

Sunday October 2nd 2011
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Nineteen

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.*9 ¶ *But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. 10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

a). We had seen last week how the writer of Hebrews had used the metaphor of the earth and the rain to demonstrate the two possible outcomes for those who receive the word of God, and of course given the context of the Book of Hebrews we are dealing specifically with the Word of the Kingdom rather than the word of God in some general sense.

b). Also within our context, those being addressed through this metaphor would be those who had come to need milk and not solid food, those who had regressed to a place of spiritual immaturity - Heb 5:11 *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. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.*

c). We will remember from our scripture here that this group of the eternally saved had allowed themselves to become ‘dull of hearing’ and needed someone to teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God.

d). They had also been warned through the first warning and the second warning in our Book, in Chapter 3 - 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,*

e). And so, God has spoken to them through the warning, He has spoken to them through the admonition at the beginning of Chapter 6 - Heb 6:1a ¶ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection.....*

f). And He will continue to speak to them as they are taught again ‘the first principles of the oracles of God’.

g). And this then brings us back to our metaphor of the earth and the rain – They are pictured in ‘the earth’ and the word of God [the warning, the admonition, the first principles] is pictured in the rain.

h). If they chose not to harden their hearts, but instead chose to hear His voice then they may go on to perfection; in which case they will be like the earth which ‘bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated’, a process that will result in receiving ‘blessing from God’.

i). If, however, they chose to harden their hearts and chose therefore not to hear His voice, then they have been warned that they may reach a point of no return - 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.*

j). And if this was the case then they will be like the earth that ‘bears thorns and briars’, who will find themselves ‘rejected and near to being cursed’ at the Judgment Seat, ‘whose end is to be burned’.

k). Now although we have specifically related this to those who were the original recipients of the letter to the Hebrews, it is very easy to see the application that can be made from it for Christians of all generations.

l). We all hear the warnings that are given in the Book of Hebrews, and we all hear the Word of the Kingdom week in and week out and we will all either be the earth that is fruitful, which receives blessing from God, or the earth that produces thorns and briars and is rejected – we will all be one or the other of these as there is no middle ground. In fact this is the very same truth we have seen many times before in - 1Co 3:11 ¶ *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

m). The same truth taught in the Matthew 13 Parables - Mt 13:47 *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48 "which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. 49 "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 "and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*

n). Taught in the parable of the 10 virgins - Mt 25:8 *"And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 "But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' 10 "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'*

o). And the parable of the wedding guest - Mt 22:12 *"So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are called, but few are chosen. [lit. called out of the called]"*.

p). The evidence of scripture is very clear and leaves us without the slightest doubt – some of the eternally saved who will have heard His voice with respect to the Word of the Kingdom and then organized their lives accordingly will receive the salvation of their souls and a position of rulership with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom, and some who have hardened their hearts to the very same word won't.

q). Joh 5:28 *"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 "and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

r). 2Co 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

2). Heb 6:9 ¶ *But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.*

a). This very serious and very challenging section of scripture then moves into an area that is far more positive and encouraging.

b). The last thing before this verse that was addressed to this group of the eternally saved was the picture of the earth that would bring forth thorns and briars, that would be rejected and close to being cursed, whose end was to be burned, as we have just seen, but our writer is now 'confident of better things' for this group than that presented in the picture.

c). Now the word translated 'confident' has the sense of having been persuaded – the writer had previously had significant doubts about this group, but now has been persuaded to the contrary.

d). Rather than things that would lead to their rejection the writer has now been persuaded that ‘things that accompany salvation’ await them, even though it was necessary to speak to them in such a severe way.

e). The salvation spoken of here is of course the salvation of the soul and not the free gift of eternal life which is the irreversible possession of all Christians.

f). And we may know that we are dealing with the salvation of the soul, a future salvation that is inextricably connected to the Millennial Kingdom – 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, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

g). We may know this very simply from the scripturally stated subject of Hebrews, which is the age to come that will not be subject to angels, that we find in Chapter 2 and also because our verses have been speaking about loss and rejection, neither of which come into area of eternal salvation.

h). So what are the ‘better things...that accompany salvation’ that our writer is confident of? – Well our scripture from 1 Peter has set it out for us – there is the realization of ‘the hope’, the receiving of the ‘inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away’.

i). And by comparing scripture with scripture we would add to this list, becoming the Bride of Christ - Ge 24:4 *"but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac."*

Re 19:6 *And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

j). Which speaks of the same thing as being a joint heir with Christ – Ro 8:17 ¶ *and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

k). Which is the same thing as being adopted as a firstborn son – Eph 1:5 *having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,*

l). All of which brings to fulfillment the foundational type of Adam and the Woman from the first three Chapters of Genesis.

3). Heb 6:10 *For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

a). And here in v10 we find the reason for our writer's optimism – God is not unjust, He won't neglect their work and labor of love.

b). The word 'work' would speak of 'good works' and would have to do with dying to self through the ministry of the Holy Spirit - 2Ti 3:16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, 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.*

c). Now inevitably our dying to self and walking in the Spirit will have a direct impact on the way we relate to others - Php 4:5 *Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.*

d). Tit 3:1 ¶ *Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.*

e). 1Ti 6:17 *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

f). Then connected to the work is the 'labor of love' – Labor = Greek – 'kopos', *kop'-os* = a cut, i.e. (by analogy) toil (as reducing the strength), literally or figuratively; by implication, pains:--labour, + trouble, weariness. [this comes from a root word that means hacking with continual blows]. This then is speaking of something that is continual and can be wearying, that emanates out of 'agape' love.

g). Now both the work and the labor of love have been 'shown toward His name' and this gives us actions that are visible to God and to others and come as a result of being more 'Christ like' – a good description of this we can find in – Col 3:8 ¶ *But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. 12 ¶ Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And*

let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

h). What we find here in Colossians with respect to ‘one another’ is exactly where our verse from Hebrews takes us – *‘in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister’*.

i). We will note here though that this ministry is to ‘the saints’ – and what we will realize is that at the time this letter was written this statement was far less difficult than it is today. For the church in the early years there was the ministry to them by the Apostles; they were all taught the Word of the Kingdom and all had their eyes on the prize. Today, however, under the umbrella of ‘Christianity’ there are so many denominations, streams, rivers, waves, movements and the like that have grown in a corrupted form as a result of that contained in our Hebrews warnings, as prophesied by Christ in the Matthew 13 Parables, that it becomes far less clear as to who we should regard as ‘the saints’.

j). Needless to say the best way to resolve our dilemma is to allow the scriptures themselves to give us the answer - 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. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

k). If we should sow to the Spirit then it must follow that the way we relate to anyone will be governed by that fact and therefore ‘as we have opportunity’ we will ‘do good’ to all. But we are also admonished to do good ‘especially to those who are of the household of [the] faith’.

l). The household of the faith then would deal specifically with those who are in active pursuit of the Kingdom, those who are going on to maturity – this then brings clarity for us and makes it much easier to identify the saints to whom we are to minister on a continual basis.

4). Heb 6:11 *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

a). In v11 we see the writer’s fervent desire that all those who are the recipients of this letter would demonstrate ‘the same diligence’ with respect to ‘the full assurance of hope until the end’.

b). From that which we have studied previously we would know that not everyone who was a recipient of this letter was on the same page – but the desire now is that, as a result of what has been written to them, they will be.

c). This is the same desire we find in - Ro 12:16 *Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.*

d). And - 1Co 1:10 ¶ *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

e). Some of those who had received this letter, as we know, had let their spiritual maturity slip away and some hadn't. That being the case, those who had slipped into immaturity could have aligned themselves with those who hadn't, but also the reverse could also be true. Therefore they are all admonished not to 'become sluggish', not to allow sluggishness to become their default setting, but rather they should 'imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises' – promises to do with a land and an inheritance, the very things that would accompany salvation that we spoke of earlier.

5). Heb 6:13 *For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*

a). In v13 our writer then takes us to the father of faith, Abraham, as our example.

b). When God made a promise to Abraham concerning rulership of the earth in the 7th Day He also confirmed His promise by the swearing of an oath. And as there was no one greater than Himself to swear by, He swore by Himself.

c). Both the promise and the oath referred to in our verses take us back to – Ge 22:15 ¶ *Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - 17 "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."*

d). It is following the offering of Isaac that Abraham receives the fullness of God's promise concerning rulership of the earthly and heavenly realms of the Kingdom, reinforced by the surety of God's oath.

e). And according to our scripture in Hebrews it was after Abraham had patiently endured that he received this promise with respect to rulership.

f). His then was a patient endurance that began with leaving Ur of the Chaldes on a journey to the land of promise during which time he would wrestle with the tension between trusting God and following the dictates of his flesh.

g). Waiting until he was 100 years old before the birth of Isaac, the son of promise and then in faith taking Isaac to be a sacrifice, believing God's promise concerning Isaac above the circumstance he found himself in - Heb 11:17 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.*

h). This is one of the examples of faith and patience that both our writer's readers and we need to imitate. [there will be many more examples when we get to Hebrews 11]

i). 1Co 11:1 ¶ *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*

j). Heb 13:7 *Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*

6). Heb 6:16 *For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

a). Our writer continues by revealing the absolute certainty of God's promises by returning to the idea of the oath.

b). As we are told in v16, 'men indeed swear by the greater', and that for men 'an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute'. Within the historical context the swearing of an oath was extremely serious and binding to the point of death.

c). It is somewhat more difficult for us to grasp the full importance of this as, outside of ourselves, our word means little unless supported by a legal contract and then that may not mean anything if we can find a lawyer smart enough to get us out of it.

d). Now the point of what we read here is this – That God makes a promise is enough of itself. The scriptures tell us - 2Co 1:20 *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

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?"*

e). However, because of the frailty of man, in order to make the certainty of His promise sure, He brings Himself into the realm of human experience, by the swearing of an oath in confirmation of His promise.

f). Was there ever any doubt as to the truth of God's promise that it had to be confirmed with an oath? Absolutely not, but this He did for our benefit, so as to demonstrate the absolute certainty of what He had said within an experience that human beings could relate to. This of itself is truly remarkable.

7). If the Lord permits, we will pick this up again next week.