# THE KINGDOM REVEALED IN HEBREWS (II)

### SUPERIOR TO AARON AND ALL THE PRIESTS

The third section of the book of Hebrews begins with the last verses of chapter 4 and goes through the end of chapter 7. In this section Christ is compared with Aaron, the high priest. Christ is revealed as being much superior to Aaron. Christ became a High Priest not according to the order of Aaron but according to the order of Melchizedek. The order of Melchizedek is an eternal order. He ministered not according to any regulation or commandment of the law but according to the power of an indestructible life (7:16). Because He has this kind of priesthood, He is able to save us to the uttermost. If we are not saved to the uttermost, it does not mean that He is not able to save. Rather, it means that we were not willing to be saved. We will have no excuse. If we are willing to be saved, surely He will save us to the uttermost (v. 25).

# **Not Laying Again the Foundation**

Let us also read **Hebrews 6:1-2**: "Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, **let us be brought on to maturity**, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God, of the teaching of baptisms and of the laying on of hands, of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment." Here the apostle Paul says that we need to leave the word of the beginning of Christ and be brought on to maturity. Many Christians today are fully occupied with the beginning, elementary principles. All they talk about is redemption, justification by faith, forgiveness of sins, and going to heaven. Year after year they speak of the same things. When you are with them, you can hardly hear anything else. In principle, this is like a grandfather who is still studying in elementary school. Not only is he still in elementary school, but his son, his son's son, and even his great grandson are all still studying in the same elementary school. There is no going on. But let us go on! Let us go on from the elementary teachings of Christ to maturity.

Verses 4 through 6 read, "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and yet have fallen away, to renew themselves again unto repentance, crucifying again for themselves the Son of God and putting Him to open shame." In these verses Paul covers a number of points. He says that some of the saints have been enlightened, have partaken of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted of the heavenly gift. They have also tasted the good word of God and have tasted the powers of the age to come. What is the heavenly gift? Surely it is something given from heaven. Perhaps it is forgiveness or joy of salvation. We know that when we were saved, we did have some real enjoyment. We experienced joy, peace, comfort, forgiveness, and other things. Do you think that a person could be enlightened, taste the heavenly gift, partake of the Holy Spirit, taste the good word of God and the powers of the coming age and yet not be saved? It is impossible! However, most of the Christian teachers consider that such a person has not yet been saved. Verse 6 mentions that some have fallen away. But to fall away is one thing, and to be lost is another. Many saved persons have fallen. Even after we were born physically, we fell many times. But our falling did not constitute us false persons.

Some use verses 4 through 6 to say that once a person has fallen away it is impossible for him to be saved. Verse 1, however, says, "Let us be brought on." Leaving the foundation we must be brought on. The first aspect of the foundation is repentance. We may say that it is the first stone of the foundation. The foundation was already laid with six pieces of stone, including the first stone of repentance. Paul's concept is that since the Hebrew believers had already laid the foundation, they simply needed to go on. There was no need for them to lay the foundation again. Even if they wanted to do so, it was impossible to lay the foundation again. We may illustrate this with a couple who are married: Suppose after a time they are divorced and then later come back together. While they might say they were remarried, actually, it is impossible for them to remarry because they are already married. The marriage was already laid as a foundation. Likewise, the Hebrew Christians had laid the foundation already; they simply needed to go on. They should not have lingered at the foundation.

Many Christians in revival meetings go back and lay the foundation again and again. After a year, another revival meeting comes, and they repent again. Once more they lay the foundation. They go on a little distance, but then they fall. After they fall, another revival comes, and they go back and repent again. They are continually going

back to lay the same foundation. This means that they are not going on. These verses do not mean that it is impossible for us to be recovered once we have fallen. They mean that after we have fallen, we have to rise up by the grace of God and go on. We should not go back. We should not lay the foundation of repentance again. The foundation has already been laid. To try to lay it again is to waste our time.

Suppose in the construction of a building, the foundation is laid, and then the work is discontinued. After a year, the work is renewed, and instead of building upon that foundation, another foundation is laid beside the first. Again the work is discontinued, and later a third foundation is laid beside the second. How ridiculous! Eventually, there will be many foundations laid beside one another but no building up. This is the proper meaning of these verses.

The Pentecostal teachers say that these are real believers but that they lost their salvation and, because of their falling away, they cannot be saved again. This concept is not accurate. What Paul means is this: The Hebrew Christians had laid the foundation but had been distracted. They stopped the building. Now they needed to realize that they should go on. For their going on, there was no need for them to lay the foundation again. They simply needed to go on. We too need to leave the beginning things and go on to enjoy Christ in a further way. If we do not go on, we will surely suffer some punishment.

## **Going On to Enjoy Christ More**

Now let us read **Hebrews 6:7-8**: "The earth, which drinks the rain which often comes upon it and produces vegetation suitable to those for whose sake also it is cultivated, partakes of blessing from God. But if it brings forth thorns and thistles, it is disapproved and near a curse, whose end is to be burned." If we do not leave the foundation and go on to experience more of Christ, we are like a piece of ground that drinks the rain but does not bring forth the proper fruit. This will cause us to suffer a loss, but it does not mean that we ourselves will be lost. It is to suffer something for not going on. Let us go on! We should not linger here. We should not go back to lay the foundation again. The foundation has been laid, so let us build upon it. This means that we should go on to enjoy Christ further and further. We may fall many times, but we must rise up and applying the blood, go on with the Lord. The enemy, Satan, will always try to keep us lingering at the foundation. You have to tell that subtle one that you have the blood of the Lord Jesus and that you have the foundation already laid.

We must go on to enjoy Christ as our great High Priest ministering in the heavenly sanctuary, not according to the commandments of the law but according to the power of an indestructible life. He is our High Priest, not according to the order of Aaron but according to the order of Melchizedek, able to save us to the uttermost. We simply must enjoy Him more and more, not caring for the past and not caring for anything behind us. We must press on! Satan always reminds us of our past and what we did yesterday. We have to tell him we only care for today and the expectation of tomorrow. We do not care for yesterday. We all have to forget the things that are behind us and press forward to the things that are ahead of us. Let us go on to enjoy Christ more.

#### SUPERIOR TO THE OLD COVENANT

We have covered three sections of the book of Hebrews. Christ is superior to the angels in the first section, He is superior to Moses and Joshua in the second section, and He is superior to Aaron and all the priests in the third section. The fourth section, chapter 8 through chapter 10, shows that Christ with His blood is much superior to the old covenant. The New Testament gives us not the law in letters outside us but the law of life within us. Therefore, we do not need anyone to teach us (8:8-11). We have the living law within us, which is much better than the outward law of letters.

In addition, His precious blood purges and cleanses our conscience so that we may serve the living God (9:14). The new covenant is a better covenant, much superior to the old one. At the time Hebrews was written, there was the danger that the Hebrew Christians might be convinced to go back to Judaism. Perhaps their friends and families were endeavoring to draw them back to Judaism. They may have pointed out to the New Testament believers that the old covenant was given by God and was so wonderful. Because the Hebrew Christians were staggering between the old covenant and the new covenant, the apostle Paul warned them concerning the old covenant. He told them that the old covenant had been fulfilled—that it was over. There is no more sacrifice for sins, because when Christ died for sins, He finished the sacrifice for sins. Christ fulfilled the type of the sin

offering. Thus, there is no more sacrifice for sins (10:26). To go back once more and offer the Old Testament sacrifices for sins would be a real insult to the Lord.

Furthermore, Paul told them they should not stop meeting with the believers (v. 25). They should not neglect their assembling together with the other Christians. To stop meeting with the believers meant to go back to Judaism, which was a sinful thing in the eyes of God. To go back to Judaism was to sin willfully. What a serious matter this was!

## **Not Sinning Willfully**

**Hebrews 10:26** says, "When we sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice of bulls and goats for sins." Some Christian teachers have taught inaccurately that this verse means if we sin willfully, we cannot be forgiven. This is not the proper understanding. The proper understanding is that all the sacrifices in the Old Testament were fulfilled when the Lord Jesus died on the cross. To go back to those animal sacrifices is a sinful thing to the Lord. To go back to Judaism after the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross is to sin willfully. As far as God is concerned, there is no more sin offering, because His Son offered Himself once for all.

Paul also indicated that if the Hebrew Christians went back to offer the animal sacrifices, God would judge them (v. 27). Their going back would make the blood of Christ a common thing. But **His blood is not common**, like the blood of an ox or a lamb. Actually, the blood of the animal sacrifices could not redeem, but the blood of Christ can redeem. To go back to Judaism and offer the blood of an ox or a sheep for the sacrifice of sin is to make the blood of Christ common. This will bring in God's judgment.

# **Not Insulting the Spirit of Grace**

In addition to this, to go back to Judaism and the animal sacrifices would constitute a kind of disobedience to the indwelling Spirit. In **verse 29** Paul speaks of insulting the Spirit of grace. To go back to Judaism is to insult the Spirit of grace. This portion of the Word shows that once we have enjoyed and participated in the New Testament way, **we must enjoy it to the uttermost.** We should not go back to the old way, to the old covenant. To go back to the old way is a sinful thing to the Lord and will bring His judgment upon us. To go back would make the Lord's blood something common and would constitute a kind of disobedience to the indwelling Spirit.

#### THE WAY OF FAITH

Now we come to the fifth section of the book, which begins with chapter 11. In this section Paul shows us the way of faith. As we go on with the Lord, we must take faith as our way. On our way we have many surrounding, encompassing witnesses. The way of faith is very prevailing. Here we have the Lord Jesus as the Author and Perfecter of our faith. We all must look to Him. We should not be concerned for the surrounding situations. We simply look to the Lord Jesus as our way to go on. If we will not look away to the Lord Jesus as our way, we will lose something and suffer something. Since we have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken, we must take grace to go on in a positive way. We should not be disturbed with difficult situations and circumstances. Go on by faith. The Lord Jesus is the Author and the Perfecter of our faith. We simply look unto Him. By this we will be strengthened to go on.

### **RUN THE RACE**

Chapter 12 shows us that we should put away every encumbrance and run the race. If you fall while running the race, you should simply rise to your feet and continue running the race. There is no need to go back to the beginning but just to begin where you fell. No runner who falls down while in a race would be so stupid as to go back to the beginning and start over. Rather, he would get up from the point where he falls and continue to run the race.

Many Christians, though, do this very thing. Every year at the time of revival, they go back to the beginning and repent once more. There is no need for them to do this. They just need to rise up from where they have fallen and run the race for the kingdom.

If we will not be obedient to the Lord and go on, we have to realize that our God is a consuming fire (v. 29). If we refuse to take grace and go on, surely God will one day exercise some judgment upon us. This does not mean we will be lost, but it does mean we will suffer something.

We need to see that we have such a wonderful Christ who is superior to everything. He is superior to the angels, to Moses and Joshua, to Aaron and the priests, and to the old covenant. Furthermore, we have such a prevailing way to go on—the way of faith. **We need to go on** to enjoy Christ and to take the overcoming way. Eventually, we will have the full enjoyment of Christ, which will consummate in the kingdom. However, if we do not go on to enjoy Christ in such a wonderful way, we will miss something, and we will suffer something. All these points in Hebrews are the development of the seeds sown in the book of Matthew concerning the kingdom.

(The Kingdom, Chapter 45)