

## HEBREWS CHAPTER 6

### [IV] WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY OF MAN AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF GOD (5:11 - 6:20)

#### **1. Exhortation to pursue spiritual maturity (5:11 - 6:3).**

##### b. The foundation of God's covenant.

##### **6:1-3. Therefore.**

The writer does not say with Paul, "Therefore I must continue to feed you with milk" (1 Cor 3:1-2). He does not say, "Nevertheless, let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and press forward to maturity. "He says, "*Therefore, because their particular condition of immaturity is based on ignorance of Jesus Christ and what is involved in his High Priesthood, only the truth would set them free* (cf. Jn 8:31-32). *Their minds require to be stretched from standing still at Jewish notions about the high priest to the full knowledge of Christ as the High Priest!* When the Hebrews grasp the truth of God's covenant promise and the unchanging nature of God's purpose (6:17), they will be set free to grow to maturity!

Leave (standing still at) elementary teachings. 'The rudiments' or 'the elementary doctrines' about Christ (των της αρχης του Χριστου λογων)(6:1)(objective Genitive) is exactly the same as 'the elementary truths of God's word' (τα στοιχεια της αρχης των λογων του θεου)(5:12). They are the following:

- The letters of the alphabet, the ABC, 'the beginning doctrines of the Christian faith (5:12; 6:1).
- The 'elements' which make up the material universe, which will be destroyed or renewed by fire (2 Pet 3:10,12).
- The 'elemental spirits of the world' which seek to bring people into bondage and from which the gospel delivers them. They are the religions and the gods of religions that enslaved the Gentiles (Gal 4:3-8; Col 2:8) or they are the Old Testament Law together with its Jewish interpretations that enslaved Jews (Gal 4:9-10; Col 2:16-23).

Do not lay the foundation all over again. The 'rudiments' or 'elementary doctrines about Christ and 'the foundation' (θεμελιον) are the same thing described in two different figures. Six rudiments are listed, probably coming from a catechesis familiar to the writer and the readers. They were regarded as a suitable foundation of Christian teaching in a non-Pauline or Jewish Christian church.

*But remarkable is how little is distinctive Christian! Practical every item could have a place in a fairly orthodox Jewish community.* Of course, in order to be the foundation of a Christian church, each item acquired a new significance in the Christian context. We get the impression that existing Jewish beliefs and practices were used as a foundation on which Jewish Christians built Christian truth.

##### i) Repentance from dead works.

'Repentance' or 'change of mind' (μετανοια). 'Dead works' (νεκρων εργαων) are works or acts which must be repented of. They are works from which the conscience requires to be cleansed (9:14). They are probably not the works of the law, but works that are evil and belong to the way of death (Rom 6:23).

a. Old Testament. The pre-Christian book "Testaments of the twelve patriarchs" (Judah 20:1-5; Asher 1:3 - 6:3) and in the Qumran literature (Rule of Community, Qumran cave 1, 3:18-4:26) there are traces of teaching 'the two ways'. The Christian books "Didache" (1:1 - 5:2) and "The Epistle of Barnabas" (18:1 - 20:2) contain ethical treatises of 'the two ways' (the way of life and the way of death; or the way of light and the way of darkness). Didache says that 'the way of death' is "evil and fraught with a curse" and catalogues the sins that belong to it: murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, sorceries, robberies, false depositions, hypocrisies, a double heart, fraud, arrogance, malice, obstinacy, covetousness, filthy language, envy, audacity, haughtiness, boastfulness ... (Didache 5:1)(cf. Romans 1:21-31; 6:20). Repentance from such works were insisted upon in the Old Testament (Isa 59:20; Ez 18:11-13,30-32) and in Jewish religion. The sectarians of Qumran described themselves as "the repentant of Israel" (Damascus Document, 4:2).

b. New Testament. John the Baptist's preaching was "a call to repentance" (Mk 1:4). Jesus' preaching was "a call to repentance" (Acts 20:21) and so was Peter's (Acts 2:38-41; 3:19).

##### ii) Faith toward God.

a. Old Testament. Faith was the essential foundation of true religion in the Old Testament (Gen 15:6; Isa 7:9; Hab 2:4). Unbelief kept the generation of Israel during the Exodus from entering the promised land (4:2).

b. New Testament. The Hebrews are urged to apply this absolute need of faith to their own situation (4:1). This Old Testament preparation required New Testament application. The preaching of the gospel about Jesus Christ calls for faith in Jesus Christ (4:2). "The righteous one will live by faith" (Hab 2:4). If you do not believe the message of the gospel, it will be of no value to you when you hear it (4:2).

iii) The teaching about washings. (βαπτισμων διδαχης)

Old Testament. The Greek word is not 'baptisma' (βαπτισμα), which is regularly used to denote Christian baptism, but 'baptismos' (βαπτισμος), which is used in the New Testament to denote Jewish ceremonial washings:

- Mark 7:3-4. Jewish purification of cups, pots, vessels.

- (John 3:23-25). Baptism regarded as a ceremonial washing, 'a ceremonial purification' (καθαρισμος).

- Hebrews 9:10. Different ceremonial washings associated with the sacrificial cultus of the Old Testament.

- Hebrews 6:1. The plural is against the straightforward interpretation in terms of Christian baptism.

Numbers 19:9,13,19,20 requires ceremonial sprinkling, washing of clothes and taking a bath before being ceremonially 'clean'. A ceremonial 'unclean' person must be cut off from the community.

Ezekiel 36:25 uses the terminology of the Old Testament rites of cleansing to describe God's inward cleansing of his people in the age of restoration.

Baptist groups during the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. During the beginning of the Christian era, baptist groups flourished in Judaism and they found scriptural authority for their ceremonial washings beyond what the letter of the law required (cf. Zech 13:1). The Qumran community practised ceremonial washings in terms of Numbers 19 and Ezekiel 36, but did not regard such ablution as a means of removing iniquity from a man's heart. They believed that only submission to the commands of God could purify a man inwardly. Only after inward purity would outward ceremonial washings have any value for them (Rule of the Community from Qumran cave 1, 3:4-9; 5:13f).

Apparently such baptist groups were also found in the Dispersion and were carried over into Roman Christianity. The 'Apostolic tradition of Hippolytus' (beginning 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.) says, "And let those who are to be baptised be instructed to wash and cleanse themselves on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the week". According to Hippolytus, baptism as the central Christian initiation took place on Sunday, but on the preceding Thursday the candidate was required to have a ritual bath for the removal of impurity. This pre-baptismal ceremonial bath has no warrant in the New Testament, but may well have been a legacy from the Jews living in Rome. If this letter to the Hebrews was sent to a group of believing Jews in Rome, the reference to 'instruction about baptisms' may have had a more direct significance than meets the eye today.

New Testament. The expression is commonly regarded as part of the early Christian initiation ceremony. There are Christians who regard the six foundations as part of the early Christian initiation ceremony:

- The renouncing of a past way of life (repentance), whether from a Jewish or non-Jewish way of evil and the turning to God in faith to receive new power from him

- were symbolised by the early initiation ceremonies of baptism and the laying on of hands

- and the outstanding characteristics of the new life that the Christian sought to live were the new sense of purpose and an increased sense of seriousness, which were imparted to him by the certainty that there would be a resurrection from the dead and a final judgement.

Although the expression is commonly regarded as a reference to Christian baptism, it is rather a reference to Jewish ceremonial rites of cleansing.

iv) The laying on of hands.

Old Testament. This symbolic acts was also inherited from the Old Testament, where it was used especially in the commissioning for public office (Num 27:18,23; Deuteronomy 34:9) or part of the sacrificial rite (Lev 1:4; 3:2; 4:4; 8:14; 16:21). In rabbinical Judaism the term appears regularly in the sense of ordination (of elders)(Mishna Sanhedrin 4:4).

New Testament. This was an early Christian practice (Act 6:6; 8:17; 9:12,17; 19:6) associated especially with the impartation of the Holy Spirit. This is most probably its symbolic significance here (2:4; 6:4; 10:29).

v) The resurrection of the dead.

Old Testament. The resurrection of the dead is taught in the Old Testament (Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:10; 49:15; Hos 13:14; Isa 25:6-8; 26:19; Dan 12:2,13). The Jewish Pharisees emphasized this over against the Sadducees (Act 23:8).

New Testament. Jesus taught the resurrection of the dead (Mk 12:26f; cf. Ex 3:6).

vi) Eternal judgement.

Old Testament. God is the Judge of all the earthy (Gen 18:25; Isa 33:22; Eccl 12:14). Some will go to everlasting life and others to everlasting contempt (Dan 12:2, cf. Mt 25:46). God's recurring judgements in history will be summed up in the last judgement (Dan 12:9-10).

New Testament. God has entrusted all judgement to Jesus Christ (Jn 5:22,27). He will judge the world with justice by a man he has appointed (Act 17:31). The evil people will go to eternal punishment and the righteous people will go to eternal life (Mt 25:46).

c. Maturity through the teaching of righteousness.

God permitting, we will do this (6:3) refers to growth toward maturity as God's grace.

Press on to maturity (6:1). 'Let us be carried forward to maturity or perfection'

(επι την τελειοτητα φερωμεθα)(subjunctive present passive) not by a teacher, but by God! The passive denotes a personal surrender to an active influence.

Not laying again the foundation (6:1) (μη παλιν θεμελιον κατα βολλομενοι).

i) The Hebrews already possessed the Old Testament foundation.

*Thus it was on a foundation already laid in the Old Testament on which they based their way of life, that the Hebrews had received the gospel.* When the gospel was preached to those Hebrews, the first coming of Jesus Christ gave a fresh and fuller significance to this Old Testament foundation.

ii) Insistence on the (Christian) foundation does not help the Hebrew Christians.

- Apostasy of a pagan convert. If a convert from paganism gave up Christianity and reverted to paganism, there would be a clean break between the Christian faith which he renounced and the pagan faith to which he returned.

- Apostasy of a Jewish convert. But if a convert from Judaism gave up Christianity and reverted to Judaism, there would be no clean break between the New Testament foundation of faith and the Old Testament foundation of faith. It would be possible for the recipient of this letter to yield gradually to the pressures from the world and from the Jews, to give up more and more those features and practice, which were distinctive of Christianity, and yet to feel that they had not abandoned *the basic principles of 'repentance and faith'*, the realities symbolised by *the religious ablutions and the laying on of hands, the realities empowered by the expectation of the resurrection and the eternal judgement!*

The writer of Hebrews says that *to keep on insisting on these foundational things or elementary doctrines of the bible would not help them to continue as real and distinct Christians or grow to spiritual maturity as Christians.*

iii) Growing is the only way forward.

Growing, that is, getting acquainted with 'the teaching of righteousness', is the only way to spiritual maturity (and the only way to hinder threatening apostasy, 5:13-14)!

*'The teaching about righteousness' (λογου δικαιοσυνης) consists of the teaching about Jesus Christ as the Reality of what the Old Testament foreshadows* (8:5; 10:1; cf. Col 2:17).

Jesus Christ is:

- the Fulfiler of the Old Testament Law (5:12; cf. Mt 5:17)

- the Final Word (revelation) of God to man (instead of standing still at the Old Testament prophets, 1:1)

- the True Firstborn Son of God (instead of the nation-state of Israel, cf. Ex 4:22; Heb 1:5)

- the High Priest forever (instead of Moses and the Aaronite high priests, 5:10)

- the Mediator and Guarantee of the better (new) covenant (instead of the old covenant of the law, 7:22; 9:15; 12:24)

- the True Inheritor of God's Old Testament promises (9:15; 12:2; cf. 2 Cor 2:20)

- the Author and Perfecter of biblical faith (instead of continuing in Old Testament 'faith', 12:3)

- the Great Shepherd of the sheep (instead of the kings, prophets and priests of the Old Testament, 13:20).

***The New Testament revelation is the fulfilment of the Old Testament revelation.***

***The Old Testament must now be read in the light of the New Testament revelation.***

***The Church is the continuation and enlargement of Israel to encompass all the believers in all the nations.***

**2. Warning (3<sup>rd</sup>) against falling away from the New Testament covenant (6:4-8).**

a. Apostasy (reverting from the New Testament foundation back to the Old Testament foundation) is irremediable.

Humanly speaking, when a person has rejected the distinctive Christian beliefs, the foundation cannot be laid again.

**6:4-6.** If people who have shared in the covenant privileges, 'fall away from' (deliberately renounce) these covenant privileges, it is humanly impossible to turn such people back to faith in Christ. They are the most difficult to reclaim for the Christian faith.

Nothing of this sort is ultimately impossible for the grace of God. But in human experience it has often proved to be practically impossible. The writer does not question the perseverance of the saints. *He rather insists that those who persevere are the true saints!* (cf. Js 2:17,22; Eph 2:8-10; Mt 3:8,10-12; 13:23).

- Repentance (non-Christians who have not yet been born-again). It is quite possible for people who are attached to a formal way of professing the true faith without ever having experienced its power, to have an experience of God's grace which changes what was once a matter of formal attachment into a matter of inward reality (For example Paul)!

- Apostasy (a sin committed by people participating in the covenant while not being born-again - as nominal Christians - and then deny or reject Christ). It is humanly impossible for people, who already clearly see where the truth lies and perhaps for a period of time conform to it, but then, for one reason or another renounce it, to be brought to repentance (For example Hymenaeus and Alexander, 1 Timothy 1:19-20).

- Sin against the Holy Spirit (a sin committed by non-Christians who are not born-again).

It is a deliberate closing of the eyes to the light, refusing to accept the evidence of God's revelation in Jesus Christ and ascribing the work of the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:8) to the power of the devil (Mk 3:20-30)(For example the Pharisees).

b. Old Testament participation in the covenant people.

It is possible that the Exodus and Wilderness narrative is still in the background of the writer's mind.

The Israelites:

i) had their camp illuminated (Ex 13:2) by heavenly light and had been baptised in the Red Sea (Ex 14:22; 1 Cor 10:2) (εβαπτισαντο εν τη νεφελη και εν τη θαλασση)

ii) had received the provision of bread from heaven (Ex 16:15; 1 Cor 10:3) and water from the rock (Ex 17:6)

iii) had been instructed by God's good Spirit (Neh 9:20; cf. 1 Pet 1:10-12).

But in spite of hearing God's words and seeing God's mighty works in their midst, they failed to enter Canaan, because they hardened their hearts and chose not to believe (4:2,7).

c. New Testament participation in the covenant people.

i) They were once enlightened (απαξ φωτισθεντας)(participle aorist passive).

This enlightenment took place 'once for all'. The light of the gospel had broken in on the darkness of these people. After this, life could never be the same again. To give up the gospel would be to sin against the light, the one sin which by its very nature is incurable.

It is quite possible to regard this enlightenment as baptism.

- Ephesians 5:14, "Wake up, o sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you". This is frequently taken to be a snatch from a Christian baptismal hymn. The convert is exhorted to wake up from darkness of spiritual death into the light of Christ.

- Psalm 34:5 (LXX) "Come to him and be enlightened (φωτισθητε) was early used in the Christian baptismal liturgy.

- The Syriac Peshitta translates the word 'enlightenment' in Hebrews 6:4 and 10:32 with the word 'baptism'.

- Justin (First Apology, 61:12f, 65:1) uses the verb 'φωτιζω' and the noun 'φωτισμος' to describe 'baptism' and he does it in a way which indicates that this was a current usage among the Christians of his acquaintance.

Thus the Hebrews were 'enlightened' by the gospel message and may have received baptism as a sign that they had understood the message (light) of the gospel).

ii) They had tasted the heavenly gift (γευσσαμενους της δωρεας της επουρανιου).

'Taste' refers to the enjoyment of blessings.

- Psalm 34:8 (LXX) "Taste and see that the Lord is good" in a baptismal context (Psalm 34:5) may suggest the Lord's Supper.

- Acts 20:11. "He broke bread and ate" (κλασας τον αρτον και γευσσαμενος) is a reference to celebrating the Lord's Supper.

- 1 Corinthians 10:3-4. "They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink" (παντες το αυτο πνευματικον βρωμα εφαγον και παντες το αυτο πνευματικαν επιον πομα) 'for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ'.

However, 'tasting the heavenly gift' need not be restricted to the Lord's Supper, but may indicate that the Hebrews experienced the whole sum of spiritual blessings that were sacramentally signified and sealed by the Lord's Supper.

iii) They had become partakers of the Holy Spirit (μετοχους γενηθεντας πνευματος αγιου).

To 'share' or 'participate' (μετοχοι) means definitely sharing in the experience of the Holy Spirit as they shared in the heavenly calling (3:1) and shared in Christ (3:14). But 'called' (κλητοι) is not the same as being 'chosen' (εκλεκτοι)(Mt 22:14; cf. 24:24). And those that 'share' in Christ have the responsibility "to hold firmly till the end the confidence they had at first" - they must prove not only to be 'starters', but 'finishers' (3:14; cf. Col 4:17). Only those that continue in the faith and bear good fruit can have the personal assurance that they have really been born-again of the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 8:9-13,18-23. The sorcerer, Simon, believed the good news and was baptised. Apparently he received the Holy Spirit when the apostles laid their hands on the Samaritan believers. And yet he remained a captive of sin (cf. 1 Jn 3:9).

- Hebrews 10:26-29. A person who received the knowledge of the truth (the gospel) and yet 'deliberately or wilfully keeps on sinning' (10:26) has trampled on the Son of God, has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him and has insulted the Spirit of grace.

The writer has Hebrews in mind who have been enlightened by the gospel, had received baptism and underwent the laying on of hands as a sign that they had experienced the reality and presence and power of the Holy Spirit. But this does not necessarily mean that the Holy Spirit was actually imparted and that they experienced rebirth. The sense in which they became partakers of the Holy Spirit lies in the following words:

iv) They had tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.

'Tasted' (γευσαμενους) means had really enjoyed or experienced. 'The spoken word' (ρημα) is the preaching of the gospel or sermons in the church. 'Powers of the coming age' (δυναμεις τε μελλοντας αιωνος) are the miracles of the apostles (2:4).

- Nehemiah 9:20,30. God gave his good Spirit to instruct the Israelites (Neh 9:20). By his Spirit he admonished them through his prophets (Neh 9:30). Yet they paid no attention and so God handed them over to the neighbouring nations.

- Matthew 12:28-30. The preaching of Jesus was accompanied by the mighty works of the Holy Spirit.

- Galatians 3:5. The preaching by the apostles was accompanied by God giving his Spirit and working miracles among people who believed.

The Hebrews experienced the goodness of God's Word as instructed by the Holy Spirit and the power of miracles as done by the Holy Spirit as a sign that the new age or new order has begun.

v) Falling away (παραπεσοντας<παραπιπτω)(participle aorist active).

Not the root meaning (cf. παραπτωμα) (to trespass), but the context determines its meaning as 'apostasy' (αποστηναι)(3:12). Thus it is possible for people who can be described in the language of Hebrews 6:4-5 to fall away irretrievably! This solemn warning should not be exaggerated by saying that there can be no repentance for sins committed after baptism. This solemn warning should also not be underestimated because "an evil heart of unbelief" can result in "falling away from the Living God" (3:12)! The attitude and the condition of the human heart are determinative! The writer himself distinguishes (as the Old Testament does) between deliberate or wilful sin (2:2) and inadvertent sin (5:2). *The context of Hebrews 4:6-8 shows that he has deliberate apostasy in mind.* People, who commit this sin, cannot be brought back to repentance.

vi) Can no longer repent.

Impossible to be brought back to repentance (αδυνατον ... παλιν ανακαινιζειν εις μετανοιαν). 'To renew again' (ανακαινιζειν) or 'to make new again' - the repentance (change of mind) with regard to Christ. Falling away is a possibility for people who share in the covenant privileges of the people of God (the Christian Church). Because they do not persevere in faith and continue to bear fruit (which is the test of a true born-again believer), for one or another reason they reject the truth (the bible, Christ, gospel).

God has promised to forgive everyone who truly repents. But the bible and experience alike suggests that it is impossible for people to arrive at a state of heart and life where they can no longer repent (cf. Isa 6:9-10; Mt 10:11-15; Act 28:26-27).

vii) Crucify Christ. (ανασταυρουντας)(participle present active)

The participle is causal and indicates why it is impossible for such people to repent. In the words, "to their loss they crucify the Son of God all over again" (εαυτοις ανασταυρουντας) the prefix 'ανα' denotes 'up' and not 'again'; and the word 'εαυτοις' means 'to themselves'. Therefore, we translate, "They crucify the Son of God on their own account" (RSV), that is, they are guilty of deliberately rejecting Christ. It is impossible for them to repent because on their own account they put Christ on the cross (that is, they reject him).

If the readers were to return again to Judaism, there would be no possibility for them to begin their spiritual life anew. This would require a recrucifixion of Christ and putting him to open shame. By renouncing Christ, they put themselves in the position of those Jews and Romans who, by deliberately refusing Christ's claim to be the Son of God, crucified Christ and subjected Christ to public disgrace. *People, who reject the salvation which has been procured by Christ, will find no salvation anywhere else!*

For this reason they must continue toward maturity despite the difficulties, problems and persecutions which attend their walk.

d. The test of genuine faith.

**6:7-8.** Like the vineyard of God in Isaiah 5:1-7 and the comparison of Jesus in Matthew 12:33-37 the test of a true born-again believer is that he perseveres in the faith and continues to bear good fruit.

'Worthless' or rather 'tested and disapproved or rejected' (αδοκιμος)! They are near God's curse and final burning.

**3. Encouragement that God is just and will keep his promise (6:9-20).**

**6:9.** We are confident (πεπεισμεθα)(indicative perfect passive) from 'πειθω' to persuade, to be confident.

The writer reassures his readers that he is confident that they are not reprobate soil that bears thorns and thistles, but fertile land that produces a crop useful to its owner.

**6:10. God will not forget your work and love.**

The fruits of righteousness had beyond question manifested themselves in the lives of the Hebrews. The presence of fruit in their lives was a token of the presence of salvation too. Their act of love is described in Hebrews 10:32-34.

**6:11. Show the same diligence to the very end.**

By continuing to be diligent, that is, to show eagerness (ενδεικνυσθαι σπουδην) they make their hope very sure, the hope that God would continue the work which he began (Phil 1:5), and that they would inherit the kingdom in its final form (Mt 25:34).

**6:12. Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what God has promised.**

He refers to the Old Testament believers described in Hebrews 11. 'Patience' (μακροθυμια) is patient endurance.

**6:13-15. God made his promise to Abraham and with regard to Melchizedek.**

By faith Abraham believed God. He did not withhold his only son, Isaac. Therefore God would multiply him to an uncountable number! This would happen through his 'seed' (Gen 22:16-18).

John quotes this promise by saying that God will have children of Abraham, even if he had to create them from stones (Mt 3:9)!

Paul quotes this promise to prove justification by faith without the works of the law (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6).

James quotes this promise to insist that faith apart from works is dead (James 2:21-22).

The writer to the Hebrews quotes this promise to present Abraham as the supreme example of someone who received promises from God and lived in the good of these promises, persevering to the end in faith and hope (Heb 6:12-15).

God's faithfulness to his promise to Abraham is a token of his faithfulness to his promise concerning melchizedek! These two promises hang together. Paul worked out the promise to Abraham in Galatians and the writer to the Hebrews worked out the promise to Melchizedek in Hebrews.

God's promise to Abraham regarded multiplying his descendants through his 'seed' (Gen 12:1-3). But after Isaac was born, God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac up to God. Abraham's faith and obedience was shown in his readiness to do this. And Abraham received Isaac back from the dead "in a figure" (11:19) and received a reconfirmation of the promise, but this time together with God's oath (Gen 22:16-18). Thus, through faith and patient endurance Abraham received what had been promised - a son, even though that was only the first instalment of God's promise (cf. 11:39-40).

**6:16-17. Promise confirmed by an oath.**

The supreme oath in Israel was to swear by God (Gen 14:22; 21:23-24; 24:3). That put an end to all argument or contradiction (αντολογία). But because God has none greater than himself, he confirms his promise with his oath (cf. Ps 110:4). The bar word of God is guarantee enough (Num 23:19). But confirming it with his oath makes the assurance double sure.

To the heirs of the promise. They are not so much Abraham and the other patriarchs, because they have not yet inherited the promise (11:39-40). They are those who have inherited the fulfilment of the promise meant and which is realised under the new covenant (9:15). They are the writer of Hebrews, the readers of Hebrews, who experienced in the gospel the fulfilment of the oath which God swore to Abraham.

**6:18-20. Hope as an anchor for the soul.**

The two unchangeable things that make it impossible for God to lie are his promise and his oath.

Our hope, based on this promise, is our spiritual anchor (αγκυρα), which is firmly secured to God's throne in heaven. Christ is present there at the right hand of God on our behalf (9:24)! He is there to prepare a place for us (Jn 14:3)! He is there to intercede for us (7:25)! Christ is our Advocate with God (1 Jn 2:1-2). He is the Safeguard of the Church and the Guarantee of her complete glorification (1 Jn 3:1-3; Rev 21:1-2). Christ is our perpetual High Priest, but not in the line of the Old Testament law (the priesthood of Aaron), but in the line of Melchizedek. With these words the writer of Hebrews comes back to the point from which he digressed in 5:11 and continues his teaching of 'solid food' about Christ our High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.