course, would signify that the Aaronic priesthood is no longer their priesthood.

The Aaronic priesthood has been done away with! The Aaronic priesthood has no more validity. The priesthood that is valid now, for the saints of God, is not the Aaronic priesthood; that had a temporal existence. It began with the giving of the Law, and it concluded with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and that’s, you’ll remember, when the Cross took place, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, from top to bottom, as if God is doing away with the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law, that is, the moral law, the civil law, the ceremonial law, all done away with. Now, we have a different priesthood. Our priesthood is an eternal priest, and he has entered the Presence of the Lord God. And there, he is an eternal priest. Not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek.

What a great source of encouragement that would be! For people who are having difficulty with the reigning religion of the land of Palestine, Judaism, to realize that the truth of the New Testament is that Judaism has been swept away in its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Aaronic priests were priests who could never measure up to the perfect eternal priest. We know that from the history of the Old Testament. Many of them were wicked men. But now, here is a priest who cannot be succeeded by someone who is wicked, but who is at the right hand of the



throne of God. There are some marvelous figures, of course, in the Aaronic priesthood. When Aaron carried out his ministry, once a year, he went in with the names of the children of Israel, the Tribes, on his chest and on his shoulders; the place of affection, the place of strength. And our great High Priest has entered heaven as our representative and he is there; and because he's there, the rest of those who belong to Him, those whom He represented are going to be there too. So the remedy for believers, who are sinking in the swamp of apathy, and have the urge to go back, is the strong consolation of hope in the unseen, grounded in the promise and in the oath.

And for professors, he has a lot to say about professors, doesn't he? For professors tottering on the brink of irremediable apostasy, the action that they should be sure that they've made is to do what he says here, when he says, “have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.” Verse 18. “We might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.” The remedy for those who are having difficulty is to flee for refuge in the hope that belongs to us by the promises of God.

That statement, incidentally, “to flee for refuge?” The word for flee is the word that is used in the Old Testament in the description of the cities of refuge. Do you remember the cities of refuge? You remember, there were six cities of refuge. Only six! Six cities of refuge. And if a person committed a crime, such as murdering someone without intent, then he was given the opportunity to flee immediately to the city of refuge. And if he entered the city of refuge, without the redeemer, the redeemer of the one who had been slain catching him that man, of course, had the right to kill him if he caught him, but if he got in, he could stay in the city of refuge. He was safe, until the high priest died. Isn't that interesting? Until the high priest died. When there was a change of the priesthood, he could go back and live his normal life.

Now, that word, “flee for refuge,” is precisely what you and I must do, because you and I are guilty of manslaughter. We are guilty, because we, by the very fact that we have fought against the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, have participated in that which the Gentiles and the Jews did, when our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. And so the responsibility of the person today is to flee for

refuge to that city of refuge, which, of course, is figurative of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and so beautifully expresses what is our responsibility.

You know, there is a statement in the Old Testament, a part of a text, in 2 Samuel chapter 3, that has to do with Abner. Do you remember Abner who represented Saul? He was his general and Abner was attacked by Asahel, and it was forced to kill Asahel, Joab's brother. Do you remember that? They finally caught up with him and he had to stop and he plunged his spear into him and killed him. From then on, of course, Joab was the redeemer and Abner was his prey. And you'll remember that Joab killed Abner, and the text that is used at that particular place in connection with it. I think it's in David, I didn't look this up but, I believe, it's in David's mourning over Abner. "Died Abner as a fool dieth?" And, you know, that's precisely what he did. In the first place, he was guilty of manslaughter, and he didn't go to the city of refuge. Furthermore, when Joab killed him, they were right by Hebron. Hebron! That was a city of refuge. It was right at hand. He knew that Joab had the right to slay him. He carried on a conversation with him. And when, of course, Joab slew him, the text says David mourns over him and says, "Died Abner as a fool dieth?"

There are some of you, maybe, in this auditorium who are in the process of dying like Abner died. Dying as a fool because the city of refuge, the Lord Jesus Christ, is open. You may flee for refuge to him, and receive forgiveness of sins. If you don't do it, you will die like Abner died. As a fool. May God deliver us from that!

Let me say one other thing, this is about the lesson next time. We're going to start a rather serious study of the High Priesthood of Christ. I want to ask you a question. Since Christ died for all of our sins; past, present and future. Do we believe that? [Mumbles.] Look at you! All of you do! Maybe a few of you may not. Maybe you're puzzled over it. But anyway, it's true. Christ died for all of our sins, past, present, and future. Why do we need a High Priest? Why do we need a High Priest? We'll try to answer that question as we study the High Priesthood of Christ.

Let's bow together in prayer.

“One Immutable God and Two Immutable Things” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the word of God, as we reflect upon our study of it and how much it has come to mean to us. And every time we turn to it, we find things that we had missed, confirming us in the fact that Thy word is eternal. Rich in grace, rich in its preaching of the remedy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. O God, may there be no one in this auditorium who dies as Abner, as a fool dies, without the possession of eternal life.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.