

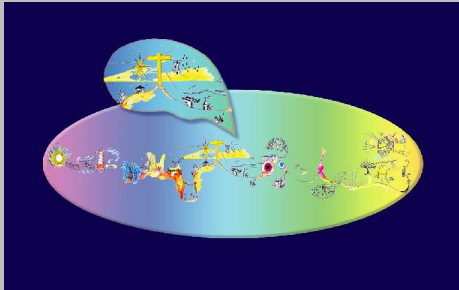
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AUGUST 2005

NO 118



Eternal Fellowship News Bulletin

We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Hebrew Bible and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

All activities are free of charge and no obligation whatever. Just enjoy our fellowship!

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HULDAH MINISTRY

LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

【 CHRIST, AS ANCHOR FOR OUR SOULS 】

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so. It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. ...

Even, though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation.... We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised. ... Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek.
HEBREWS 5:11~6:20.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is urgently concerned with exhorting and warning his readers so that they will properly respond to his serious message about salvation. The first warning pointed out in the epistle is that there is nowhere else to turn, apart from faith in Christ. The second is a warning against unbelief in the sufficiency of God. The third is a warning against apostasy, which anyone could fall into, even if he once professed faith in Christ.

We will examine this third warning in detail in this letter. The author of the epistle devotes much space to stressing the priesthood of the heavenly sanctuary and the priesthood of Christ, a far superior system in characteristic to the system of Aaronic priesthood explored in 4:14-10:39. The theme of the high priesthood was very important for Jewish believers and it must have drawn lots of interest.

Christ is very unique because He alone fulfilled three offices of the Jewish leadership—**king, priest, and prophet**. First, He was the very **prophet** that had been long awaited since God's promise to Moses; *'I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will tell them everything I command him.'* (**De.18:18**). The reaction of the people in Jesus' days was their undeniable appreciation of Him as a great prophet, expressing, *'God has come to help this people.'* (**Lk.7:16**). Christ Himself gave the major part of His prophetic revelation to the apostle John on the island of Patmos and proved His role of prophet. Secondly, Jesus came to be a Jewish **king** as apparent in angel Gabriel's announcement to virgin Mary: *'The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end.'* (**Lk.1:32-33**). However, because the Jews rejected Jesus as their promised Messiah in the days of His first coming, Jesus' reign over His own countrymen as a rightful King was postponed until the time of His return to the earth. Accordingly and thirdly, during the interval between His first and second comings, Christ is being engaged in interceding in heaven as a **high priest**. Christ appeared as the One who is to fulfil these three offices by 1) sacrificing Himself as the best once-for-all sacrifice at the altar, 2) passing through the court of the Temple and the holy place into the holy of holies in the order of Melchizedek, which is superior to the Aaronic high priesthood, and 3) passing into the heavens, i.e., the immediate dwelling place of God, making the heavenly sanctuary open to everyone who has faith in Him. Christ led the way into the holy of holies in heaven as the perfect and eternal High priest, removing the need for a priesthood in the Aaronic or Levitical order to be repeated ever again.

The recipients of the Epistle of Hebrews were unable to understand the *'solid food'* of biblical truths; that is, **the truths concerning the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ**. Behind their sluggish condition lay a degenerated soul. In other words, while they were long standing Christians, they were dull to responding to the Word of God because they were not trained to *'distinguish good from evil,'* i.e., to distinguish between their Jewish earthly hopes (the transitory and shadowy nature of the Levitical priesthood) and Christian heavenly hopes (eternal Christ's priesthood). The exhortation presented in Hebrews 6, quoted at the beginning depicts a step towards 'substance', leaving the shadowy patterns behind. An expositor H.A. Ironside argues in his comment on Hebrews: "The exhortation of the Spirit in Hebrews 6 is not to leave earlier Christian experience and go on to a deeper work of grace, as some put it. Neither is it to cease from being occupied with the elementary truths of Christianity and go on to deeper things." He identifies **"the principles of the doctrine of Christ"** (*the elementary teachings about Christ* in 6:1) with **'Judaism,'** which includes the entire Mosaic law, the teachings of the Old Testament prophets and of John the Baptist.

Those six principles are: **1.Repentance from acts that lead to death, 2.Faith in God, 3.Instruction about baptisms, 4.The laying on of hands, 5.The resurrection of the dead, 6.Eternal judgment.**

The last Old Testament prophet, John the Baptist's ministry, which marked the end of the old era but also marked the beginning of the new era brought in by Christ, was focussed on a return to God and on baptism with true repentance accompanied by deeds, in which a mere claim of being of physical descent from Abraham, the Jewish forefather would not defend the Jews from imminent judgment. While John's baptism simply cleansed man ceremonially, John proclaimed another superior baptism that is to be

granted by the coming One who will cleanse man's heart by an inward work of God and also forgive man's sins and One who will ultimately cause judgment upon the unrepentant. Commentators have pointed out that the Greek term used for baptism in 6:2, "ablutions," is in the form of plural and not the usual word for Christian baptism, indicating that Jewish ceremonial washings are referred to here. For the Jews under the Mosaic law, it was essential to cleanse themselves through ceremonial baptisms (washings) to have fellowship with God. Such external regulations were applicable until the time of the new order as the author of the epistle commented in 9:10. Indeed, as Peter declared ;*'this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of good conscience towards God'* (1 Pe.3:21, Line added), a new order was introduced by Christ, under whose order, baptism does not remain a mere external, ceremonial cleansing. Concerning the fourth principle '**The laying on of hands,**' it is understood that there is no doctrine of it in the New Testament, despite some reference in Acts. However, under the Levitical priesthood, the sacrifice offerer was required to lay his hands on the head of the sacrifice in order to identify himself with the victim offered to God, and also as a symbolic act of transferring his sins to the sacrifice. The offered sacrifice was then put to death as a sinner in the place of the offerer before God. The fifth principle '**The resurrection of the dead**' was also believed under the classification of the Old Testament doctrines. In contrast to the Sadducees, the Pharisees believed in this doctrine and Jesus' interpretation and application of the Torah (the Hebrew Bible) actually remained within the then acceptable traditional guidelines recognised by the Pharisees. Jesus' teaching was not a novelty to the Pharisaic understanding as many put it, apart from His denigration of their oral tradition which the then rabbis accepted as the authoritative interpretation of Mosaic law. The last principle, '**Eternal judgment**' was also part of the Jewish foundations. The Scriptures tell of God's judgment being effected in two ways; the first one is to be carried out within the context of human history and the second one is to be carried out after the close of human history. The latter is God's judgment in eternity and called '*eternal judgment.*' A verse: '*The soul who sins is the one who will die.*' in Ezekiel 18:20 depicts the judgment of each individual, which is to be settled for eternity. Concerning God's judgment in eternity, there is also a fascinating illustration of a man dying, likened to a condition of the tree falling in Ecclesiastes 11:3, '*If clouds are full of water, they pour rain upon the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or the north, in the place where it falls, there will it lie.*' (Line added). As the position in which the tree falls decides the position in which it will die, by the same token, the verse implies that the condition of each individual at the moment of death decides what his condition will be throughout eternity. It is each individual himself that determines his own destiny in eternity.

As examined above, all these six fundamental principles listed in 6:1 & 2 should have been very basic teaching for Jews. However, it was undesirable for Jewish Christians to regard them as enough. They needed to move on from such Jewish foundations to Christian maturity. Their decisive action was urgently required, however, paradoxically also, it was not something that was to be attained by man's efforts, but only by their surrender to God, as the author of the epistle expressed: '*And God permitting, we will do so.*' In other words, a complete change of attitude towards God on man's side, i.e., faith in Christ alone with a clean break from tradition and rituals of Judaism enables man to press on to full maturity.

The author sternly declares that if those once enlightened would deliberately turn from it and reject Christ, it is impossible for them to be brought back to the initial and decisive response of repentance and faith any longer, but only to judgment. Because the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ is the last Word of God sent to man, there will be no further word of saving intervention from God. Jesus is the once-for-all, final and perfect sacrifice that fulfilled God's requirement for man's salvation, one that does not need to be repeated. There will be no escape from the coming judgment of God if man consciously rejects this wonderful salvation of grace by Christ.

There are five things described as that experienced by those failed in verses 4 to 5; **1) having once been enlightened by Jesus' messiah-ship, 2) having tasted heavenly gifts, 3) having been partakers of (the) Holy Spirit, 4) having tasted the goodness of the Word of God, 5) having witnessed the powers of the coming age.**

There are many theological debates concerning the interpretation of those who went through all above experiences; **1.whether or not those had ever been regenerated at all,** and also **2.whether or not any**

man once saved can yet be finally lost. While some say that their condition of apostasy itself is an apparent proof that they have never been regenerated, others, rather contradictorily, say that these five experiences are very proof of regeneration. However, examining each of these five experiences, they do not necessarily seem to be ones that only regenerated, born-again Christians are able to experience. Instead, it can be said that everyone is able to be enlightened by the light of the gospel brought in by Christ and yet refuse such gracious news. Also, everyone can be a partaker of the blessing of the Holy Spirit under the influence of His mighty power even without being sealed by Him or without being filled with Him. It is highly possible for man to end with unbelief even if he has begun with enthusiasm to the gospel and also the Word of God, having enjoyed the foretaste of the coming age. Being a truly regenerated Christian requires decisively surrendering **one's whole being; body (five senses), soul (feelings, will and thought), and spirit (conscience, intuition, and fellowship with God)** to Christ. Accordingly, those who ended up in apostasy may have merely been outwardly informed about the gospel, having never fully accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour. Indeed, in Jesus' days there were many such believers and even disciples that turned back and no longer followed Him shortly after being confronted with the truth or the Word which gives eternal life as John recorded in John 6. In other words, these apostates who deserted Christ were perhaps never regenerate Christians and their action is nothing less than that of those who crucified Him, making a show of Him.

The consequent judgment on their complete degeneracy would lead them into a loss of eternal salvation. However, when it comes to Christians that have been truly regenerated, it would be impossible to lose their eternal salvation in Christ. Some of them might happen to lose their reward in the end because of their unfruitfulness as a result of incomplete surrender of their heart (soul) to Christ, yet, they will eternally be saved: ***'If any man builds on this foundation (Jesus Christ) using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.'*** (1Co.3:12-15, Line added). This is why it is called the gospel, i.e., "good news" for all of us, sinners.

Regenerate and degenerate Christians are both outwardly the same professed Christians, having been baptised with water, having enjoyed spiritual fellowship, witnessed signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit; however, their inward maturity and thus their end result will be different. While the former devoted the whole of their beings to Christ as His fruitful vessels, and continued to be faithful to Him to the end, laying hold of their assured hope of final and eternal salvation, the latter just intellectually tasted a bit of Christianity only to produce worthless ***'thorns and thistles'***—a symbol of the curse—with an unrepentant heart. In such a way the readers of this epistle needed to be properly warned so that regenerate Christians should press on to their maturity, by imitating their predecessors through faith and patience as inheritors of God's promise. **God's Word and God's oath**, these unchangeable, double grounds of confidence are enough for man to trust in His promise.

This hope of salvation in Christ is to us, according to the author's phrase, ***'an anchor for the soul, firm and secure,'*** which ***'enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.'*** According to Ironside's comment, this anchor, which has neither been cast into the **"hold of the ship,"** nor rested on the **"shifting sands,"** symbolically illustrates that it (an anchor for the soul =hope of salvation in Christ) neither depends on man's own frames and experiences, nor rests on man's systems of thought, but is fastened to the mercy-seat of the most holies. Jesus is our **"Forerunner"** who carried this anchor into ***'the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,'*** i.e., the holy of holies. This significantly means that while we are still here on earth, tossed around on the rough sea of this age, we are completely safe because our anchor is firmly held within the curtain by Christ. It is worth referring to Jesus as **"Forerunner,"** ***'who went before us, has entered on our behalf.'*** (Hebrews6:20). The term 'forerunner' means a small boat in nautical terms. It is understood to have been customary to first rest the anchor in the forerunner to secure the heavy ship until the tide should rise and finally cast it in the harbour because heavy ships were unable to get through the mouths of many Greek harbours at low tide. It is fascinating to know that this literal picture illustrates how Jesus as our **"Forerunner,"** secured

our soul's salvation by first entering into the very presence of God on our behalf as '*a high priest in the order of Melchizedek*'.