

Sunday March 10<sup>th</sup> 2019  
The Word of God  
A Survey of the Bible – Lesson 16C  
'Let Us Go On'

1). Heb 4:4 *For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; 5 and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest." 6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, 7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. 11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.*

We have seen from our previous study that the Book of Hebrews is a Book about the 7<sup>th</sup> Day, the Sabbath Rest of God, the age to come, when God will rest from His work among fallen Man, having brought to fulfilment His great redemptive purpose. The time when Christ and His joint heirs will rule from the heavens over the earth in the place of angels.

a). And we had seen again from the verses we began with this morning that Israel was not allowed to enter that Rest, in connection with the earthly realm of the Kingdom, because of disobedience.

b). But Israel's failure did not nullify God's Rest with respect to us and the heavenly realm of the Kingdom, but rather provided a type for us as a warning concerning it. The Rest still remains to be entered into, and as we would enter that Rest so we will cease from our works in this present age as God will have ceased from His. And so, the writer exhorts us to be diligent to enter that Rest so that we do not fall from our high calling 'according to the same example of disobedience' that we have witnessed with Israel. And part and parcel with this will be giving the more earnest heed to the things we have heard and holding fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end, hearing His voice while it is still 'Today'.

c). And then with respect to the call to diligence and the ever present possibility that we might fall into the sin of unbelief and disobedience we are then told – Heb4:12 *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

On the one hand it is the word of God alone, which is alive and powerful, that can make the division for us now between our carnal nature, our unredeemed soul, predisposed to draw us into unbelief and our redeemed spirit through whom our diligence to enter His Rest must come.

d). And not only that, but it is the word of God alone, living and powerful, that can reveal to us the thoughts and intents of our heart – to show us of what sort they are. Whether our thoughts and intents, our motivation, comes out of our faithful obedience to the Scripture, or out of our own carnal desire. And it can only be of one or the other of these as there is no middle ground to be found.

e). And we must realize that there is nothing that we might do or say, or think, even in our innermost being, that the Lord does not know about. And this is described as being ‘naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account’. And it is described this way because our actions and motivations are stripped of any pretense or self-righteousness, we might try to clothe them with. God sees the thoughts and intents of our heart exactly as they are.

f). Now, not only can these verses be applied to our present race of the faith, but also to the end of our race, to the events at the Judgment Seat when these things will be judged.

g). The way that God sees all so clearly shown in Hebrews 4:12-13 can be quite sobering for us, but this should by no means send us into despondency, but rather into rejoicing – Heb 4:14 *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 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.*

Inevitably, because we live in this body of death, our actions and our motivation for those actions will not always come from our spirit man in harmony with the word of God, they can instead come out of our carnal nature. And when that happens and we are led by our flesh rather than our spirit, we have both the comfort and the security of knowing that we have a High Priest who can sympathize with our weakness in this, who understands what happens with us. And because He understands we can go boldly to the throne of grace to find the help that we need at times such as these. And the help that we need in these times comes in the form of cleansing from our sin through the blood of Christ on the mercy seat in the Heavenly Tabernacle as we confess – 1 Jn 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

h). This is priceless.

2). And to deal with our sin as eternally saved individuals, Our Lord presently ministers in the Heavenly Tabernacle on our behalf after the order of Aaron on the basis of shed blood. And for this we should be grateful beyond measure. The Holy Spirit though, through the writer of Hebrews, does not want us to stay focused solely on the Lord's present ministry of itself, but to look beyond it to that end for which His present ministry exists – Heb 5:5 *So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."* 6 *As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek";* 7 *who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,* 8 *though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.* 9 *And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal [age lasting] salvation to all who obey Him,* 10 *called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"* 11 *of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.*

In the age to come, when the world is no longer ruled by angels, Christ will have come forth as the great King/Priest 'according to the order of Melchizedek'. And it is the coming of Christ's Melchizedek Priesthood in the age to come that is the reason for the Lord's present ministry on our behalf that there may be many sons brought to glory. And it is concerning this time when Christ will rule according to the order of Melchizedek that the Holy

Spirit had much to say, but these things had become hard to explain because those He wrote to had 'become dull of hearing'. Or perhaps we could say that they had stopped giving the more earnest heed to the things which they had heard causing their hearing to be dulled.

a). Heb 5:12 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

This group of Christians had clearly been taught the Word of the Kingdom for a significant length of time. Long enough that they should have been grounded sufficiently in the Word that they could teach others the same.

b). But rather than having moved forward in the faith, to be able to do this, they had in fact gone backwards, so that instead of being able to teach others they needed someone to teach them again 'the first principles of the oracles of God' – they had regressed to the point where they were only able to handle the milk of the word and not the strong meat which should have been theirs. They had not progressed to maturity in the faith.

c). Now, there is something here that we need to understand and settle in our hearts and minds. Given the context here in Hebrews, maturity in the faith is seen in a mature understanding of Christ's coming Kingdom when the Melchizedek Priesthood will come into being.

d). This then is not maturity in a general sense, but a very specific sense, in relation to Christ and the age to come. This kind of maturity, from a Scriptural perspective, is never about age or the accumulation of life experience, but about receiving, believing and then acting upon a mature [epignosis] knowledge of the Christ and the Melchizedek Priesthood. This is the strong meat of the Word.

e). So, having reprimanded this group of Christians for their lack of growth, the writer then encourages them and challenges them, a challenge that takes us into the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 5 warnings – Heb 6:1 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal [age lasting] judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits.*

The encouragement and the challenge are for them to not continue in the rudimentary principles of Christ any longer, but to go on to maturity, maturity with respect to Christ's Kingdom and the Melchizedek Priesthood, maturity in the faith.

f). And there are 3 interconnected pairs of scriptural doctrine that are itemized in relation to this. These are, dead works and faith, baptisms and laying on of hands, resurrection and judgment. Now, these of themselves are not 'elementary'. But there are elementary teachings concerning these 3 areas of doctrine and then beyond these elementary teachings there are much deeper levels of spiritual truth to be seen in these same 3 areas.

g). The idea then is not to keep just looking at these things from a superficial, elementary perspective, but to go on into the deeper truths to be found in them. And that deeper truth to be found is inextricably connected to the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ in the age to come – 1 Cor 2:9 *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."* 10 *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.* 11 *For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.*

h). And then we come to v3 - *And this we will do if God permits.* To take this verse for what it simply says, God will permit some eternally saved Christians to go on to spiritual maturity with respect to the Day when the Lord will come forth in the Melchizedek Priesthood and others He will not permit to do so.

i). And this can only lead us to wonder, what is it that would make this distinction between these 2 groups of Christians? And what does this all have to do with the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ, something which has been the subject of the verses we have been looking at in connection with maturity in the faith stretching back into Chapter 5?

3). The historical account of Melchizedek can be found in Genesis Chapter 14 and that which directly deals with him covers approximately 3 verses. Melchizedek is also seen in Psalm 110. But in this very short Psalm, the one verse that talks of Melchizedek also draws from the 3 verses in Genesis Chapter 14. And then he is mentioned no less than 8 times in the Book of

Hebrews, the Book that deals with the age to come which will not be ruled over by angels and again that said about him comes from Genesis 14.

a). And remarkably, though probably not surprisingly, the key to unlock what we find in Hebrews 6:3, 'and this we will do if God permits', is found in those verses from Genesis Chapter 14. We will look at those 3 verses and also set some context for them - Gen 14: 14 *Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. 16 So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people. 17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. 18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all. 21 Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself." 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'— 24 except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion."*

And the reason why God will permit some to go to maturity in the faith and others he will not is right here in these verses.

b). We will remember that Abraham went to rescue his nephew Lot and it is having done that, following the battle with the kings, that Melchizedek brought out bread and wine and blessed Abraham.

c). This whole scene forms a picture of that future Day when the Christ will come forth as the Great King Priest according to the order of Melchizedek to bless Abraham and his descendants both earthly and heavenly. And it is with this future Day in mind that we need to continue.

d). Both Abraham and Lot were present when Melchizedek came with bread and wine and spoke his blessing. And so through the type given we can see 2 kinds of Christian, one pictured through Abraham and the other through

Lot and it is in their individual response to Melchizedek that the difference between the 2 kinds of Christian is found - Heb 7:1 *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," 3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.*

Through his encounter with Melchizedek Abraham understood something of such magnitude and value concerning what awaited him in the future that it caused him to completely separate himself from engagement with the world - *But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'*

That which Abraham understood directly impacted the way he viewed his present and the way he viewed the world around him. And that which Abraham saw and understood, and the reaction it caused him to have, needs to be our own experience also. We have spoken much over the years about those 'Orpah moments', when we face a choice to go on or turn back. But from what we see here, we also need to have a 'Melchizedek moment' as well. And that moment may be upon us right now.

e). And if it is, then our response to that which we see with our spiritual eyes and now understand will be the same as we sang about last week –

'The riches of this world will fade  
The treasures of our God remain  
Here I empty myself to owe this world  
Nothing and find everything in You...'

f). So, what was Lot's response to Melchizedek? Scripture is silent. There was no response. And in this we might find a parallel with Ruth and Orpah. Ruth picturing the Christian that God permits to go to maturity in the faith and Orpah the one not permitted to go on. And let's note Orpah's focus –

Ru 1:15 *And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods;*

Beyond this point Scripture remains silent about Orpah, but we can pick up on what would have been her experience if we follow the lives of Abraham and Lot beyond their encounter with Melchizedek, where we will see there is a sharp contrast between the two just as there is between Ruth and Oprah.

g). Abraham continued to live in the high country, but Lot is found not only in the cities of the plain, the area to which he was first attracted, but sitting in the gates of Sodom, fully engaged with the affairs of that place.

h). God spoke to Abraham directly about the destruction He was about to bring – Gen 18:1 *Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day..... 17 And the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,*

And even though Lot was warned of this same impending destruction through the ministry of angels, he just didn't get it – Gen 19:16 *And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. 17 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest you be destroyed."18 Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords!*

In order to escape from the impending destruction Lot is given a fourfold command – 'escape for your life [soul]', do not look back, don't stay anywhere in the plain, 'escape to the mountain'. And he was to do this, 'lest you be destroyed', because if he didn't do these 4 things then that on which his attention was fixed, which was about to be destroyed before his eyes, would bring about his own destruction with respect to his soul.

i). But as we can see, Lot was not even able to receive the warning given to him, 'please no my lords!' and there is a reason for this.

j). And eventually when Lot does end up on the mountain he was originally told to escape to, we find him in a cave, in a place of darkness and shame, whereas Abraham who had no interest in the things of the plain, stood on top of the mountain in the presence of the Lord.

k). And here we have it, if we haven't grasped it already – If we have seen the reality of Christ's coming Kingdom and the Melchizedek Priesthood

and the total overthrow of the present world system and because of this we have rejected that which the one pictured through the king of Sodom has to offer, then there is absolutely no reason why the Lord would prevent us going on to maturity in the faith.

l). But if our attention, our aspirations, our desires and our involvements are located in this age which is under the control of Satan, then we will not be permitted to go to maturity in the faith, and we are unlikely to receive the warnings given about this either. It really is as simple as that.

m). And the reason why we would not be permitted to go to maturity in the faith is spelled out for us in the meat of the warning given to us –  
Heb 6:4 *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, **since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.***

This will have to wait until next time though – if the Lord is willing.