

Sunday July 8<sup>th</sup>  
The Land and the Rain – Part One

1). Heb 6:7 *For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.*

a). Our scripture here from Hebrews 6 concerns a land that receives rain and although it is the same land and the same rain there are two potential outcomes –

i/ it is to bear herbs and thereby receive blessing from God

ii/ or, it bears thorns and briars, is rejected by God, whose end is to be burned.

2). Within the context of Hebrews 6 – a chapter that deals with –  
Heb 6:1 ¶ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection,*

a). Our scripture relates to those who go on to spiritual maturity, those who will receive blessing from God, or those who don't, whose end is to be burned.

3). And of course within the wider context of the Book of Hebrews as a whole, a book that's stated purpose is about, as recorded in - Heb 2:5 ¶ *For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.*

a). A Book about the change of rulership that will take place at the advent of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, and the positions of rulership on offer with Christ in His Kingdom for those found worthy.

b). We will understand that our opening scripture concerns Christians, those in possession of the free gift of eternal life – given to them by grace through faith in the finished work of God's Son on the cross of Calvary.

4). In order to give our scripture some clarity, let's spend a little time laying some foundation with regards to the land we are talking about.

5). And what better place to begin with foundation than Genesis – we will remember - Ge 2:7 *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*

a). The first man, Adam, was made of the dust of the ground – the very fabric of his being was constituted from the realm over which he was to rule - Ge 1:26 ¶ *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion*

b). And as a result of the actions of the incumbent ruler of this world, Satan, the very ground from which Adam had been formed and over which he was supposed to rule became cursed –

c). Ge 3:17 ¶ *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,*

d). That which was given for blessing, as a result of sin, could now only produce thorns and thistles – and there was nothing to be done on man's part then, or on man's part now that could change that.

e). Everything connected with this world is rejected by God and has no eternal or Millennial value whatsoever.

6). And, as we know, all human beings born from Adam onwards are born after the fashion shown in -

a). Ge 5:3 *And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.*

b). In other words every human being is born - Eph 2:1b *...dead in trespasses and sins,*

c). Every thing to do with our first birth, our birth in the natural is intimately and inextricably connected with the earth that is under a curse, with this world under the dominion of Satan - 1Jo 5:19b...*and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*

7). This, within our scriptural parlance, is what we would call, 'the land of our birth' – we have no choice in the matter, nor are we of ourselves able to change it or escape from it.

a). And no matter how righteous our actions may appear to our own eyes, within the context of this world, from God's perspective –

b). Isa 64:6 ¶ *But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;*

c). Ro 7:18 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;*

8). As a result of our first birth we find ourselves alienated from God unable to produce anything but thorns and thistles and our end is to be destruction.

9). Hence the absolute imperative that we must be born from above.

a). Without this new birth there is no alternative to eternal destruction.

b). And again, this new birth is not something that we can do for ourselves – the removal of sin as the barrier between man and God is an action that can only be performed by Deity.

c). We will remember - *Ge 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

d). Man's attempt to deal with sin is completely futile - the only possible solution to their situation must be, and can only be, provided by God - *Ge 3:21 ¶ Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*

e). As it is with us today - *Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*

f). This is a very familiar scripture, but let me just point out the wording – we are saved by grace – not faith – we are saved through faith, but it is God's grace alone that grants eternal salvation to us.

10). But once we have passed from death unto life something beyond the land of our birth then comes into view.

a). And our foundational type for understanding this is the nation of Israel in Egypt.

b). Egypt is of course a type of the world and Pharaoh a type of Satan, the god of this world.

c). Israel, in bondage in Egypt, were not of themselves able to change their situation. They could not remove themselves from their location, nor could they free themselves from the authority of Pharaoh.

d). In order to bring them out of bondage there had to be Divine intervention on their behalf – God's grace – witnessed through the events surrounding the death of the first born recorded in Exodus Chapter 12.

e). What we will focus on now is not these events in themselves but rather the reason for them –

f). *Ex 3:17 "and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and*

*the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey."*

g). Ex 6:8 *'And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.'*

h). What comes into view now is the land of Israel's calling – a land which is to be theirs as an inheritance. A land that is only available to them after the death of the firstborn, after their redemption from Egypt.

i). A land in which God has a specific purpose for them – Ex 19:4 *'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 5 'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* *These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."*

j). This is a land from which rulership is to take place within a Theocracy, where God's blessings, through His people Israel, would be poured out on all the other nations, just as God had promised to Abraham.

k). But what we will note from our scripture is that rulership with God within the land is conditioned on faithful obedience to what God had to say to them. And what God had to say concerned the land itself and the nation's entrance into it.

11). We will also note, something that is very obvious but nevertheless important, which is that Israel could not enter the land promised to them, the land of Canaan, without leaving Egypt – there was a journey that had to be made.

a). The very thing we have seen elsewhere in scripture, beginning with Abraham - Ge 12:1 ¶ *Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.*

b). With Rebekah, who is to marry Isaac, the son of promise – Ge 24:58 *Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."*

c). And of course Ruth, whose journey ends with marriage, the redemption of an inheritance and ultimately regality - Ru 2:11 *And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before.*

12). Within our own setting however, the journey is not a geographical one, but a spiritual one, as we would move from immaturity to maturity.

13). For the moment though, let's get back to foundation - Ge 1:3 ¶ *Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.*

a). As we have noted many times in the past, the calling forth of light does not eradicate the darkness, but rather brings a division between both states – they both exist at the same time.

b). In the type of Rebekah, her family still remained behind in Mesopotamia after her departure, they did not cease to exist.

c). And exactly the same is true for Ruth – the land of Moab and all that was connected with the land of her birth remained in tact.

d). And we also know that it remained accessible through choice – Ru 1:14 *Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. 15 And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."*

e). Orpah never ceased to be a member of the Jewish family into which she had married – but she remained connected with the land of her birth and as a consequence was not the one who gleaned in the harvest, who married Boaz.

f). And for ourselves this remains true also – Our new birth, the birth from above is a spiritual birth - Joh 3:6 *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

g). But that which is inextricably connected with our first birth, here called 'the flesh', that which has to do with our soul life, our sin nature, remains in place and remains under the sway of the wicked one and this can never and will never change.

h). That connected with our first birth will never receive blessing from God – blessing is only ever associated with our new birth – Ga 4:30 *Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."*

i). The two coexist side by side and we may choose which of these two realms we want to live in – the flesh or the spirit – as the son of the bondwoman or the son of the freewoman – the former, however, is already rejected, only in the latter will we find inheritance.

j). Nor is living in the spirit passive. It is not a case of simply trying to ignore our flesh – these two cannot exist peacefully side by side – just note the situation with regards to the descendants of Isaac and the descendants of Ishmael even to this day and we can have some understanding of this – rather living in the spirit is to actively die to the flesh - Mt 16:24 ¶ *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.*

14). The reality of having to die to the flesh is poignantly and encouragingly portrayed for us in Israel's Red Sea crossing.

a). The Children of Israel on the night of Passover had died a vicarious death – a lamb had died in their place, but from God's perspective, Israel, His firstborn had died.

b). What had died that night was that associated with their first birth, that connected with the land of Egypt, that connected with their slavery under the authority of Pharaoh.

c). In the Red Sea crossing we see the burial of their flesh in the place of death.

d). Ex 14:21 ¶ *Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. 22 So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.*

e). This left that which was now alive, their spirit, to rise in newness of life, on the eastern shore – symbolizing the resurrection power of God.

f). And what is particularly encouraging for us is recorded in what happens next - Ex 14:27 *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28 Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.*

g). Here is the most powerful superpower on the face of the earth at this time completely defeated, dead on the seashore and completely unable to touch Israel.

h). Now if we will die to our flesh and live in the spirit, the most powerful angel at present in the heavenlies and all his legions can have no sway over us. We may be made a little lower than the angels and we may be completely inferior to them in power and authority – but living in the spirit affords us God’s protection - 1Pe 1:5 *who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

i). Isn’t this just what the whole teaching in Ephesians on the spiritual warfare is all about?

15). However, we will also realize that the spiritual warfare is an on going battle, not a one time event, and that although we have died with Christ our flesh, that associated with our first birth has to be kept in the place of death as a continual process and that our aberrations have to be dealt with by our great High Priest as and when they occur, through our confession and His forgiveness - 1Jo 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

16). This of course is pictured for us in the sacrificial system given to Israel as they camped at Sinai in preparation for entering the land of Canaan.

a). And as we consider Israel being prepared to enter Canaan, this really brings us back to our scripture that we began with this morning.

b). Israel as a nation comprised of individuals was completely and irrevocably redeemed in relation to eternity. There was absolutely no possibility that some of them somehow failed to be redeemed on the night of Passover – any who did not put faith in God’s provision of the Passover lambs, as God’s firstborn son would have died that night. This is not recorded.

c). Not only that, but we read in the scriptures - 1Co 10:1 ¶ *Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.*

d). Spiritual food and spiritual drink is only for the spiritually alive.

17). As those who were spiritually alive they heard first hand and through Moses everything that God wanted them to know about entering the land and overcoming the enemy who lived there. There is no sense in which some other type of message was presented to them – everything was about

the land, their inheritance and God's conditional calling on their lives. Once again, they all heard it.

18). Yet at Kadesh Barnea, despite the fact that all had heard exactly the same thing, two different outcomes followed.

a). Following the return of the twelve spies from the land a report was given about the land - Nu 13:26 ¶ *Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.*

b). There was no doubt about the land's existence.

c). There was no doubt that it was a land just as God described

d). What became an issue was believing what God had said about what they had to do to conquer the land.

e). Nu 13:30 *Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." 31 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."*

f). And here in our scripture we have the two opposing views

i/ Caleb and Joshua – we can do this

ii/ The rest – no we can't

g). And in consequence two opposing outcomes – Caleb and Joshua receive their inheritance – the rest die in the wilderness never realizing their inheritance - 1Co 10:5 *But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.*

19). And as we look at the response of the Children of Israel at Kadesh we see something very interesting - Nu 14:1 ¶ *So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! 3 "Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" 4 So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."*

a). Their thoughts and their desires and their actions were focused on Egypt, the land of their birth, that which surrounded their first birth, things to do with the flesh, that which had to do with the realm over which Satan

had control – rather than the land of Canaan, the land of their calling, that which surrounded their new birth, things to do with the spirit, under the sovereignty of God.

b). Joh 4:24 *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

c). This scripture from John is not a description of God's physical make up – it is rather a description of His character – God does not and cannot operate in any realm outside of the spiritual.

20). And as with Israel, so with ourselves – we can hear all that God has to say concerning the land of our inheritance. We can have experience of the goodness of that land - Heb 6:4 *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,*

a). But we could choose to turn away from what we must do to enter, preferring instead those things connected with our first birth, the things of this world.

b). And if we should do this, the outcome for us is the same as for Israel - Heb 6:4 *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. 7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.*

21). And here we are, right back where we started.

a). And next week, if God permits, we shall continue to look at the land and the rain in more detail.