

Sunday June 19th 2011
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Eight

1). Heb 2:16 *For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. 3:1 ¶ Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house.*

a). We had seen last week how our Lord had taken to Himself the form and nature of His creation, Man, for the purpose of suffering death - Heb 2:9 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.*

b). Now when we are speaking about death we are always speaking of separation from God rather than physical death or ceasing to exist and as we think about separation from God we must be careful to realize that this separation has to do with separation from God's purpose for His created being rather than separation in some general sense.

c). God and His purpose, which is His Son and His Son's companions ruling over the earth from the Heavens during the 7th Day, are inextricably connected. God is His purpose and His purpose is God - Isa 46:9 *Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'*

d). Eph 1:7 *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,*

e). And so with this in mind we will realize that separation from God, from an eternal perspective, means being separated from God's purpose for the creation of Man throughout the endless ages of eternity future with no opportunity for respite from that condition. A condition that is graphically described in –
Re 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

f). And again, separation from God from a Kingdom perspective would mean being separated from God's purpose for the creation of Man and separated from the reason for the eternal salvation of Man for the duration of the Millennial Kingdom, also described graphically in - *Mt 13:40 "Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

g). Now we may want to debate whether that which is described in our scriptures from Revelation and Matthew are literal or figurative, but to be honest this is hardly the issue. Whether literal or figurative what is described here is exceedingly unpleasant.

h). We must also note that according to Hebrews 2:9 the Lord tasted death for everyone – He experienced, through the embracing of the human condition, exactly what that separation from God would be like and the record of this experience we had looked at 2 weeks ago in Psalm 22.

i). As that which is recorded in Psalm 22 is the anguish which the Lord experienced through separation as a result of becoming sin for us, then we must conclude that this same anguish will be the experience of those who allow sin to separate them from God's purpose whether it be for the duration of the Kingdom or the endless ages of eternity

j). Needless to say this is not a happy situation on either count.

k). *Ps 22:14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.*

2). However, as we also saw last week, as a result of suffering death the Lord destroyed the power of the devil - *Heb 2:14 ¶ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

a). Through sharing in 'flesh and blood', through His sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection we have been set free from the kingdom of Satan, but just

as a slave in the natural upon receiving his freedom could choose to place himself back under his former master's dominion, so can we if we choose to live according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit - Ro 8:13 *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

b). But the point here is that we now have a choice – if we remain slaves to sin it is because we choose to and if we can choose to be a slave to sin we can also choose to be a slave to righteousness instead - Ro 6:16 *Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*

c). And then in the making and the implementation of the choice to be a slave to righteousness we are not left to the exertion of our own strength as our opening scripture today tells us - Heb 2:16 *For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.*

d). 'The seed of Abraham', within the context of our letter, would be those who are Abraham's seed by faith - Ga 3:29 *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

e). Our Lord has then 'laid hold of' the seed of Abraham for the purpose of helping them – and this is something He did not do for angels. And of course the help would be with a view to our success in the race of the faith. Quite clearly we only become the seed of Abraham if we 'are Christ's' and so the help the Lord provides is with regards to the salvation of the soul rather than the salvation of the spirit.

3). And so, in order to 'lay hold of' the seed of Abraham in order to provide the help we need towards the salvation of our souls the scripture tells us –
17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

a). In the phrase 'He had to be' we see the translation of the Greek word - 'opheilo', *of-i'-lo* = to be under obligation.

b). And this is to be under obligation because of a certain consideration – in other words there is a particular reason, because of the position the Lord adopted, why the Lord was under obligation 'to be made like His brethren' and it is because He had determined and had taken up the position to be the One who would 'lay hold of' human beings for the purpose of helping them fulfill God's purpose for their creation.

c). The obligation arising out of this position was that in order to provide for the salvation of the soul for the eternally redeemed of the human race He had to become like the human race, namely, Man, in both form and nature, because a

priest must always share in the nature of those on behalf of whom he ministers if he is to minister with compassion and mercy –Heb 5:1 ¶ *For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. 3 Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins.*

d). And so in order to ‘have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray’ the Lord at His incarnation was ‘made like His brethren’ – and this was a real and complete likeness to humanity, apart from sin, a likeness that was most apparent at the very point where the outworking of the curse from the Garden was most recognizable – in poverty, in temptation and in violent, unmerited death.

e). Christ’s incarnation then made possible His becoming a merciful and faithful High Priest not exclusively because of His omniscience as the Son of God, but rather experientially through the human condition which He had embraced as the second Man.

f). The word translated ‘merciful’ is, in the Greek language, a word that speaks of being actively compassionate. He has sympathy with our weaknesses and has experienced the suffering we endure as we wrestle with the sin in our lives and in consequence He lays hold of us in order to be our helper in our time of need. This is not a knee jerk reaction on His part, but rather a continually active process.

g). And so our Lord, being an actively compassionate High Priest is therefore a faithful one – One who is trustworthy, one who is sure, one who is true, who in all circumstances can be relied upon.

h). And as I thought about this I was reminded of the incident in Genesis Chapter 15 where God cuts a covenant with Abram in response to Abram’s question - Ge 15:8 *And he said, "Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"*

i). Now the covenant was not for the purpose of keeping God to His word, but was rather for Abram’s benefit, to prove to him in terms that he could understand that God is faithful.

j). In the same way we can be assured that Jesus, as our High Priest, is actively compassionate towards us because He has shared in our suffering and understands through experience our weaknesses.

4). Let’s remind ourselves of what we read in v17 again - *17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

a). The phrase ‘in things pertaining to God’ is a technical phrase which speaks of the functions of ministry service. So we should note that the Lord is a faithful High Priest in the function of His ministry towards His Father.

b). And the particular ministry service He has been faithful in is given to us in the phrase, ‘to make propitiation for the sins of the people’.

c). The word ‘propitiation’, within our context here, refers to Christ’s blood with respect to the sin of the eternally saved. As our High Priest He is faithful to apply His blood to our sin thereby satisfying the righteous demands of God’s justice. We will no doubt remember that this is the very thing we saw last week recorded in - 1Jo 1:7 *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 ¶ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

d). And He does this out of an active compassion because He understands our weaknesses.

5). Heb 2:18 *For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

a). In the original language the emphasis in this verse is not on the Lord’s suffering, but rather on the reason for His suffering, which is, ‘being tempted’.

b). Tempted = Greek – ‘peirazo’, *pi-rad'-zo* = to test (objectively), i.e. endeavor, scrutinize, entice, discipline:--assay, examine, go about, prove.

c). The word firstly, as we see in our definition, means the action of being put to the test to see what good or evil is in the one being tested; and then secondly, because so many people broke down under the test and committed sin, the word came to mean ‘a solicitation to do evil’. It is what the word has come to mean that is probably uppermost in our understanding of it.

d). And within our verse here from Hebrews 2:18 both meanings would have to be in view.

e). Therefore, according to our scripture, our Lord in His incarnation, through His embracing of the human condition, was put to the test and was also solicited to do evil.

f). We will no doubt remember the Lord’s temptation in the wilderness – Mt 4:1 ¶ *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the*

pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" 8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" 11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

g). In v3 we see the temptation to satisfy the desires of the flesh. The Lord, after 40 days and 40 nights of fasting 'was hungry' – but the Lord's focus here was not on His physical need for food, but that which really mattered - *'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'* – And here He quotes from - De 8:3 *"So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.*

And no doubt this is why the Lord later says - Mt 6:25 ¶ *"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"*

Perhaps there are echoes here of Esau who relinquished his birthright to satisfy his hunger.

h). In the next temptation v5-7 we find the devil quoting from Psalm 91- *For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"*

And this is a Psalm that has its focus on the age to come – and so the solicitation to do evil is through an appeal firstly to pridefulness and secondly to bring into the present that which awaits the future.

Then in response the Lord once again quotes from Deuteronomy, this time from - De 6:16 *"You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah.*

And what is very interesting here is the context from which this quotation is taken – let's look at the next 3 verses - De 6:17 ¶ *"You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. 18 "And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the LORD swore to your fathers, 19 "to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.*

We are again taken to the promise of the age to come – the very joy that the lord had set before Him.

i). The final temptation recorded in this passage of scripture in Matthew is perhaps the greatest of all as it is a solicitation to have the dominion that is to be the Lord's in that future Day, without having to endure the cross in order to get there - *8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."*

Knowing as we do now the reason for the Lord's incarnation we can perhaps hear the full force of what Satan says to Him here. But once again the Lord turns to Deuteronomy - *De 6:13 "You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.*

De 10:20 "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name.

And in this temptation we hear the Lord's words recorded in - *Mr 8:35 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? 37 "Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*

j). And so what might we conclude here? Well the Lord was focused on the joy that was set before Him and nothing was to move Him from that purpose. And likewise our focus needs to be in exactly the same place, with exactly the same motivation. And the Lord has provided us with exactly what we need in order to be able to successfully endure temptation - *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. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*

k). And let's not forget what the scripture says about temptation - *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.*

l). And the promise that has to accompany it - *Jas 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

6). *Mt 16:21 ¶ From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. 22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen*

to You!" 23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." 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.

a). Then again here in Matthew Chapter 16 we see the Lord being tempted to turn away from the cross and instead do that which would be pleasing in the eyes of others.

b). But also, again, we see the Lord focused on the things of God, not the things of men. And to underline the importance for us of being mindful of the things of God v27 brings us right to our future appearance at His Judgment Seat.

c). Perhaps this is why the Lord warns in - Lu 14:26 *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.*

7). And finally let's remember the garden of Gethsemane on the night of the Lord's betrayal - Mt 26:36 ¶ *Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." 39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." 40 Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? 41 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." 43 And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. 44 So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. 45 Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 "Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."*

a). Here within the humanity that He has embraced is the awful anticipation of that which awaits Him *"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.* Which gives rise to the request, *"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;*

b). Now we should be careful to note here that it is not going to the cross that the Lord is asking to pass from Him, but rather the separation from His Father that will accompany it.

c). Knowing the content of Psalm 22 and feeling the awful anticipation of this in His human nature He asks if there is any other way.

d). But let's please note that He is seeking another way only if it is within the will of His Father – hence His ultimate act of faithful obedience, *nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.*

e). And how this needs to be our constant cry and our constant practice.

8). We would do well to remember that God has provided us with everything that is necessary for us to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil; not the least of which is the provision of Jesus as our High Priest, a minister of the true Tabernacle.

a). In every temptation, no matter how trying, our Lord is ready and waiting to rush to our aid, to lay hold of us to help us by His grace because He understands all there is to know about temptation, not only in His omniscience, but also through His experience, as he has experienced temptation for Himself – *18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

b). Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

c). And what is absolutely remarkable here is that the Holy Spirit, through the scripture, makes absolutely clear that the Lord experienced every kind of temptation we experience; He wants to make clear that there was no peculiarity in Jesus which made His temptation wholly different to ours. We must realize in this that He felt in His own human consciousness the difficulty of being righteous in this world; that He felt pressing upon Him the reasons and inducements that so often make us want to choose sin so as to escape the suffering of dying to self. Within every part of His human nature He knew the pain and the conflict with which temptation is overcome.

d). Now, even though His divinity may have ensured His success, His temptation and the conflict that accompanies it were very real and could only have been overcome by the same means that are open to all of us. The only difference between our temptations and those of Jesus is that His did not result in sin.

e). As Shakespeare would say, 'herein lies the rub', because our temptation does not have to result in sin either.

f). So let's finish today with one last scripture - Heb 12:3 *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.