

Sunday May 15th 2011
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Three

1). Heb 1:13 *But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? 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) Chapter 1 of the Book of Hebrews concludes with a statement about angels, pointing out that they are all ‘ministering spirits’ who have been ‘sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation’. And those who will inherit salvation are the same ones referred to as ‘companions’ in Hebrews Chapter 1:9, the ‘many sons’ who are being brought to glory’ in Chapter 2:10 and the ‘holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling’ of Chapter 3:1. They are those who are described as overcomers in the opening Chapters of Revelation and pictured as the wise virgins and the faithful servant in the gospels. They are then faithfully obedient Christians who will be found worthy to be a joint heir with Christ at His Judgment Seat – Lu 19:17 *"And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'*

b). Mt 13:23 *"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."*

c). Re 3:21 *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."*

d). 2Ti 4:7 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

e). And so this final statement concerning those who will inherit salvation has to be seen within the context of Chapter 1 as a whole, a Chapter made up primarily of 7 OT quotations all of which set out for us a complete, composite picture of the Christ from ‘In beginning’, somewhere in eternity past, to the new

heavens and new earth that precede the endless ages of eternity future, and all within the remit of God's plans and purposes for rulership by His Son and those found worthy to accompany Him. That very same thing that is declared in the scriptures from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation and referenced at the beginning of our Book – 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;*

f). 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."*

2). And so, with the final statement of Chapter 1 firmly set within God's plans for His Son and His companions with respect to rulership in the age to come the second Chapter of Hebrews begins with the word, 'Therefore' – a word that we could perhaps better translate as 'Because of this'.

a). 'Because of this' – because of this which has just been set out by the Holy Spirit in Chapter 1 concerning Christ and His companions we are on the one hand admonished to do something and warned on the other of the consequences of not doing that which we are admonished - 2:1 ¶ *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

b). That which has been set out for us in Chapter 1 is the Divine destiny of redeemed Man, and within the scope of this Divine destiny, because of that which has been revealed to us, we are compelled to accomplish the goal of our faith.

c). We, as a result of our birth from above, through our being firstborn children of God, are in possession of a birthright. And we may, as a result of our actions in the present, inherit the rights of the firstborn with respect to the age to come - 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.*

d). And again, this is the essence of what Hebrews Chapter 1 is about – to say it again another way – Christ, as God's firstborn [only begotten] Son is in the 7th Day to come into possession of His inheritance - Ps 2:6 *"Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." 7 ¶ "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'"*

And overcoming Christians, as firstborn children of God awaiting their adoption, waiting to inherit salvation, will also in the 7th Day, upon their adoption, come into possession of this same inheritance as a joint heir with Christ –

Re 2:26 "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations-- 27 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' --as I also have received from My Father; 28 "and I will give him the morning star.

e). 'Because of this' then we are to 'give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard' – that which we have heard, that which is laid out for us here in the opening Chapter of Hebrews, which is the focus of all scripture, is to demand our undivided attention, it is to be the focus to which we constantly and consistently look. This is the very same thing we see presented to us in Hebrews Chapter 12 - 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.*

f). According to our scripture from Hebrews 12 we are not to be weighed down by the encumbrance of worldliness or ensnared by 'the sin', but rather we are to look away from anything that might distract us in our race of faith and instead look unto Jesus. And we are to look unto Jesus after a particular fashion, with a particular mindset; the same mindset that Christ had that caused Him to endure the cross and despise the shame – which was for the joy that was set before Him. And we must always see Christ's sacrifice at Calvary in light of this. His sacrifice is inseparably connected to that which was set before Him.

g). And the joy that was set before Him is the Day when He and His joint heirs will rule and reign together in fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. His sacrifice, through the provision of eternal redemption, made it possible for fallen Man to now be in a position where he could fulfill the purpose of his creation as set out in Genesis 1:26-27 and any attempt to separate this from Christ's sacrifice is to totally corrupt the purpose of God and pervert the word of God.

h). Jesus kept His focus on that coming Day and we are to do the same. In fact 'giving the more earnest heed to the things we have heard' and 'looking unto Jesus' would really be one and the same thing – both have the 7th Day and rulership as their focus.

i). And then we are warned at the end of the first verse of Hebrews Chapter 2 that we need to do this 'lest we drift away'.

3). 'Drift away' = Greek – 'pararrhēo', *par-ar-hroo-eh'-o* = to flow by, i.e. (figuratively) carelessly pass (miss):--let slip.

a). What we see here from our Greek definition is a carelessness on our part. Drifting away would be as a result of our own carelessness – as if we were looking in one direction and that which we had heard passed by on the opposite corner and disappeared because our attention was not where it should have been.

b). And we should also realize here that it is not just what we have heard that we could allow to let slip, but rather that to which what we have heard directs us. This is not a case of just forgetting the scriptures; this is a case of losing the Kingdom as a result of our own careless actions or even our own careless inaction.

c). Lu 9:59 *Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."* 60 *Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."* 61 *And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."* 62 *But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

d). This is an incredibly serious business – that which we have heard from the scriptures concerning the Christ and His joint heirs and His Kingdom is not a fairy tale, it's not the feel good, Mickey Mouse Christianity, peddled throughout most of Christendom, this is not the mansion over the hilltop; but rather the most indescribably superlative event that an omniscient God could provide for His creation. An event that was planned in the eternal council chambers of God before there was ever an earth to rule or a Man to rule it, an event that required the death and shed blood of God Himself to accomplish it, an event to which the whole of creation and time is inexorably marching; an event that we will let slip at our peril.

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

4). Heb 2:2 *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,*

a). The consequences of drifting away from that which we have heard are then spelled out for us in no uncertain terms in verse two by drawing attention to the word 'spoken through angels'.

b). The reference to the word spoken through angels takes us to the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt and the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai.

c). In the Exodus account of this we have likely only ever seen God on the mountain top, however, commentary on this from Deuteronomy gives a somewhat fuller picture - De 33:2 *And he said: "The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came with ten thousands of saints; From His right hand Came a fiery law for them.*

d). A picture that is confirmed in - Ga 3:19 ¶ *What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.*

e). Now all of this is in perfect keeping with that which we find elsewhere in scripture where actions carried out by angels in accordance with God's will are seen as being actions taken by God Himself.

f). Now the focus here for us is not on the law being 'appointed through angels', but rather to whom it was given and the results of their subsequent actions.

g). Our verse from Hebrews 2:2 tells us that this word was steadfast – it was absolutely sure, it was established, containing the full force and resoluteness of the Godhead and that every transgression and disobedience against this steadfast, established word 'received a just reward'; literally a payment exactly commensurate with services rendered. In other words the nation of Israel got exactly what they deserved in accordance with the revealed word of God.

5). God always and without exception acts in perfect accord with that which He has revealed through His word, that which is steadfast - Ex 19:5 *'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

a). Here in Exodus 19, after the Red Sea crossing, we see God making a conditional promise to the eternally redeemed nation – 'if you will indeed obey.....then'.

b). This same conditional promise is reiterated later in much more detail in both Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, adding in the negative side to the positive - Le 26:3 *'If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, 4 then I will give you rain in its season.....14 ¶ 'But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, 15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, 16 I also will do this to you: I will even*

appoint terror over you.....18 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

c). God had revealed certain truth to the nation of Israel and on many occasions they acted completely contrary to the truth which had been revealed to them; with the result that they always reaped exactly what they had sown – just as scripture says - 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.*

d). There was always a ‘just reward’ for Israel, and so there had to be, because if that ‘just reward’ was not there then God would not have acted in complete accord with His word – without this ‘just reward’ God would not have been perfectly just and righteous in His dealings with the nation.

e). It is the righteous God acting in accordance with His revealed word that is the reason for the wrath of God falling upon the nation at Sinai in the golden calf incident amongst others, it is the reason for the overthrow of the entire generation in the wilderness after Kadesh Barnea, the reason for the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities later in Israel’s history, and the reason for the worldwide dispersion of the Jewish people throughout the world today – not to mention that which still awaits the nation during the time of Jacob’s trouble.

f). God has done exactly what He said He would do based on the actions of Israel with respect to His revealed word. He has done and yet will do exactly that which He has said in His word, no more and no less.

6). 1Co 10:6 ¶ *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

a). 1 Corinthians Chapter 10 sets out very clearly for us that all that happened to Israel became our examples, literally our ‘types’ so that we ‘should not lust after evil things as they also lusted’; and we see laid out for us in these verses examples of the ‘just reward’ the nation received in payment for their actions which were contrary to His word.

b). And so it is by taking all that we have just looked at and placing it within the framework of 1 Corinthians 10 that the heart of our first warning is revealed in Hebrews 2:3 *how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,*

c). Here the thought turns away from that which happened to Israel as a result of acting contrary to God's word, to that which will also happen to Christians who act contrary to God's word. God dealt completely justly and righteously with Israel based upon that which He had revealed in His word and God will, in exactly the same way, deal with Christians based on the same thing – that which He has revealed in His word.

d). 'How shall we escape' should be understood as, 'how is it possible' for us to escape – followed by the obvious question, 'Escape what?' And the answer is as obvious as the question 'how is it possible for us to escape a just reward?' And the answer to this question is equally as obvious – we are not going to escape.

e). Israel did not escape in time past and nor will Christians in the present escape, if we neglect so great a salvation.

f). According to the first verse of Hebrews God spoke to the Jewish nation - 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,*

g). And then in these last days He has spoken to us 'by His Son' – that which was spoken in time past and that spoken in these last days is one and the same – it is the word of God. And that spoken in these last days is just as steadfast as that spoken in the past – the word of God is settled, established and perfect.

h). And as we saw in our study last week God is unchangeable – Heb 1:10 *And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 11 They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; 12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail."*

i). Heb 13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

j). This being the case, which scripture clearly shows that it is, then we must realize that the way in which God dealt with Israel with respect to His revealed word concerning the earthly realm of the Kingdom, is exactly the same way that He will deal with Christians with respect to His revealed word concerning the heavenly realm of the Kingdom. The one difference that there is, is one of timing, not of substance. Israel with regards to the earthly Kingdom was and will be judged in their present; Christians on the other hand have their judgment reserved for the Judgment Seat that remains yet future. And here really is the cause of a major problem – because we don't see the ground opening up and swallowing people, we could be deceived into thinking that God treats us differently and the things we do don't really matter to Him.

k). But right here would be a doctrine of demons, because this is not what scripture teaches. What scripture does teach is - Mt 7:21 ¶ *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"*

l). Mt 25:30 *'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

m). 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.*

n). 1Co 6:9 ¶ *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*

o). Re 22:12 *"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.*

p). Again, another dramatic incentive to 'give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away'.

7). Heb 3:10 *Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' 11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" 12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." 16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

a). We will deal with this in greater detail when we get to Hebrews Chapter 3, but I just wanted us to see that the stated reason for Israel 'drifting away' from

the things they had heard, which resulted in transgression and disobedience which received a just reward, was ‘unbelief’.

b). ‘Unbelief’ is the sin that so easily ensnares us from Hebrews Chapter 12 and it is somewhat disturbing to think that we can be ‘so easily’ ensnared by it.

c). Simply put, unbelief, which is described in Hebrews 3 as ‘evil’, is not believing that which God has said which results in actions in contradiction to His word – sin. And the truth of the matter is that if we don’t, as a matter of discipline, give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, if we don’t keep these as our consistent focus resulting in a lifestyle of faithful obedience, we will begin to deceive ourselves that God will make an exception for us, that He didn’t really mean what He said. And in so doing that which should have been our finest hour, the very pinnacle of God’s purpose for our life, we will have carelessly let slip.

d). Who can fathom the horror of that Day if our expectation of glory becomes a reality of thick darkness and a 1000 years to grieve over all we have thrown away.

e). Or, conversely who can begin to imagine the ‘joy inexpressible and full of glory’ as we receive reward from our Lord as a result of triumphing over the world, the flesh and the devil because we chose to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard.

f). And we will close today with a few verses from Psalm 119 to encourage us - Ps 119:100 *I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts. 101 ¶ I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. 102 ¶ I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me. 103 ¶ How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. 105 ¶ NUN. Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. 106 ¶ I have sworn and confirmed That I will keep Your righteous judgments. 107 ¶ I am afflicted very much; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word. 108 ¶ Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, And teach me Your judgments. 109 ¶ My life is continually in my hand, Yet I do not forget Your law. 110 The wicked have laid a snare for me, Yet I have not strayed from Your precepts. 111 ¶ Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, For they are the rejoicing of my heart. 112 I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes Forever, to the very end.*