

Message Eleven: Our Hope and Abraham's Promises

Hebrews 6:11-20 — Understanding Hebrews Series, Part 11

By Escape the Mustard Tree

Introduction

One word keeps surfacing throughout this letter, and we have mostly let it pass without stopping to define it: hope. "Hold fast our confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end" (Hebrews 3:6). "The full assurance of hope until the end" (6:11). "The hope set before us... an anchor of the soul" (6:18-19). "A better hope, through which we draw near to God" (7:19). "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" (10:23). The word is everywhere in this letter, and yet if you stopped most readers and asked them to define it precisely, they would struggle.

Before we can step into Hebrews chapter seven and finally hear everything the author wants to tell us about Melchizedek, we need to nail this word down. And the only way to do that properly is to trace it through the rest of the New Testament and then walk all the way back to the promises God made to a man named Abraham — promises that, it turns out, are the very foundation this hope stands on.

I. What Exactly Is "Our Hope"?

Scripture never treats hope as a vague, sentimental wish. Peter calls it "a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" and tells believers to "rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:3, 13) — hope fixed on a specific future event, Christ's return. He tells believers to always be ready to give an answer "for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15), as though it were something concrete enough to explain. John says "everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3) — hope with the power to shape present behavior. Paul writes that "we were saved in this hope" and describes it as something not yet seen, "eagerly waited for... with perseverance" (Romans 8:24-25), and prays that believers would know "the hope of His calling" and "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18) — hope tied directly to an inheritance. Paul calls it "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven" (Colossians 1:5), a helmet to be worn in spiritual battle (1 Thessalonians 5:8), and "the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Every one of these descriptions points the same direction: this hope is not wishful thinking about eternity in general. It is a specific, well-defined expectation — Christ's return, an inheritance, a reward — held out to believers who are diligently pursuing it.

II. Diligence and Hope

That specificity is exactly why the letter can tell us to be diligent about it. "We desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end... imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:11-12). If hope were vague, urging diligence toward it would make no sense — you cannot work diligently toward something you can't define.

Peter makes the exact same connection using the exact same Greek word for diligence: "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love... be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-11). Diligence connected to an abundant entrance into the coming kingdom. That is our hope, named plainly.

III. The Promises Given to Abraham

To understand where this hope comes from, we have to go back to the man these promises were first spoken to. God's promises to Abraham did not arrive all at once — they unfolded in stages, over decades, each stage adding new detail.

It began in Genesis 12, when God called Abram out of Ur: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). A land, a nation, a name, a blessing reaching to all the families of the earth.

Then, after Abram and Lot separated, God added detail: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are... for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth" (Genesis 13:14-16). Descendants pictured here as dust — an earthly, countless multitude.

Then came the meeting with Melchizedek after Abram's rescue of Lot, where the king-priest of Salem blessed him in the name of "God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:18-19) — the first hint that whatever God was going to do for Abram would reach beyond the earth into the heavens themselves.

Not long after, God took Abram outside at night: "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them... So shall your descendants be" (Genesis 15:5). Notice the shift — dust of the earth in chapter 13, now stars of heaven in chapter 15. Two separate pictures, two separate realms.

Years later, God renewed the covenant with new detail still: "you shall be a father of many nations... an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you" (Genesis 17:4-7).

IV. Two Seeds, Two Realms

Now bring these pictures together, because this is where the promise becomes strikingly specific. Abraham is promised a seed like the dust of the earth and a seed like the stars of heaven — two distinct pictures of descendants belonging to two distinct realms. His physical descendants, through Isaac and Jacob, form an earthly line. And everyone who belongs to Christ, Paul tells us, forms the other: "if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29) — a heavenly line, grafted into the same promise by faith rather than by blood.

Both lines are promised the same thing: governmental authority. When God finally swears His oath in Genesis 22, this becomes explicit: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD... blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 22:16-18). "Possessing the gate" of a city was the ancient way of describing governmental control over a territory — city gates were where legal and civic business was actually conducted. Abraham's earthly seed and heavenly seed are both promised this: rule, exercised over enemies, resulting in blessing flowing out to every nation on earth.

This is precisely the moment Hebrews 2:5 has already told us to expect — the world to come, no longer subjected to angels. Abraham's heavenly seed ruling from the New Jerusalem, His earthly seed ruling from the earthly Jerusalem, together fulfilling the promise given to one man, standing outside his tent, looking up at the stars.

V. The Oath That Cannot Be Broken

Notice how Genesis 22 opens: "By Myself I have sworn." This is precisely the moment Hebrews 6 already pointed us back to — "when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself" (Hebrews 6:13). The promise itself was one guarantee. The oath, sworn on God's own name because there was nothing greater to swear by, was a second, independent guarantee laid on top of the first. Two unchangeable things, the letter tells us, "in which it is impossible for God to lie" (6:18) — which is exactly why this hope can be called "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (6:19). It isn't anchored to your own grip strength. It's anchored to God's own unchangeable character.

VI. Applying "Our Hope and Abraham's Promises"

So when this letter tells you to be diligent about your hope, understand what's actually being asked of you. This is not vague spiritual aspiration. It is the specific, promised, oath-secured expectation of an abundant entrance into the coming kingdom — a share, alongside Abraham's whole believing family, in the rule his seed was promised beneath the stars.

And take real comfort in where the security of that hope actually rests. The anchor itself cannot fail, because it was set by an oath God cannot break. But an anchor holding firm doesn't mean a ship can't drift on its line if the crew stops tending it — which is exactly why diligence, faith, and patience are still asked of you, even while the hope itself stands utterly secure.

Looking Ahead

Next, we move into Hebrews chapter seven, where the author, having laid this whole foundation, finally tells us everything he set out to say about Melchizedek.