

Sunday October 21st 2012
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Sixty Two

1). Heb 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

a). Faith is the great issue in the Book of Hebrews, as indeed it is throughout the rest of scripture, and the foundation for the faith that we find in this Book is laid in Chapter 1 - Heb 1:1 ¶ *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

b). Faith is simply believing that which God has said and this faith is then brought to its goal, to its completion by the organizing of our lives in response to that which we have believed.

c). And that which God has said He has spoken ‘at various times and in various ways in time past to the fathers by the prophets’ and then He has ‘in these last days spoken to us by His Son’ – and all that He has said, by the prophets and by His Son has to do with a time when His Son will inherit ‘all things’.

d). This foundation in Chapter 1 is then built upon through the Chapters which follow using a type/antitype structure, drawing from the experiences of Israel in the wilderness and the Tabernacle ministry.

e). The structure that is built through these Chapters then receives its ‘capstone’ with Chapter 11 – the great Chapter of faith.

f). And this chapter draws from the experience of particular OT saints as they believed and responded to that which God had said ‘at various times and in various ways’, ‘by the prophets’.

g). And whether our starting point is the death of Abel, or the sacrifice of Isaac, all bring us to exactly the same focal point of time – the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

2). At the beginning of the Book of Genesis this focal point is pictured in the 7th Day – Ge 2:2 *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,

a). And this 7th Day is then shown to have to do with a land and an inheritance – Heb 11:8 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.*

b). The catalogue of OT saints who are presented to us in Hebrews Chapter 11 all looked for this land and this inheritance, but what they looked for was not to be found in the land covenanted to Abraham Isaac and Jacob on the earth, the land of Canaan, but a place in the New Jerusalem, in the Kingdom of the heavens, the heavenly land - Heb 11:9 *By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.....13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

c). And whether we are looking at Enoch, or Moses, or Rahab, the same would be true for each.

3). And it is this very theme that brings Chapter 11 to a close also making an explicit connection between the lives of these OT saints and our own experience - Heb 11:32 ¶ *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the*

promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

a). What becomes evident then is that there is an unspecified number of OT saints who will realize positions of rulership over the nation of Israel within the Kingdom of the heavens - Mt 8:11 *"And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*

b). V32 makes the explicit connection between what is about to be recorded and that which has already been written.

c). 'And what more shall I say?' – in other words what more shall I add to what I have already told you?.

d). 'For the time would fail me to tell of....' – there would then be so many more examples of OT saints who had this same like faith, that the writer would not have enough time to write about them.

e). This is the same idea that we see at the end of John's gospel – Joh 21:25 *And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.*

f). There is so much more that could have been written, so much more than the scriptures actually record – and this very fact should continually cause us to look carefully at the examples that the Holy Spirit particularly wants to draw our attention to.

g). The writer has no time *-to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:* - but the names listed here should be added to the list of names that began in Hebrews 11:4 with Abel – and although nothing is said specifically about them individually I would encourage us all to go away and look at why this group would be particularly mentioned. Now some names we might at once see, but what about Barak and Jephthah? Perhaps one day, if the Lord is willing we will study these.

h). But what is said of them is that they all acted 'by faith' – they had believed that which God had said – set their sights on that which lay beyond this world and then acted accordingly.

i). And this of course is what is recorded about their actions - *33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

j). Again we need to be clear that the exploits we see recorded here do not come out of the individual's natural ability, but through trusting God to accomplish that which without Him would not be humanly possible. In this sense we can see this group, as with those we have been previously studying, fulfilling that recorded in - Heb 6:1*let us go on to perfection*, - as it would pertain to these OT saints within their experience. In the same way we could also see them fulfilling that recorded in - Php 2:12 ¶ *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*

k). Going on to perfection and receiving the goal of faith are not exclusively NT concepts - this is the process and the conclusion for all who would aspire to the 'heavenly calling', whether they lived before the cross or after it.

l). And these examples are given for us, examples of literal events that took place within Biblical history, but, let us not be deceived into thinking that these exploits are only for the heroes of scripture and have no bearing on our own pilgrim journey - no, these are exploits that are in the realm of our own experience, every day, if we would but see them.

m). Let's just think about it for a moment - 'through faith subdued kingdoms' - well think about the present kingdom of Satan where we find united together against us the world, the flesh and the devil - the word translated 'subdued' in our scripture is a word that means to overcome, so 'through faith' kingdoms were overcome and we are called to be overcomers - to overcome the world the flesh and the devil, the realms of the kingdom under Satan's control - 1Jo 5:4 *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.*

n). Step up then you mighty person of valor and start subduing kingdoms.

o). We are to 'work righteousness' as we go from faith to faith - Ro 1:17 *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

Remember these are the acts which make our wedding garment - Re 19:8 *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.*

p). We have, by our faith 'obtained promises' - 2Pe 1:3 *as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be*

partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Promises that we have received by faith that relate to our present experience and to our future expectation.

q). We live as it were in the lion's den, in Satan's kingdom, and his appetite is insatiable and so we had better make sure that we have 'stopped the mouth of the lion' - 1Pe 5:8 ¶ *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith,*

r). The 'violence of fire' is to be quenched through the spiritual warfare Eph 6:16 *above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

s). At the Judgment Seat of Christ we are to be judged by the Word of God and this is how our Lord is described in - Re 1:16 *He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword,*

This sword is 'two edged' because it deals with both the positive and the negative - reward, inheritance and life or no reward, no inheritance and death; all with regards to the age to come. So how do we escape the edge of the sword that brings death? Well what does the scripture say? -

1Co 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

1Co 6:18 *Flee sexual immorality.*

1Co 10:14 *Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*

t). 'Out of weakness were made strong' - 2Co 12:10 *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

u). And putting all this together, this is how we are to defeat the forces that inhabit the heavenly land that God has promised us as an inheritance - *become valiant in battle, turn to flight the armies of the aliens.*

Remember - 2Co 10:3 *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

v). Each and every one of these examples can only be accomplished by faith and each and every one is ours. Those OT saints who performed these exploits did so by faith during the course of their lives because they looked to

God's promises of a heavenly Kingdom and these same exploits are to be our present experience as we look to these same promises.

4). Heb 11:35 *Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.*

a). As we move into v35 we move away from specific individuals to the experiences of an unnamed group – those who are simply classified as 'women' and 'still others' – those whose experiences by and large are not attractive to the natural eye - Heb 11:37 *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.*

b). Now the point here is for us to see exactly what they were prepared to endure for the sake of realizing the promises of God.

c). What we can see is just how little this present world and their own lives meant to them when set alongside that which God has provided for the future. In their attitude I think we can see that which Paul wrote about in – Ro 8:18 *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

d). And although we might not have to experience the awful circumstances they endured [although if we did it should not influence our faith] we are, by faith, to have the same disregard for this world and our own lives as they did.

e). Perhaps we should also note that they all had opportunity to get out of the circumstance they were in, but they did not accept deliverance, because of that which awaited them if they remained faithful. As we read this section of Chapter 11 we might also remember the experiences yet to be endured by the Tribulation martyrs as they embrace the promises and stand with the people of God.

5). And it is within this section of scripture that we find clearly stated the reason for the faith enacted by all those in Hebrews Chapter 11 - *that they might obtain a better resurrection*

a). Now in past weeks we have studied the resurrection of OT saints in connection with the restoration of the nation of Israel at the end of the Great Tribulation and how this group return to the land covenanted to Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob under the headship of Christ prior to the destruction of Gentile world power - Eze 37:12 *"Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13 "Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. 14 "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD."*

b). And it is once in the land, following the overthrow of Gentile world power, that this 'better resurrection', which is the exclusive province of the OT saints, will take place.

c). Now the word translated 'resurrection' is a compound word that means to stand up from, to stand out of.

d). All OT saints as we see from our scripture in Ezekiel will come up from their graves and be brought into the land of Israel – they are then all resurrected – then out of this entire resurrected group there will be those who had set their hearts and minds upon the heavenly Kingdom, who had organized their lives by faith accordingly, who will then stand up, out from this general group – this is what is called the 'better resurrection'. They will stand up, out of this large group who will remain on the earth, and will be taken into the New Jerusalem to receive positions of rulership over those Jews who inhabit the earthly realm of the Kingdom.

e). This 'better resurrection' of course remains yet future and although this event for them remained thousands of years in the future, it was to this that the course of their life was set - Heb 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

Heb 11:39 *And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.*

f). And it is here in v40 that we find the explicit connection with ourselves – 'God having provided something better for us' – a 'better resurrection' maybe? – Well scripture doesn't use that phrase with respect to Christians, although we do find an equivalent to this for ourselves – but I would suggest that which is 'better' for us is the offer to Christians to be a joint heir with Christ; dependent upon our own pilgrim walk, as we go on to perfection, looking with the eyes of faith to that future day beyond this mortal coil.

6). And it is with a view to this that Paul writes about the NT equivalent of the 'better resurrection' - Php 3:7 *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 ¶ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection [lit. out resurrection] from the dead. 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

a). It is in these verse that we encounter another of those errors of translation that not only cause confusion, but also mask for us the connection with the 'better resurrection' for OT saints in Hebrews.

b). The regular Greek word for resurrection is the word 'anastasis', but the word translated resurrection in v11 of Philippians 3 is 'exanastasis' – the preposition 'ex' prefixed to 'anastasis' means 'out of' – literally then we are talking about those who would 'stand up out of' those who have already 'stood up out of' – confused? Don't be.

c). When Christians are raised from the dead to appear at the Judgment Seat along with those who are raptured we will as we know find all Christians there, both the faithful and the unfaithful – the 'dead in Christ' will have been separated at this time from all the other dead; from both OT saints and the unsaved dead – they will stand up out of all the other dead and taken into the heavens.

d). The out-resurrection has to do with another separation that takes place after this – when a smaller group will be separated out of, who will stand up from, all those who were previously raised from the dead; they will stand up out of the entire contingent of Christians at Christ's Judgment Seat – this is the antitype of the Woman taken from Adam's body.

e). And we can see from our scripture in Philippians that this 'out-resurrection' is directly connected to attaining 'the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus'. And we can also see that attaining this out-resurrection was the glorious obsession of Paul's life – the passion with which he sought

after this is the same passion we see evidenced in those OT saints in Hebrews Chapter 11 who were pursuing at whatever cost, a 'better resurrection'.

f). Paul's passion centered on having an intimate relationship with Christ during his pilgrim walk in order that he might be amongst those who would receive the prize – but note if you will the nature of the relationship Paul desired - *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*, - this is not a plea for a warm and fuzzy, let me come and sit on Your knee relationship, but rather a plea that Paul's life would so replicate that of his Lord that he would understand and experience what it meant to endure the cross and despise the shame because of the joy set before him.

g). Paul was prepared to suffer the loss of all things and count them rubbish that he might gain Christ, that he might have the righteousness that comes from God through faith – the very righteousness that Christ implored us to seek, of which Abraham is but one example - Mt 6:33 *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

Jas 2:23 *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.*

h). If this was Paul's passion and the obsession of his pilgrim walk, if this is what drove the OT saints to a life to be counted worthy at whatever cost, shouldn't this be our passion also?

i). Just how much do we really want to be a part of the out-resurrection? Are we really prepared to pay the price in order to make our call and election sure?

j). Well as always we do have a choice, but the choice that we ought to make is given to us at the beginning of the very next Chapter of Hebrews – the Chapter in which we also find our fifth and final warning –

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.*

7). All of this however, will have to wait until next time, if the Lord is willing.