

Sunday July 17th 2011
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Twelve

1). Heb 3:16 *For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

a). Chapter 3 of the Book of Hebrews draws to a close with a series of questions to which there is essentially one answer - That answer being, 'the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt'.

b). That our writer draws attention to this generation is significant for us for a number of reasons; and perhaps the foremost reason is for us to see that we are dealing with a large group of people, all of whom are eternally saved.

c). All those 'whose corpses fell in the wilderness' are the same ones who applied the blood of the Passover lambs to the door posts and lintels of their houses on the night that all the firstborn in Egypt were slain; the same ones 'who came out of Egypt led by Moses' and who passed through the Red Sea.

d). And so quite clearly for us we are dealing here with events in connection with God's plans and purposes that come into view only after eternal redemption has taken place - 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.'*

e). The promise of the inheritance in the land was given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants by the Lord via an oath, demonstrating the absolute certainty of His promise. However, despite having sworn an oath, and this generation of Jews being called out to receive the promise, God does not compromise on that which is required from those to whom the promise is given if the promise is to be realized – Ex 19:3 *And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 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."*

f). So, to be clear – the children of Israel are God’s chosen people, no one other than them would receive the land of Canaan as an inheritance, but He would rather wipe out a whole generation and let their bodies rot in the wilderness than turn aside from the conditions that His holiness demands. They did not get a pass on faithful obedience because of their particular relationship with God.

g). And maybe this letter to the Hebrews is written historically to the first generation of Christians to come out of Judaism with the obvious warning clearly spelled out for them. And for us of course the same holds true – whatever was true for the first generation remains true for every subsequent generation. - Ga 6:7 *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 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.*

h). Again, without wanting to be redundant, just because we are eternally saved and have been promised the Kingdom of the Heavens, just because Christ died for us and sent us the Holy Spirit does not mean that we can live however we like and there will be no consequences. The promise is sure, but God’s holiness demands our faithful obedience on an individual basis if we are to be the recipients of that promise.

i). Willful unbelief producing unresolved disobedience can have only one consequence - Heb 3:11 *So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"*

j). If there is one thing we have learned over and over in past months it is that God is faithful and His faithfulness includes both the positive and the negative Jas 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

2). 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). And so having demonstrated that the promise of entering God’s rest was cast aside by the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt through their willful choice to disobedience, our writer then tells us that the promise of entering His rest still remains. The promise was made in the past and remains still into the present. And this is a promise that God has taken an oath about concerning either entering His rest or being excluded from it.

b). The writer, and therefore the Holy Spirit, is fearful that those receiving the letter ‘seem to have come short of it’ [the rest]. The phrase ‘seem to have come short of it’ can also be translated ‘should be judged to have fallen short of it’.

c). For them, as for us, this would take us to the Judgment Seat of Christ where the determination as to whether we will enter His rest or not will be made.

d). And what is it that could result in us falling short of His rest? Well exactly that which we have looked at in our letter so far - Heb 2:1 ¶ *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

e). 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,*

f). Heb 3:12 *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;*

g). As we have seen in past weeks some of those who were the original recipients of this letter had already begun in this process described in our verses and it is true to say that all those in pursuit of the Kingdom have a susceptibility towards this same sin, with the same catastrophic result.

3). Heb 4:2 *For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

a). The second verse of Chapter 2 continues with the comparison between us and the first generation of Israel once again. In the first half of our verse we see that ‘indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them’. We have had the ‘gospel’, the good news preached to us and the first generation of Israel had the ‘gospel’ the good news preached to them.

b). The first generation were given the good news of entering God’s rest through occupying their position at the head of the nations within the Theocratic Kingdom in the land of Canaan.

c). We have been given the good news of entering God’s rest in the Millennial Kingdom in the Heavens. And both of these would be one and the same as we are dealing with a period of time and not a physical location.

d). Now what is interesting is the way the preaching of the gospel is presented in the original language. Through the construction of the Greek grammar we are told that the preaching of the gospel is a complete work accomplished in the past with the persistence of the finished result in the present. The idea here is that the preaching of the gospel was so thoroughly done that the memory of these messages was indelibly imprinted on the minds of the respective hearers. There is therefore no excuse that the message had not been clearly and forcefully delivered in both instances. We could translate this as, ‘We have been completely good-newsed’.

e). Eph 1:13 *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

f). 1Pe 1:25 *But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.*

4). Our verse from Hebrews 4:2 continues - *but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

a). Mixed = Greek – ‘sugkerannumi’, *soong-ker-an'-noo-mee* = to unite one thing with another.

b). That the first generation of Israel heard the word, that God’s promise concerning His rest had been thoroughly and forcefully presented to them is without dispute. But the word did not produce a return in their lives, there was no profit, because of that which was lacking on their part – faith.

c). Their lives, the way they lived, how they viewed the world should have been governed by that which God had said, but they willfully chose not to believe God, not to exercise faith, to live in disobedience, because they enjoyed the present pleasures of sin more than they looked for the future hope of rest.

d). And for ourselves we will realize that what we have heard concerning the coming Kingdom of Christ must be united together with the way we live. We cannot compartmentalize our lives so that some parts of it remain separate from that which the scriptures teach. If we have believed God, if we have faith, then every aspect of our lives on every occasion will be governed by that which God has said. And in so doing we will profit from it. Our focus will be upon that which God has promised for the future not on the present pleasures of sin. This tension between the present and the future is the very thing the Lord draws attention to in - Mt 16:26 *"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?"*

e). Ro 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

f). Jas 1:21 *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

4). Heb 4:3 *For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For He has spoken in a certain place*

of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; 5 and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest."

a). Here in v3 it is spelled out for us plainly, in case we have missed the point so far, the rest of God can only be entered into by faith. Entering into God's rest is the very thing that will characterize those who have believed. But let us be careful here to understand that the reference to 'we who have believed' takes us to the end of the race of faith and speaks of our consistency over the course of that race. It is only as we enter His rest, following the events at the Judgment Seat, that we may truly attribute to ourselves the title of 'believers' - 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,*

b). 1Pe 1:9 *receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

c). Let's pause for a moment just to say that there is a common misconception amongst Christians to call anyone who is eternally saved a 'believer'. Now in one sense this is true in that in order to be eternally saved a person must 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ', but scripture rarely uses the word 'believer' within the context of eternal salvation and so we should therefore be careful ourselves to use it after the correct fashion.

d). Just consider the verses we have been looking at again for a moment and we will see that this is so – if 'we who have believed' refers to eternal salvation then every Christian must automatically enter into the Millennial Kingdom, into the rest, but the evidence of scripture clearly shows this not to be the case. And the example we are given of the first generation of Israel validates this. They were all eternally saved and yet the whole generation perished in the wilderness and did not enter His rest.

e). And so we may conclude then, according to our scripture, that those who have faith to the saving of the soul will enter His rest and those who do not have faith will not.

f). And again, let us be careful to realize that 'the faith' is referring specifically to that which God has said concerning the Millennial Kingdom and what it takes to be a joint heir with Christ in that Kingdom and is never some kind of generic Christmas wish list - Heb 10:39 *But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*

g). The end of v3 and the beginning of v4 now give us the foundational concept of God's rest - *although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";*

h). We are then, right here, taken back to Genesis and the 6 days of work followed by the 7th day of rest and Genesis 2:2 is directly quoted in v4 –

Ge 2:1 ¶ *Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.*

i). God's rest then as cited in Hebrews and the 7th Day are one and the same. At the very foundation of all scriptural truth God had completed 6 days of restorative work with regards to a ruined creation, culminating in the creation of a Man and the making of a Woman for the purpose of rulership in the 7th Day.

j). The 7th Day, the day of rest, the Millennial Kingdom, the age to come, the Lord's Day, the Kingdom to come are all one and the same and all speak of the Christ and His companions, the many sons to be brought to glory, those who will make up His Bride ruling together in the place of angels over the earth for 1000 years – the very thing that is the subject of our Book we will remember.

k). This Day of rest has been specifically created for this specific purpose – the first generation of Israel did not enter that rest, those who believe to the saving of the soul will enter it.

5). Heb 4:6 *Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, 7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.*

a). The 7th day has been created to be occupied by members of God's creation from the Human race, and as we learned last week concerning God's word Isa 55:11 *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

b). The 7th Day then still remains and remains yet future and remains to be occupied, 'therefore it remains that some must enter it' – it is absolutely certain that this is the case.

c). Those to whom it was first preached, the first generation of Israel, did not enter it because of disobedience, nor did the second generation led by Joshua - . *" 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.*

And the reason for the second generation not entering in, even though they occupied the land, was because of the same example of disobedience. And this of course would be true for all subsequent generations up to and including those who rejected the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens. Despite this however there are

those individuals, who because of their faithful obedience in the midst of the unbelief that surrounded them, who will enter His rest in the 7th Day.

d). And so some 500 years on from this ‘after such a long time’ God says again in David that which had already been said - *"Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."* - Drawing our attention once more to Psalm 95.

e). And no doubt we will remember what the Lord said concerning the Psalms on the day of His resurrection - 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." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.*

f). Psalm 95 then speaks of the Christ, and to speak of the Christ speaks of His coming Kingdom - Ps 2:6 *"Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." 7 ¶ "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'"*

And to speak of His coming Kingdom is to take us to the 7th Day and the works that were finished from the foundation of the world.

g). And so the conclusion of Hebrews 4:9 is - *There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.*

h). The 7th Day, the Sabbath rest of God still remains ‘for the people of God’, those who will enter into that Day through their faithful obedience.

6). Heb 4:10 *For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. 11 ¶ Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.*

a). V10 tells us that the one who enters God’s day of rest, will have ceased from working just as God in the 7th Day ceased from His works.

b). So to make sense of this let’s remember that God worked for 6 days for a specific purpose – to restore a ruined creation and to set in place those who would rule over His restored creation. We must also remember that the majority of God’s work towards the fulfillment of the 7th Day comes after His initial act of bringing light into the darkness on the first day. There is a starting point then after which work is then done to bring about a specific conclusion.

c). The first day in Genesis Chapter 1 is a picture of the point of our eternal salvation where the ‘Light of the World’ enters into that which was previously only darkness. What follows in days 2-6 in Genesis Chapter 1 deals with work that is done following the point of eternal salvation and as such pictures for us the process

that leads to the salvation of the soul, which in turn will result in rulership with the King of kings and Lord of lords in the Millennial Kingdom. And as we consider this process that leads to rulership we must include all that scripture says we must do towards spiritual maturity, experiencing God's ways through practice, dying to self, overcoming temptation, overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil, being victorious in the spiritual warfare, giving the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, being on our guard against an evil heart of unbelief – to name but a few.

d). And so, to try to bring all this together – those who enter His rest will have received the salvation of their souls, they will be the many sons being brought to glory and will be the companions of Christ and will make up His Bride. Having attained the end of their faith through the accomplishment of those things we have listed there remains nothing more to be done towards the attainment of that end and in this sense they will have ceased from the work that was necessary to bring them to that point. God's work was completed with a view to rulership in the 7th Day and our work towards entering into His rest will be completed with the realization of rulership in the 7th Day.

e). In this sense we cease from our work in exactly the same way and for exactly the same reason as God ceased from His.

f). And in v11 we have both the exhortation and the warning - *11 ¶ Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.*

g). Because the Day of God's rest is still available, because we still have the opportunity to enter that rest we therefore need to be diligent to make sure this happens. And the word diligent of course speaks of effort, to get on and do that which has to be done. The word speaks of an intensity of purpose followed by intensity of effort towards the realization of that purpose. This is not then for the casual, the complacent or the lazy.

h). And according to our scripture we have to be diligent in case we should 'fall according to the same example of disobedience' – the same example as the first generation of Israel who hardened their hearts through unbelief.

7). Heb 4:12 *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

a). Now as we look at this verse let's remember that which has been our exhortation so often - "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."

b). The 'word of God' both in the person of Jesus Christ and in the scriptures that contain Him is the most glorious provision that we have towards the saving of

our soul, but we must be able to hear His voice, to receive that which He has said if that provision is to be ours.

c). The word of God is ‘alive’ and is actively alive in the sense of being constantly active and this constant activity will be on the behalf of those who hear His voice - 1Pe 1:23 *having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,*

d). The word of God is also described as ‘powerful’ which is a translation of a Greek word from which we get our word ‘energy’, that means to be active and energizing. It is ‘sharper than any two edged sword’ and in the word ‘sharper’ is the idea of being able to slice through at a single stroke of the blade rather than a continual hacking.

e). And as the sharp sword of the word pierces through, in a spiritual sense it penetrates the soul and the spirit causing the death of one and giving life to the other. And so that we will understand the picture the piercing through of the soul and spirit is likened to a sword in the natural that would pierce through the joints and marrow of a physical body.

f). And alongside this deep penetration into the very core of our being the word is ‘a discerner of the thoughts and intent of the heart’. The word translated ‘discerner’ here has the idea of sifting out and analyzing evidence for the purpose of judgment.

g). And that which is sifted through are the thoughts and intents of our heart – that which we conceive and think about that provides the motivation for our actions.

h). We will pick up on all of this next time to look at it in more detail. For today however, we will close with that which the scriptures says about the level of understanding God has of us and our actions - Heb 4:13 *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*