

# Hebrews 6:13-20

**For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.**

Focus:

1. Absolute surety of God’s promises. The Lord’s promises and character are worthy of our trust (faith).
2. Abraham is an example of someone who believed, trusted, waited patiently and obtained the promise. Abraham was not lazy, did not become slow of hearing and did not drift away. Abraham had full assurance of hope until the end.

This section which began in 5:11 when the author abandoned further using the priesthood of Melchizedek as a source of encouragement for the readers to trust the priesthood of Jesus. This illustration was abandoned because the readers had not progressed, but had regressed in their understanding of God’s revelation. The readers are rebuked beginning in 5:11 and forms of warning and encouragement continue until the end of this section with verse 6:20. Then, amazingly the author returns to the use of Melchizedek in 7:1. What was abandoned at 5:10 resumes at 7:1. In the section 5:11-6:20 the readers are rebuked, warned, encouraged and given this example of Abraham to follow.

Hebrews 6:13 – **For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,**

1. This example of Abraham proceeds the great list of example to follow in chapter 11.
2. Abraham is used as an example 10 times.
  - a. Luke uses Abraham 15 times
  - b. John uses Abraham 11 times
3. Abraham is an excellent example of someone who heard God’s promises, trusted God’s character, faced overwhelming difficulties, overcame failures, and endured to the end. He is both credited as receiving the promises (limited) and not receiving the promises (full, eternal)
  - a. Abraham died in faith having received the promise(s)
  - b. Abraham died in hope looking forward to yet receiving the promise(s)

6:14 – **saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.”**

1. Genesis 22:16-17

- a. Genesis 22:16 states that this is an oath:  
 “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,…”
- b. Genesis 22:17(17-18) states the promise:  
 “I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

**6:15 – And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.**

1. Abraham was confident. The emphasis is NOT that he “waited”, but that he “waited confidently”.
  - a. Since Abraham knew the absolute surety of the Lord’s promise Abraham had confidence.
  - b. The focus is not on Abraham’s faith, or Abraham’s patience, or Abraham’s confidence, but instead on Abraham knowing the promise, knowing the character of God and knowing that God is faithful and true.
  - c. Confidence in the promise gave Abraham confidence in life
  - d. The reason the author of Hebrews is using this example is he wants the readers to have the same confidence in the promises of Jesus. By having confidence in the words and works of Jesus the readers will also, like Abraham, have faith, patience and endurance.
2. Isaac was born 25 years after the promise: Genesis 12:4 → Genesis 21:5
3. Abraham’s grandchildren were born 60 years later in Gen. 25:26
4. The complete promise would be impossible to occur during Abraham’s lifetime, but Abraham knew and anticipated the ministry of Jesus through understanding the promises:
  - a. John 8:56-58 -  
 “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”  
 So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?”  
 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”
    - i. Abraham heard and saw the Lord in his lifetime
    - ii. But, Abraham was also looking forward to seeing the fulfillment of the seed of the woman
    - iii. Abraham was also looking forward to his people becoming a great nation
    - iv. Abraham saw these things by faith and was confident they would happen
      1. Abraham knew God’s truth and trusted it
      2. Abraham had great faith because he had a great promise.
      3. Abraham did not emotionally work himself into a state of delusion

**6:16 – For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.**

|             |          |          |          |           |           |          |          |           |
|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 444 [e]     | 1063 [e] | 2596 [e] | 3588 [e] | 3173 [e]  | 3660 [e]  | 2532 [e] | 3956 [e] | 846 [e]   |
| Anthrōpoi   | gar      | kata     | tou      | meizonos  | omnyousin | kai      | pasēs    | autois    |
| 16 Ἄνθρωποι | γὰρ      | κατὰ     | τοῦ      | μείζονος  | ὀμνύουσιν | , καὶ    | πάσης    | αὐτοῖς    |
| Men         | for      | by       | [one]    | greater   | swear     | and      | of all   | their     |
| N-NMP       | Conj     | Prep     | Art-GMS  | Adj-GMS-C | V-PIA-3P  | Conj     | Adj-GFS  | PPro-DM3P |

|            |          |            |                  |          |          |
|------------|----------|------------|------------------|----------|----------|
| 485 [e]    | 4009 [e] | 1519 [e]   | 951 [e]          | 3588 [e] | 3727 [e] |
| antilogias | peras    | <u>eis</u> | <u>bebaiōsin</u> | ho       | horkos   |
| ἀντιλογίας | πέρας    | , εἰς      | βεβαίωσιν        | , ὁ      | ὄρκος    |
| disputes   | an end   | for        | confirmation     | [is] the | oath     |
| N-GFS      | N-NNS    | Prep       | N-AFS            | Art-NMS  | N-NMS    |

1. People swear by “something greater” (ESV) or “someone greater” (NIV), “the greater” (KJ), “one greater” (NAS)... “**του μείζονος**” (Greek)
  - a. The oath is taken before someone more powerful than the person taking the oath so that there will be repercussions/punishment if the oath is broken or fails to be met.
  - b. The Greek phrase **του μείζονος** can mean “something greater”, but it is more likely it would be a greater person with the ability to oversee, judge and inflict some form of punishment to guarantee the fulfillment of the oath.
2. *Eis bebaiosin* – “**for confirmation**”, “for ratification”, “for establishment” - is an expression from Egyptian legal formula that had been in use for hundreds of years
  - a. Widely used in the papyri
  - b. A well-known expression in 63 AD
  - c. A form of this phrase is still used today
  - d. The sworn oath ends all discussion, court case, judicial matter, law suit or dispute because it is “confirmed” by the highest available authority.

6:17 – **So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath,**

|          |            |                 |             |          |          |           |          |                     |          |
|----------|------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|---------------------|----------|
| 1722 [e] | 3739 [e]   | 4053 [e]        | 1014 [e]    | 3588 [e] | 2316 [e] | 1925 [e]  | 3588 [e] | 2818 [e]            | 3588 [e] |
| en       | hō         | perissoteron    | boulomenos  | ho       | Theos    | epideixai | tois     | klēronomois         | tēs      |
| 17 ἐν    | ᾧ          | περισσότερον    | βουλόμενος  | ὁ        | Θεὸς     | ἐπιδείξει | τοῖς     | κληρονόμοις         | τῆς      |
| in       | which      | more abundantly | desiring    | -        | God      | to show   | to the   | <u>heirs</u> plural | of the   |
| Prep     | RelPro-DNS | Adj-ANS-C       | V-PPM/P-NMS | Art-NMS  | N-NMS    | V-ANA     | Art-DMP  | N-DMP               | Art-GFS  |

|            |          |                  |          |          |           |                 |            |
|------------|----------|------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------------|------------|
| 1860 [e]   | 3588 [e] | 276 [e]          | 3588 [e] | 1012 [e] | 846 [e]   | 3315 [e]        | 3727 [e]   |
| epangelias | to       | ametatheton      | tēs      | boulēs   | autou     | emesiteusen     | horkō      |
| ἐπαγγελίας | τὸ       | ἀμετάθετον       | τῆς      | βουλῆς   | αὐτοῦ     | , ἐμεσίτευσεν   | ὄρκῳ       |
| promise    | the      | unchangeableness | of the   | purpose  | of Him    | guaranteed [it] | by an oath |
| N-GFS      | Art-ANS  | Adj-ANS          | Art-GFS  | N-GFS    | PPro-GM3S | V-AIA-3S        | N-DMS      |

1. 6:16 was discussing legal oaths in a human court or temporal legal matters. But, now in 6:17 the author turns to the Lord using the same human system to communicate his intentions of never changing his mind and never failing to fulfill his promise.
2. First, God had no need to justify his character or to take an oath. God's word stands alone and causes the desired outcome:
  - a. Creation – God spoke
  - b. Judgment – God speaks
  - c. Events – God calls into existence
  - d. So, here, God promises Abraham will be part of the plan of salvation for all nations.
3. "desired" – *boulomenos* –
  - a. *Boule* means counsel and refers to a resolved plan. But, when used of the Lord's plan it is more than God's unchangeable reality that he has created, but also includes the Lord's purpose.
  - b. *Boule* is identifying God's plan and purpose which is directly connected to this oath
  - c. *Boulomenos* is a strong term identifying the predetermined intention directing the planning
  - d. It should be noted there is another Greek word *thelo* that could be used which focuses on the desire or wishfulness behind an intention or an offer. This is NOT the word *thelo* that means God's desire for having given someone an opportunity, but instead is the word *boulomenos* which identifies what God has predetermined he intends to do with this offer.
    - i. The difference could be seen in a conditional covenant (*thelo*) and an unconditional covenant (*boulomenos*)
4. "Guaranteed" – *emesiteusen* (*emesiteuo*) – commonly means "to interpose" (place between two things), "to mediate", "to stand between".
  - a. But, here *emesiteuo* does not mean to mediate between the Lord and Abraham, but to stand with the Lord as a guarantee of something that is going to happen to Abraham.
  - b. God is both:
    - i. Making the promise – *boulomenos* – revealing God's plan and purpose
    - ii. Guaranteeing the promise – *emesiteuo* – guaranteeing the plan and purpose
5. "heirs" is plural! This promise, oath and guarantee was not just made to Abraham. It was made to Isaac, Jacob, the 12 tribes, and all who are of the faith of Abraham
  - a. Galatians 3:7 –  
"Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham."
  - b. The readers of this letter would be included in those who have the same promise and guarantee that Abraham had.
  - c. Likewise, we can have the same faith, confidence, patience and endurance that Abraham had
    - i. Gen. 12:3 – "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."
    - ii. Gen. 18:18 – "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him..."
    - iii. Gen. 22:18 – "in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

6:18 – **so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.**

1. Two unchangeable things: the promise and the oath

**6:19 – We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,**

**6:20 – where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.**