

Sunday May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011  
The Letter to the Hebrews  
Part Four

1). Heb 2:1 ¶ *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?*

a). We will remember from last week that this, the first of the five warnings found in the Book of Hebrews, that we see here at the beginning of Chapter 2, must be seen within the context of that which is revealed to us in Chapter 1 – as indeed must the remaining four warnings.

b). And Chapter 1 we will remember is a Chapter that deals with the One - Heb 1:2b...*whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

The One who will exercise the rights of the firstborn in the age to come – 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"?*

c). And those who will be ‘companions’ with Him, who are about to inherit salvation - Heb 1:14 *Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*

d). And all this within the framework of the 7<sup>th</sup> Day, the Age to come, the Millennial Kingdom - Heb 1:8 *But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."*

e). And so firstly, at the beginning of Chapter 2, we are admonished to ‘give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard’, the things detailed in Chapter 1, and we are warned that we need to do this ‘lest we drift away’ – in case that through our own carelessness we let the Kingdom slip from our grasp.

f). Verses 2 and 3 from Chapter 2 then make plain to us the consequences of drifting away by drawing our attention to the first generation of the nation of Israel to come out of Egypt who received ‘a just reward’ for every transgression and disobedience they committed against the revealed word of God; the word in which

God spoke of a land, an inheritance and the rights of the firstborn – and we are to look to these events involving Israel remembering that they are written down and given to us for a purpose - 1Co 10:6 ¶ *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*

g). And so from this we realized that just as God had dealt with Israel in past history with regards to how they had responded to His word concerning the earthly realm of the Kingdom, so He will deal with Christians with regards to how they have responded to His word concerning the heavenly realm of the Kingdom.

h). The substance of God's judgment upon Christians will be the same as that upon Israel with the difference that judgment for Christians is deferred to the Judgment Seat of Christ, rather than being manifest in the present - Heb 13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

i). The certainty of this is made clear to us in the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse in Chapter 2 - 3 *how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,*

j). What is asked here is a rhetorical question, a question that already has an unequivocal answer – given then what has just been revealed to us concerning Israel in the preceding verse we realize that it is not possible for us to escape 'a just reward' if we neglect so great a salvation - 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.*

k). And we know that the NT scriptures are replete with examples of this very thing, and are there to be plainly seen by anyone who has eyes to see – Mt 25:10 *"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.'*

l). Ga 5:19 *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

2). Now, I know that we know this, but let us go through this one more time so as to make absolutely certain that we understand that the 'so great a salvation' spoken of in Chapter 2:3 is the same salvation that is spoken of in Chapter 1:14 – a salvation that is to be inherited – a salvation that is connected to becoming a 'companion' of the One who is 'heir of all things' – a salvation that is connected to being adopted as a firstborn son, thereby inheriting the rights of the firstborn.

a). The very fact that this salvation is seen connected to inheritance will make plain for us that we are not talking about the salvation we presently possess – the free gift of eternal life, the salvation of our spirit; as this salvation is already ours, it is not something yet to be inherited, nor is it dependent upon our adoption as a firstborn son.

b). So, rather than the free gift we are talking about the salvation of our soul which is contingent upon inheritance and adoption. And I am hoping that we might remember a scripture that we looked at in 1 Peter that draws all this together – 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. 6 ¶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

c). Now this salvation, ‘the salvation of your souls’ is something that has consumed the interest of both prophets and angels, which is exactly what we see by continuing to read in 1 Peter - 1Pe 1:10 ¶ *Of this salvation [the salvation of the soul] the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into. 13 ¶ Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

d). Then as we go back into Hebrews 2:3 we see that the salvation of the soul is qualified by the words ‘so great’, a descriptive term showing it to be something quite remarkable.

e). So great = Greek – ‘telikoutos’, *tay-lik-oo'-tos* = so vast:--so great, so mighty.

f). Although we can read the words of our definition here from the Greek it would be helpful to see this word used in context elsewhere in scripture in order to help us understand the full impact of what is being said. The word is only used 4

times in the NT, and going to its last usage in the Book of Revelation will provide us with the clearest picture of what is meant by it - Re 16:17 ¶ *Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"* 18 *And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty [telikoutos] and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.*

g). The earthquake that we see here in v18 occurs in connection with the conclusion of God's dealings with the earth dwellers during the Tribulation, immediately preceding His Son's return. And what we are told here is that this earthquake is 'so mighty', 'telikoutos', that it is significantly more powerful than any earthquake has ever been since the time of the days of Adam onwards. If we just call to mind the incredible power we have seen in earthquakes in recent history we will begin to comprehend the enormity of what is being described here.

h). And so when we see this word, 'telikoutos', used in connection with salvation we will realize that we are dealing with something so incredible, the likes of which have never been seen before. Now this by no means takes away from the incredibleness of eternal salvation, but rather demonstrates just how much more incredible is the salvation of the soul compared to the incredible salvation of the spirit.

i). It is impossible to find words that would adequately describe this, but suffice it to say that we are looking at the most superlative, the most incredible thing that an all knowing and all powerful God could bestow upon His redeemed creation. Nothing has come close to this salvation before and nothing may come close to it ever again. It has taken the death and shed blood and resurrection of God Himself to make this possible and affords those found worthy to receive it the indescribable privilege to be adopted as God's own firstborn son thereby affording them the right to sit on Christ's throne in the Heavens and to rule and reign with Him as a joint heir – as someone who has received exactly the same inheritance as Christ has received - Ro 8:16 *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 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.*

3). And so, taking all this into consideration it is not surprising that we would not escape a 'just reward' if we neglect 'so great a salvation'.

a). Now our neglecting 'so great a salvation' would come about as a result of our drifting away and so once again we would realize the importance of 'giving the more earnest heed to the things we have heard'.

b). Neglect = Greek – ‘ameleo’, *am-el-eh'-o* = to be careless of:--make light of, neglect, be negligent, no regard.

c). This particular word only appears 5 times in the NT and if we look at some of its usages we will see something interesting.

d). The word appears in a parable given by the Lord in Matthew Chapter 22, a parable that has particular significance to our present subject. Although this is familiar let us look at it once again as repetition is always good - Mt 22:1 ¶ *And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, 3 "and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. 4 "Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" 5 "But they made light [ameleo] of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 "And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. 7 "But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8 "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 'Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' 10 "So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 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."*

e). The parable of the wedding guest as I am sure we will remember describes three different invitations to two different groups of people to attend a royal wedding.

f). The first two invitations are given to the same group of individuals and represent the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens made to the nation of Israel during the time of the Lord's first advent and then the reoffer of the Kingdom by the Church to Israel during the period of time covered by the Book of Acts.

g). In the first instance we see that - 2 *"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, 3 "and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.*

h). Simply, those invited ‘were not willing to come’ – however in the second instance we see a noticeable addition - 5 *"But they made light [ameleo] of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 "And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them*

i). Here we see that those invited showed a total disregard for that which was being offered to them some even going as far as to treat the King's servants 'spitefully' and even killing them - Ac 9:1 ¶ *Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest*

j). In consequence of this, that which had been offered to the first group was taken from them and offered to a different group of individuals – those who would make up the body of Christ, who would for the most part be drawn from the Gentile nations, in other words Christians - 8 *"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 'Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.*

*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.*

k). Those then now being offered the Kingdom of the Heavens, also referred to as 'the salvation of God' in Acts 28:28 [the salvation about to be inherited], all the eternally saved from this dispensation are classified in our parable in Matthew as follows - 10 *"So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

l). Now within the context of the response of the nation of Israel to the offer of the Kingdom, making light of it, we would have to see those Christians in Matthew 22:10 who are classified as 'bad' as being those who display the same attitude to the Kingdom, that of disregard, as the nation of Israel; with those classified as 'good' as those who understand and accept the offer being made to them – those who give the more earnest heed to the things they have heard – those who do not neglect 'so great a salvation' – those who are about to inherit salvation.

m). Within our parable the Judgment Seat of Christ is pictured as 'the wedding hall', and it was 'filled with guests', the bad and the good, as – 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.*

n). *11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 "So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.*

The man here in v11 who did not have on a wedding garment is representative of all those Christians previously classified as ‘bad’ who have made light of, who have disregarded the inheritance offered to them. And knowing in that Day that this is exactly what they had done they will, like our man in the parable, have absolutely nothing they can say.

o). And of course our parable comes to a conclusion with the consequences of neglecting ‘so great a salvation’ - *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.'*

p). And here in v13 we see graphically presented the answer to the question from Hebrews 2:3 – ‘how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation’ – we won’t. Just as the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt perished in the wilderness, eternally saved but falling short of their inheritance, so will Christians who neglect so great a salvation find themselves in the place of which the wilderness is a type – the outer darkness – apart from Christ and His Kingdom glory – eternally saved, but falling short of their inheritance - *1Co 3:15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

4). Now this Greek word ‘ameleo’ is also used in Hebrews Chapter 8 within the following context - *Heb 8:8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- 9 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded[ameleo] them, says the LORD.*

a). And so what we see here is perfectly consistent with receiving the ‘just reward’ [reaping what you sow] from Hebrews 2:2. Just as Israel disregarded the covenant that God had made with them, so He in return disregarded them.

5). We also find the word ‘ameleo’ used in a positive way in a Book we have recently studied - *2Pe 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 12 ¶ For this reason I will not be negligent [ameleo] to remind you always of these things, though you know and are*

*established in the present truth. 13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you,*

a). The subject of our verses here is the supply of an abundant entrance ‘into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’, the very subject we are dealing with in Hebrews, and because of the seriousness of this subject Peter states his determination not to make light of, not to disregard, his responsibility ‘to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth’. Having a constant reminder of these things and giving the more earnest heed to the things we have heard would be inseparably connected.

b). It would be true to say that we know and are established in the present truth, but nonetheless we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, the truth we already know, we must keep our eyes firmly fixed on the goal out ahead of us - *Php 3:14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

c). And then if we step back for a moment from the human involvement in the letters of Peter and Hebrews we will realize that this is the literal word of God to us. The Holy Spirit will constantly remind us of the truth of Christ’s coming Kingdom; He will constantly desire to ‘stir us up’ so that we won’t become complacent, or careless, so that we won’t drift away.

d). God is continually active in this way on our behalf, which is of great encouragement to us, but what He does not control is our response to Him – that is a matter of our own personal choice. And so what we will realize is exactly what we have seen in the scriptures – we will have no excuses, and we will receive ‘a just reward’ – and that can be positive or negative.

6). And so to bring to a conclusion for today this section on ‘so great a salvation’ we will remember that the scripture said - *Heb 2:3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?*

a). We see in the second half of v3 that the message surrounding the ‘so great a salvation’ ‘at the first began to be spoken by the Lord’ – Perhaps we have never consciously made the connection but the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to Israel at the Lord’s first advent would of necessity encompass the salvation of the soul as eternally redeemed Man is in no position to rule while still in possession of a sin nature - *Mt 16:24 ¶ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the*

*whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.*

b). Mr 8:38 *"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."* [a just reward]

c). Not only was this message ‘at the first’ spoken by the Lord but it was also ‘confirmed to us by those who heard Him’ - 2Pe 1:16 ¶ *For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*

d). And not only this, but also - *4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?*

e). As we will recall the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens, the ‘so great a salvation’ was presented to the nation of Israel by the Lord and His disciples and this message was accompanied by signs, wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit – something of course repeated during the reoffer of the Kingdom to Israel by the Church recorded in the Book of Acts – and these supernatural events were the credentials of the messengers, bearing witness to the validity of the message they proclaimed.

f). These signs, wonders and miracles were a demonstration of the ‘powers of the age to come’ spoken of in Hebrews Chapter 6. And we should note that these ‘powers’ belong to the age to come not the present age and were exhibited only to demonstrate to Israel that which awaited them if they chose to repent in order to be an heir with the One appointed Heir of all things – all of which is confirmed in scriptural prophecy - Isa 35:1 ¶ *The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; 2 It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellency of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, The excellency of our God. 3 Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees. 4 Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you." 5 ¶ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.*

g). The signs, wonders and miracles were exclusively for the nation of Israel in connection with the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens - 1Co 1:22 *For Jews request a sign,*

h). A Kingdom that was in that day 'at hand'. Well the Kingdom is no longer 'at hand' but it, along with the 'so great a salvation', is being offered to a nation other than Israel – a nation that is to live by faith. The signs, wonders and miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit took place in real time and their reality is now part of the scriptural record and for us that is to be enough.

i). As we saw in our study of Peter, it is in the validity of scripture alone that we have our hope - 2Pe 1:19 ¶ *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;*

j). We shall end for today then with this scripture from - Heb 12:25 *See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,*