

Sunday August 9th 2015
It's Still Raining
Part Two

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.*

a). As we saw last week we are dealing here with a metaphor that describes a patch of earth that drinks in the rain that comes upon it often, that then produces herbs, or is fruitful, for those who cultivate that earth in conjunction with the rain, resulting in blessing from God.

b). These verses also deal with this same patch of earth drinking in the same rain that often comes upon it, but instead of being fruitful it produces thorns and briars instead, resulting in rejection by God, coming close to being cursed by God, whose end is to be burned.

c). And we have seen that both of these, because of their context within the sixth chapter of Hebrews and within the Book of Hebrews as a whole, are a picture of Christians, who drink in the Word of the Kingdom, which is taught to them often, who may, in response to the Word of the Kingdom, be fruitful – ultimately receiving blessing from God.

2). It is what it looks like to bear herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated that is the subject of our message this morning, but before we go there let's spend a few moments setting in place some more foundation with respect to the earth and the rain that often comes upon it.

a). Let's begin with what we see in connection with Israel, the land of their calling, the land of Canaan, and the rain associated with that land - Ho 6:1 ¶ *Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. 2 After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. 3 Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth.*

We cannot help but see in these verses from Hosea the inextricable link between the restoration of Israel in the land of promise during the Millennial Kingdom and the blessing of God that will come to them – which is likened to the latter and former rain.

b). And we can see this same picture again in - *Joe 2:21 Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done marvelous things! 22 Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength. 23 Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you-The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month. 24 The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. 25 "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. 26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the LORD your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame.*

c). And again in - *2Ch 6:24 "Or if Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and return and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication before You in this temple, 25 "then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to them and their fathers. 26 "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them, 27 "then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.*

d). So we can see from our three examples here that the ‘rain’ is intimately connected with issues surrounding the restoration of Israel to the land, following the nation’s repentance, at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom – it has to do with blessing and the fulfillment of God’s promises to His people, the culmination of His promises to Abraham, just as He has said in His word.

e). The ‘rain’ then within the context of Israel would be the word that God has spoken throughout the OT scriptures concerning Israel’s time of trouble, their deliverance, and their cleansing, bringing to

fulfillment His promise to Abraham and his seed, thereby fulfilling His purpose for the creation of Man.

f). And to add a further dimension to this we see in –
De 32:1 ¶ *"Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. 2 Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As raindrops on the tender herb, And as showers on the grass.*

g). Here, the word of God given to Israel is seen as the rain – rain that nourishes the tender herb and the grass. This is the word that contains the very promises of God with regards to the inheritance – promises that provide the absolute assurance of hope for what is to come in the future – and given Israel's near future experience, this is a glorious hope beyond belief.

h). If we bring this into our own context this would be the same idea as the living water of - Joh 4:10 *Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."*

i). We can then continue with this same metaphor in our own context in - Jas 5:7 *Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

j). And here for us is the very same picture we have seen with respect to Israel.

k). Our scripture begins in v7 with a call for patience as we wait for the coming of the Lord, an event that will precipitate the fulfillment of His promises to us, promises that remain yet future – and our patient waiting is likened to the farmer who waits patiently for his crop, a crop that is produced as a result of receiving the early and the latter rain.

l). Then in v8 there is a repetition of the call for patience, and a command to establish our hearts, as we look ahead to the coming of the Lord at the resurrection/rapture of the church and the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom beyond the Tribulation - Looking towards our inheritance in the land of our calling – the fulfillment of God's purpose for the 7th Day.

3). Now we know why we must produce fruit, because it is fruit production that is necessary if we are to receive our inheritance in the Kingdom. Remember – Mt 21:43 *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.*

a). It is those from the new nation, the one new man in Christ, who produce fruit who will be given the Kingdom.

b). Bearing the fruits of the Kingdom and bearing herbs useful to those by whom it is cultivated would be the same thought.

c). And in our James scripture we see the connection between fruit production, receiving the rain, patience and the establishment of our hearts.

d). And here in the phrase, 'establish your hearts' we have a key to what the cultivation that produces the herbs that are useful looks like.

e). It is a present process with a future consequence.

4). Back in - De 28:9 *"The LORD will **establish you** as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, **if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways.***

a). And here is the unmistakable connection between being established and faithful obedience to the word of God. For Israel here, it is in relation to receiving their inheritance in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; for us it would be exactly the same, except in relation to the heavenly realm of the Kingdom rather than the earthly.

b). And not surprisingly this is exactly what we find in –
Ro 16:25 ¶ *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—*

c). Here then is our 'early and latter rain' by which we are to be established through faithful obedience to the word of God – that which Paul calls, 'my gospel' and the preaching of Jesus Christ', which is the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began – the good news that God would call out a people for His name from amongst the Gentile nations to be a Bride for His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things.

d). And this good news has been made known to all 'nations' by the prophetic scriptures, according to the commandment of the everlasting God for a clearly specified reason – 'for obedience to the faith'.

5). That obedience to the faith must result in fruit production should be obvious for us, and faith's dependence on the word is evident –

Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

a). The Word of God is Spirit, just as God is Spirit – there is nothing in the word, as there is nothing in God that has any connection with the flesh. Nor can there be – the flesh is connected to this world under a curse, and the god of this world – it is connected to that which has already been rejected, whose end is to be burned - Ge 3:18 *Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field.*

b). So, if we are faithfully obedient to the word of God, we are being led by the Spirit and cannot help but walk in the Spirit.

c). Ro 8:1 ¶ *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

d). Ro 8:14 *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

6). This is exactly the same thing that Jesus speaks of in John Chapter 15 which we had looked at last week - Joh 15:1 ¶ *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

a). The Lord Jesus Christ is the Word and we cannot abide in Him apart from walking in the Spirit, apart from being faithfully obedient to the Word.

b). This is made clear for us a few verses later in - Joh 15:8 *"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. 9 ¶ "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.*

c). Abiding in Him is to keep His commandments – without keeping His commandments we can produce no fruit.

d). This is very straight forward.

e). Keeping His commandments, although very simple in concept, may be more difficult in practice because of what scripture calls the hardness of our hearts.

f). 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.*

g). And here we see that in order to keep His commandments we need to deny ourselves and take up our cross. And neither of these is a onetime event, but a continual process day by day as there remains a constant conflict between our flesh and our spirit.

h). 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.*

i). How do we put to death the deeds of the body? We do this simply by choosing to be faithfully obedient to the word in every aspect of our life in all circumstances.

j). This is what cultivating the land which receives the rain so as to bring forth herbs from our opening scripture in Hebrews Chapter 6 is all about.

7). And should we choose to do this it is a guaranteed certainty that we will be fruitful - Joh 12:24 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.*

a). Remember it is the land that comes up out of the water by the power of the Spirit on the third day, in the Genesis account of the earth's restoration that then produces fruit, leading us to understand through the picture of baptism that it is only by living in the power of His resurrection that will enable us to be fruitful - Or to put this another way - it is only through keeping that associated with our first birth in the place of death and choosing to live in that associated with our second birth that will enable us to produce a harvest - 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 [age lasting] life.*

8). If we cast our minds back to the Parable of the Sower we will recall that those sown in good ground are those who have understood the word of the Kingdom, have sent down roots into that word, and

overcome the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of this life.

a). However, the different types of ground we see in that parable and the obstacles to be overcome do not represent a progression, but rather, a continuum. We should understand that in order to produce fruit that will have value for us with respect to a position in the Kingdom we must be in the continual process of dying to self.

b). And we will realize that in the midst of this we can choose to stop producing fruit at any time during the course of our journey to the land of promise. We can choose to let go of the scriptures and like Orpah turn back.

c). This is the reason we are exhorted in - Heb 3:6 *but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.*

d). Heb 3:14 *For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,*

e). Heb 6:11 *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,*

f). We must not waiver in our focus or our determination – we, like Caleb and Joshua, must patiently endure – keeping the faith over whatever period of time we have, irrespective of the circumstances of our life.

9). We need to have the same determination as the Lord with respect to this as we see in – Lu 9:51 ¶ *Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,*

a). Heb 12:2.....*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.*

b). And the same determination shown by Paul - Ac 20:22 *"And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

c). And in v24 we see a man whose heart has been totally established through receiving the word of the Kingdom as taught to him by the Lord.

10). So, to consistently produce fruit for the Kingdom we must, like Paul, be established – a translation of a word in the Greek which means - to set fast, to turn resolutely in a certain direction.

a). This then is not just about knowing what is out ahead – not that it is a bad thing to know that – but making sure we continually put one foot in front of the other, never ceasing to move forward to our destination; not accumulating knowledge for knowledge's sake, but for the purpose of renewing our mind, bringing about the metamorphosis.

b). Not allowing anything to stand in our way – no matter how great the obstacle appears – just as Ruth clings to Naomi as she heads for Bethlehem – just as Paul strains every muscle to win the prize; and Jude strives earnestly in the good contest of the faith - this is working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

c). Realizing of course that in doing this we are working in the harvest, beating out the grain as we saw in Ruth – we are participating in the good works that God prepared beforehand for us to walk in - these are the righteous acts of Revelation 19 that make up our wedding garment. And these good works will neither be forgotten nor discarded 1Co 15:57 *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 ¶ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

d). There is meaning, and there is purpose to this - Ga 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

e). 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.*

f). The gold, silver, precious stones, the fruit of the Spirit, the good works to walk in, beating out the grain, dying to the flesh are all part and parcel of the same thing. And there is a glorious reward on offer for us if we will do this, beyond anything we could imagine.

g). All of this then will lead us towards our inheritance –
*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. 5 ¶ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 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 to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.*

18). So what can we say then, that the production of fruit is always easy and always enjoyable – certainly not: to go back to our Hebrews 6 scripture concerning the earth and the rain we will see that God has provided all that is necessary for an abundant harvest, but the ground still has to be cultivated – the weeds need pulling out and the rocks removing and the ground broken up. None of that may be pleasant for us, but just look at what God has promised to those who will be steadfast until the end.

a). Please note here that our scripture from 2 Peter 1:11 does not just talk of the promise of the Kingdom, but of the guarantee of an abundant entrance into that Kingdom.

b). This is a strong encouragement for us and one that should cause our hearts to burn within us and our determination to be resolute.

11). We will bring this to conclusion next time – if the Lord is willing.