

Sunday July 15th 2007
The Land and the Rain – Part Two

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.*

2). As we saw last week our scripture here concerns a land that receives rain.

a). It is the same land and the same rain

b). However the type of ‘fruit’ that is produced is significantly different.

c). On the one hand it can bear herbs that are useful for those by whom it is cultivated – resulting in blessing from God.

d). Or it can produce thorns and briars, which are rejected by God, whose end is to be burned.

3). We also saw last week that the writer of Hebrews uses this metaphor from nature to give clarity to that which he has already said within this chapter.

a). As we look at the context for this scripture, we can have no doubt as to what he is talking about.

b). Heb 6:1 ¶ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits. 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.*

c). He is talking about those who make the journey from spiritual immaturity to maturity and those who don’t.

b). Those who hear the word of God in respect of the heavenly calling, the inheritance and positions of rulership and then govern their lives accordingly – performing those good works, or works of righteousness associated with faith.

c). And those who hear exactly the same word, concerning exactly the same subject, but don't govern their lives accordingly.

4). We will recall from our opening scripture that the land that bears the herbs is cultivated - *bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated.*

a). This would clearly denote work being done.

b). Which is in complete accord with that which scripture teaches concerning the salvation of the soul – our inheritance. That which is the overall subject of the Book of Hebrews.

c). Jas 2:20 *But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

d). So we see then that the earth that receives the rain – the Christian who receives the word of the Kingdom, must then engage in work connected with receiving the word – cultivating the land – that will then produce herbs useful to the one doing the cultivating – all of this leading to blessing from God. A present process with a future consequence.

5). And again this is in complete accord with scriptural teaching on the subject.

a). Remember what the Lord says in - Mt 21:43 *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.*

b). Joh 12:24 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.*

c). Jas 1:22 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

d). And this of course is just the tip of the iceberg.

6). But let us put in here for those who may be connecting with these truths for the first time, that we are dealing with issues beyond the free gift of eternal life.

a). As we saw last week, the nation of Israel, under Moses, is completely and totally redeemed from the bondage of Egypt first. Being redeemed from the land of their birth under the authority of Pharaoh – who is a type of Satan, the god of this world - and is then taken to the land of their calling, the land of Canaan – a land associated with rulership as a firstborn son, a theocracy and the promises made to Abraham.

b). For the nation of Israel, everything that happened beyond the Red Sea had to do with the land of their calling exclusively, something that

remained then, and remains now yet future – never did anything have to do with their redemption from bondage.

c). From God's perspective, which is the only one that counts, all issues surrounding slavery under Pharaoh were dealt with irrevocably on the night of Passover.

7). And similarly with us – we are born – dead in trespasses and sins – in the land of our birth, which is this world, that connected with Adam and an earth under a curse, in slavery to the god of this world, Satan. We are born alienated from God and spiritually dead.

a). Hence the absolute imperative of the new birth.

b). As we put faith in Christ's finished work on the cross of Calvary

c). 1Co 5:7b... *For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.*

d). So we are saved by grace and pass from death into life –

Joh 5:24 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*

d). We are given life in relation to eternity, and it is a free gift –

Eph 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*

e). And we are no longer slaves - Ro 6:6 *knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*

f). And from that point on the land of our calling and an inheritance come into view - 1Pe 1:3 ¶ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,*

g). And as with Israel, it is that surrounding our inheritance and not eternity that is exclusively in view in God's dealing with Christians from the point of our new birth onwards. Eternal matters are never dealt with again – there is no need for them to be – Christ's work on the cross is finished. It was finished in time past and continues in that finished state in time present. And finished is finished.

h). Remember - Ro 11:29 *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

i). In other words, to make it really simple, God is not going to change His mind about or take from us either His gift of eternal life or our heavenly calling - Nu 23:19 *"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man,*

that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

j). Whether we choose to believe it or not, whether we like it or not, or whether we want it or not – everyone who has ever believed on the Lord Jesus Christ is eternally saved and will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

k). Whether we choose to believe it or not, whether we like it or not, or whether we want it or not – everyone who has ever believed on the Lord Jesus Christ is a companion of the heavenly calling and has been born again to an inheritance.

l). There is nothing else to say concerning the reality of these two things.

m). They are as they are.

8). But if we go back for a moment to post redemption Israel we can see that although God's calling for them to receive their inheritance in the land of Canaan is irrevocable – it will never be given to any one else other than the seed of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, their individual participation in the fulfillment of that calling was not guaranteed but conditional –

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.'

a). Conditioned on faithful obedience – 'if', 'then'.

9). And, again as we saw last week, although all of Israel heard exactly the same words from God regarding what was required of them to enter the land and receive their inheritance only Caleb and Joshua of the entire generation 20 years old and above were faithfully obedient.

a). And we should note that for the rest their unfaithfulness was not somehow passive – whether they rationalized it this way or not, the truth remains, that they consciously chose not to do what God had said.

b). This we would have to call rebellion.

c). And by such an action they chose to place themselves in dominion to Satan.

d). They chose, like Satan, to exalt their throne above the stars of God.

e). This is something that we cannot take lightly - 1Co 10:11 *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

10). Not only this, but at Christ's first coming we find a repeat performance by Israel, this time in relation to the Kingdom of the Heavens.

a). Mt 4:17 *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

b). This was the message that Jesus came with and the purpose for which He had been sent - Lu 4:43 *but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."*

c). And from the evidence of scripture the entire redeemed generation alive at Christ's first coming heard exactly the same words, from the One who was born King of the Jews – the One who is, the Word made flesh – Joh 18:20 *Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing.*

11). Some 120 had believed what God had said and had gathered in an upper room waiting for the day of Pentecost. The rest, who had heard exactly the same message chose not to believe and had forfeited their inheritance in the heavenly portion of the Kingdom, in a cataclysmic rejection of the messenger and the message - Joh 19:15 *But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"*

a). Rome, like Egypt, would be a type of this world and Caesar, like Pharaoh, a type of the god of this world – and here is an eternally redeemed people choosing to embrace the enemy of their soul, leading to death, rather than embracing their King and their God leading to Life – Ro 6:16 *Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*

b). And again, this was a conscious choice, even if, according to scripture, they didn't know what they were doing.

c). And the consequence of their choice was inescapable – spoken from their own mouths - Mt 27:25 *And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."*

12). And in the midst of this proclamation of the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to an eternally redeemed people we have another metaphor taken from nature to demonstrate the unfruitfulness of that nation –

Mr 11:13 And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

a). The fig tree of course is Israel, completely barren at the time of Christ's first coming – the season for fruit production, even now remaining yet future and subsequent to national repentance.

13). And in relation to what would later become the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, by the church, following the events of Pentecost, the Lord gives a parable after the same fashion - Lu 13:6 ¶ *He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7 "Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' 8 "But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. 9 'And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'"*

a). The message of the Kingdom is re-presented to Israel by the one new man, the church – beginning with Peter's message preached on the day of Pentecost.

b). The message is heard – the digging and the fertilizing - and there can be one of two outcomes – either the tree will produce fruit or it will be cut down.

c). And in relation to the Kingdom of the heavens the latter has been the outcome for Israel - Ac 28:25 *So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, 26 "saying, 'Go to this people and say: "Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; 27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'" 28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.*

14). Then in Matthew Chapter 13 we have a parable that is part of a sequence of parables outlining the history of the dispensation of the Church,

which also draws from nature after a similar fashion to those we have already looked at - Mt 13:18 *"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom,*

a). Those sown into the world are Christians who hear, 'the word of the Kingdom'

b). The type of ground designated to each is determined not by their placement but by the individual's response to the word of the Kingdom.

c). Those by the wayside do not understand it

d). Those in stony places are those who have no root, who have not become established in the word and stumble when persecution comes.

e). Those amongst the thorns are those overcome by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.

f). Those in good ground, hear it, understand it and produce fruit accordingly – some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

15). As we see here in our outline of the Parable of the Sower the first group, not having understood the word of the Kingdom, is in no position to produce fruit – the second and third groups are in a position to produce fruit, but fail to do so - it is only the fourth group, those associated with the good ground who produce fruit, and it is only those from this group that will be found worthy at the Judgment Seat. And we can put more detail to this by comparing scripture with scripture - Joh 15:1 ¶ *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*

a). The key to producing fruit in relation to the kingdom is shown here as abiding in Christ.

b). Abide = Greek word – *meno* = to stay, to stand

c). Now this cannot refer to our positional standing in Christ as this is something that comes automatically with eternal salvation – this would be the condition shown by 'every branch in Me' – but as we see from the scripture those who are positionally in Christ are capable of not bearing fruit. Just as in the Parable of the Sower.

d). No, rather this abiding in Christ would need us to see Him as described in - 1Co 15:45...*a life-giving spirit.*

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

f). To abide in Him, would be to abide in the Word, would be to conduct our lives according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh Joh 6:63 *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*

g). 2Ti 3:16 *All Scripture is God breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

h). It is the same thought as being continually filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18.

16). Don't forget our picture in the type of Orpah and Ruth - 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." 16 But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God.*

a). It is Ruth who clings to Naomi, who is a type of Israel and by extension the word of God given to Israel, who is able to glean in the harvest and find favour with the kinsman redeemer, resulting in marriage and a redeemed inheritance – not Orpah.

17). And we see exactly the same in respect of Abraham and Lot.

a). 2Pe 2:7 ¶ *and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked*

b). Lot we see here described as 'righteous' which can only be a reference to his being eternally saved.

c). But we also know that Lot's focus was on the cities of the plain rather than the hill country where his uncle dwelt - Ge 13:10 ¶ *And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere*

d). Lot's association with the plain rather than the hill country causes him to become, what Hebrews calls - Heb 5:11...*dull of hearing.*

18). Following Lot's capture and subsequent rescue after Abraham's battle with the four kings, he, Lot, would have been present when Abraham is met by Melchizedek and would have heard that which Melchizedek spoke. The

promise concerning both realms of God's kingdom – the heavens and the earth.

a). From Abraham, who hears Melchizedek's words, there comes an act of faith – he gave him a tenth of the spoils.

b). From Lot, however, who hears exactly the same thing there is no response at all, although he was in a position, being righteous, to understand spiritual truth.

19). Not only that, but following the meeting with Melchizedek, we find Lot not just associated with the cities of the plain, but in the gate of Sodom itself, demonstrating his assimilation into the affairs of that place.

20). And when the warning came about the judgment about to be brought to pass on the cities of the plain and clear instructions for escape were given to him - Ge 19:17 *So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! [your soul] Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest you be destroyed."*

a). Lot still would not hear - Ge 19:18 *Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords! 19 "Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. 20 "See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live."*

b). Despite himself Lot ends up on the mountain he was originally told to go to - Ge 19:30 ¶ *Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.*

c). However, he is not standing on the top of the mountain before the Lord as Abraham, but hidden in a cave, in a place of shame.

d). So here again is a picture of the earth receiving rain, but two completely different outcomes.

21). So as we read - Heb 4:1 ¶ *Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.*

a). My fear is this – are there any of us who are going to come short of His rest, even though we have heard the word of the coming of His kingdom and have been given the warning to flee to the mountain?

b). My fear is this – have any of us been deceived by the deceitfulness of sin, that like Lot we don't even recognize the danger we are in?

c). Are there any of us who are receiving the rain, but producing thorns and briars rather than herbs?

22). Because if this is so we may soon find ourselves in a very serious situation – one that we will regret for a thousand years - 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.*

23). If God permits, we will see next week what it would look like for us to be producing thorns and briars rather than herbs.