

Sunday July 3rd 2011
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Ten

1). Heb 3:7 ¶ *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. 10 Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' 11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"*

a). We had ended our study last week at the point of introduction to the second of the five major warnings in our book. And with respect to this warning we see here that v7 begins with the word ‘therefore’ – which immediately takes us back to that which has preceded this verse.

b). And that which immediately precedes this verse are the verses concerning Christ’s faithfulness as a Son over His own house with the comparison made between the Son and the servant, Moses - Heb 3:5 *And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, 6 but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.*

c). And Christ’s faithfulness as a Son over His own house is with respect to the dual role that He has as the ‘Apostle and High Priest of our confession’.

d). Our Lord was faithful in fulfilling the purpose for which He was sent, the Apostle, at His first advent. Now we must remember when considering this that we have learned that there is much that is encompassed in the Lord’s faithfulness during His earthly ministry. Not only did He come to the earth as our Passover Lamb, but He also came, having taken to Himself the form and nature of a man, that He ‘might taste death for everyone’; that He might experience the struggle and the anguish that is involved in enduring temptation and that He overcame temptation solely through the resources available to Him as the Son of Man, rather than the Son of God - Heb 2:16 *For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

e). And all of this of course is with a view to the fulfillment of God’s purpose with respect to rulership of the earth by His Son and His Son’s

companions in the age to come – that which is the very subject of the Book of Hebrews - Heb 2:5 ¶ *For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. 6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? 7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. 10 ¶ For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

f). And if we ever thought that faithful obedience to His Father, within the limitations of the human condition, was the easiest thing for our Lord then we just need to look at - Lu 22:41 *And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." 43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

g). 1Pe 2:20 *For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.*

h). Perhaps now we can put these scriptures together with greater understanding than ever before – let's add one more to these – Heb 12:1 ¶ *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 ¶ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*

i). And it is to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith that we are to look – literally to look away from this age to the example of the One whose earthly life was completely governed by His absolute trust in the Father with respect to the promise of the age to come resulting in His unswerving faithfulness –

Heb 3:1 ¶ *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house.*

j). And as we look to Jesus we see not only the One who has provided the way towards the age to come, but also the One who provides the means of entering in, the One who is the High Priest of our confession – the One who is faithful, because of His experience of suffering temptation, to cleanse us from our sin and to provide us with the supernatural strength of His grace in our time of need – Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

2). Then as we think about this we will realize that the word ‘therefore’ at the beginning of v7 of Chapter 3 must also take us back to all that was written concerning the age to come in Chapter 1 and God’s faithfulness with respect to it, as all of the warnings in Hebrews must be built on the foundation given in this Chapter – Heb 1:5 *For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? 6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." 7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." 8 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.*

a). All that Christ has done and is doing cannot at any time, for any reason, be separated from God’s purpose of the 7th Day, as detailed in Chapter 1. This may seem to be an obvious thing to say, but it is worth saying nonetheless as we may still have some wrong thinking from our religious past that would want to attribute some aspect of Christ’s ministry to Christians apart from a Kingdom perspective – and to do so would be entirely wrong – He is the ‘Apostle and High Priest of our confession’ – He is not the Apostle and High Priest of anything else.

3). And so, with Hebrews Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and the beginning of Chapter 3 within the scope of our understanding we come to Chapter 3 v7 and the verses that follow - Heb 3:7 ¶ *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His*

voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,

a). And what we may immediately note here is that our writer affirms that what is contained in these verses is the Holy Spirit speaking – and in speaking the Holy Spirit chooses to quote from Psalm 95, once again taking us to that recorded by David, who is himself a type of Christ, and referencing the experience of the Children of Israel in the wilderness, who, we will remember, have been given to us as an example – 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.*

b). And with respect to that which David recorded throughout the Psalms we know this from the scriptures - Ac 1:16 *"Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David....."*

c). Lu 24:44 *Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."*

4). So let's look at Psalm 95 for a moment so that we can see the context in which our quotation is found - Ps 95:1 ¶ *Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. 3 For the LORD is the great God, And the great King above all gods. 4 In His hand are the deep places of the earth; The heights of the hills are His also. 5 The sea is His, for He made it; And His hands formed the dry land. 6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. 7 ¶ For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: 8 "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 When your fathers tested Me; They tried Me, though they saw My work. 10 For forty years I was grieved with that generation, And said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.' 11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"*

a). The first six and a half verses of our Psalm present to us the Christ, the Messiah of the NT – the One who is ‘the Rock of our salvation’; who is Himself the ‘great God’ – showing us that Messiah of the NT and Jehovah of the OT are one and the same.

b). He is also ‘the great King above all gods’, taking us to the Millennial Kingdom and an inhabited earth that is no longer subject to angels.

c). He is the possessor of all things and the maker of all things – Ro 11:36 *For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

d). In v7 we see that this is the God of the Jewish people, who tends to them and cares for them as a shepherd does his sheep.

e). And so it is within this context of both the greatness and the tenderness of God that the verses of our quotation appear; and this is really the very same context in the Book of Hebrews in which we find these same verses quoted.

f). *Today, if you will hear His voice:* - The word translated ‘today’, in both its Hebrew original in Psalm 95 and in its Greek translation in Hebrews 3:7, refer to the immediate present. Therefore on a personal level it is right now that we need to hear His voice, and then within a broader context, it is only within Man’s Day that there is opportunity to hear the Lord’s voice with respect to the coming Day of the Lord.

g). Now according to both the Hebrew and the Greek languages there is only one way that we will be able to hear His voice with respect to the age to come. And this is given to us in v8 of Psalm 95 and v8 of Hebrews Chapter 3 - Heb 3:8 *Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,*

h). We will then only hear His voice if we do not harden our hearts.

i). Now, the interesting thing about what is written in our scripture in the Greek language is that it would literally read, ‘do not continue to harden your hearts’ – the recipients of this letter then had already begun to harden their hearts and they are admonished to stop doing this at once.

j). That they would be hardening their hearts is not really surprising as within our Book we are told this about the original recipients of these warnings - Heb 5:10 ¶ *called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," 11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.*

k). They had become, ‘dull of hearing’, they needed to be taught again, ‘the first principles of the oracles of God’ and they had regressed to the point of needing ‘milk and not solid food’.

l). And the example given to them concerning the process of the hardening of their hearts, which must have been the very thing that was happening to them, is ‘the day of trial in the wilderness’.

m). Now, before we start to give ourselves a pass here based on the fact that we are looking to the original recipients of the letter, let’s remember that this letter is written to all those who would potentially comprise the many sons being brought to glory, those who are partakers of the heavenly calling – therefore it becomes a sobering thought that even those in pursuit of the Kingdom, maybe even ourselves, even at this moment, may have begun upon the process of the hardening of the heart for the very same reason as those who were first to receive this letter. What

we may conclude then is that the hardening of the heart after the fashion that we will see is a very real danger for all in pursuit of the Kingdom from all generations.

5). Now the incident being referred to in ‘the day of trial in the wilderness’ is recorded for us in - Ex 17:1 ¶ *Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?" 3 And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" 5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. 6 "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" 8 ¶ Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.*

a). Now this, needless to say, is fraught with significance for us.

b). We will I am sure remember that the name ‘Rephidim’ speaks of a place of rest and it is at this place that Israel camps. What we will realize though is that this is not the place of God’s rest.

c). And having taken their ease in this place they find it is a place without water.

d). Instead of trusting God who had only recently delivered them from the slavery of Egypt and brought them through the Red Sea totally destroying the power of Egypt they instead ‘contended with Moses’ and began to ‘tempt the Lord’ – we see then grumbling and complaining and a desire to put God to the test. What we should have seen here is faith.

e). In v4 Moses cries out to God and God has the solution to the problem. And we should realize that this was not a knee jerk reaction on God’s part. The provision for providing water was always there and had been prepared beforehand. The people had only to trust God, but didn’t. And even though God provided the water they needed their trust was still not in Him – Hence it is immediately following this incident the ‘Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim’.

f). Now, according to Exodus 17, the water is provided for the people by the striking of the rock in Horeb; and this is of course a picture of Christ being struck

on the cross of Calvary. It is interesting to note that the rock was struck in the presence of the elders of Israel and Christ was crucified in the presence of the elders of Israel.

g). Now, the rock is struck in Horeb after the nation is eternally redeemed at Passover therefore this is not speaking directly of the crucifixion, but rather to that which would come after the sacrifice for sins - Joh 19:34 *But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.*

h). So as we would think about this we would see the blood that comes from His side in connection with the Lord's present High Priestly ministry that provides for the sins of the eternally saved and in the water we would see both the sending of the Holy Spirit and that which is the Holy Spirit's ministry with respect to the Word - Joh 16:13 *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15 "All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.*

i). Once again then God has provided for us that which is necessary to sustain us on our wilderness journey as we continue on our course towards His Rest.

j). If however we decide to take our ease, if we step out of the race of faith then 4 things are going to happen – our hearts will start to harden, there will be no water, we will start complaining and grumbling, and the man of the flesh will attack us unmercifully – and right here is the slippery slope to apostasy and shipwreck and none of us are exempt from the possibility.

k). This is why we are exhorted - Ga 6:8 *For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

6). Let's back up a moment and look at - Heb 3:9 *Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years.*

a). We see 3 things in this verse – Israel tested God, they tried God and they saw His works 40 years.

b). There are 2 distinct words used here in the Greek for 'tested' and 'tried' that reveal an alarming picture.

c). Tested = Greek – 'peirazo', *pi-rad'-zo* = to put to the test to see if there is good or evil in the one being tested. [This is the word we saw translated 'tempted' in previous weeks]

d). Tried = Greek – ‘dokimazo, *dok-im-ad'-zo* = to put to the test for the purpose of approving the person if they pass the test.

e). Firstly Israel tested the Lord through their heart attitude expressed in the words of Exodus 17:7 - "*Is the LORD among us or not?*" – which is mind bogglingly incredible considering all they had witnessed but what is really going on here is that they wanted God to perform for them on their terms, rather than submitting to Him on His.

f). And if this were not enough they were then looking for God’s response to see if they would approve Him or not – with the idea of would they have Him as their God or not.

g). The warning to us here is that we should not adopt the same attitude towards God as Israel did – we have learned over and over in the past weeks that God is faithful and that we have a faithful High Priest - Heb 2:17 *Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

h). Therefore, in our time of testing we don’t need to challenge, we don’t need to complain, we don’t need to get frustrated and angry – we need to trust God; we need to go boldly to the throne of grace to find help in time of need. We need to relate to God on the terms He has laid out in the scriptures, remembering that He is the Creator and we are just the creation.

i). It is incredible to me that this is exactly what we saw in 2 Peter over and over again – no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in – trust God. And now here in Hebrews, exactly the same thing – trust God because He is faithful. I wonder if we are supposed to learn something from this?

7). And so, considering all that we have just seen of the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt, it is little wonder that we see this in the next verses – Heb 3:10 *Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' 11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'*"

a). Along with the idea of vexation contained in the word ‘angry’ is also the idea of being disgusted with, of loathing, of abhorring and it is therefore a very strong word demonstrating the strength of God’s feeling – God was disgusted with this generation, He loathed them, He abhorred them. And we are shown quite clearly that the reason they tested Him and tried Him that caused Him to loathe them is because ‘they always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways’.

b). The phrase ‘they always go astray’ has to do with being led astray, to be led aside from the right course. In the original Hebrew language it would be translated – ‘They are a people of wanderers in heart’. They were then easily swayed by their feelings, their emotions and their circumstances rather than staying true to that which God had told them.

c). Not only this, but they did not know God’s ways. And the word ‘know’ here speaks of experiential knowledge.

d). Israel’s ignorance of the ways of God preceded and was the cause of their being led astray. Their ignorance was as a result of their neglect of the things of God because the knowledge they lacked was experiential knowledge which was to be acquired through experience with the ways and character of God. The saddest thing is that this experiential knowledge was readily available to them, but because of their failure to interact with God after the prescribed fashion they deprived themselves of the knowledge they needed.

e). Throughout our study of the Book of Ephesians, 1 + 2 Peter and now Hebrews God has been revealing to us His nature, His character and His ways to a degree that maybe we have never seen before and we are to gain knowledge of all three of these through our experiences – simply put – by trusting God, believing God and acting according to the word of God in every circumstance, on every occasion, all the time.

f). And again the warning for us is obvious – if we are ignorant of the ways of God; ignorant of His nature and His character, because we deliberately choose not to embrace that which the scriptures teach then we also will be led astray in our hearts, God will have nothing but loathing for us and the consequence set out in Hebrews 3:11 will be ours - *11 So I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest."*

g). This is not rocket science, but it is incredibly serious.

h). And let’s also remember that our experience of the ways of God cannot be based on the religious thinking and religious practice from our past, no matter how appealing they seem, but rather on that which God has revealed through the scriptures within a Kingdom perspective.

8). And so to finish today on a positive note - Heb 10:38 *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."* 39 *But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*