

NEWSLETTER

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From A Start To A Finish

"Then God Said, "Let there be **light**," Genesis 1:3

"In Him was life, and the life was the **light** of the world," John 1:4

"Ye are the **light** of the world," Matthew 5:14

"Let you **light** shine before men," Matthew 5:16

"If we walk in the **light**...the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us of all sin,"

I John 1:7

"they shall have no need of the **light** of the lamp nor the **light** of the sun..the Lord God **illuminates** them," Revelation 22:5.

This Newsletter is not about LIGHT. But, since light appears to be constant, we think it represents the title of this Newsletter, perfectly. Light does move; it can be slowed, depending on the medium but, man's naked eye is unable to keep up any change in the speed of light; which, is calculated at 186,000 miles per second.

When we come to God's **light** within the Bible, natural man has trouble keeping up with its movement, as well. However, God's light reveals that there is a start and a finish to man's salvation. It is a glorious reconciliation - a past transformation that is realized through a **present tense** faith of a daily walk.

If we honor the Lord for the provision of His gift of salvation, we have to be like Abraham and keep our eyes on the city. We can't look back when leaving the world. "Remember Lot's wife," Jesus told his disciples (Lk 17:32).

Historically, God starts the definition of salvation with His promise to Abraham. All nations will be blessed through him. The promise continues to be defined through Israel's presentation of "**types and shadows**."

Then, there's the time of Jesus. "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons," Galatians 4:4-5.

We pray that this Newsletter will shed some light on God's salvation, revealing its terms of past, present and future tenses. It good to have a "**Time**" reference in all portions of God's call to salvation.

We often talk about salvation as an experience of the **"past,"** with a strong hope of a **"future"** resurrection. *"I was saved (past) in 1959,"* one avows. He follows with, *"I can't wait until Jesus comes (future) and takes me home.*

And, while we reference the experience of salvation to a 'thankful' **past-time** and look forward to a 'wonderful' **future-time**, we cannot forget about the **"PRESENT-TIME"** of God's deliverance.

"Today if ye hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me." This verse comes from Hebrews 3:7-8, but it is a quote from Psalms 95:8. The writer gives a **"past"** reference; which, is clearly intended to be beneficial for us in the **"Present."** Salvation is only by faith, and Hebrews wants us to know it as a "present" reality. Faith is to be in the here and now, within every believer.

We must **not** think that an experience of the past will carry us through a present walk of faith. Faith is a daily experience; a daily walk. Neither, can we suppose that the future will take care of itself, whether we have present faith, or not. *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'LORD, LORD,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven,"* Mt 7:21.

The reference given in the book of Hebrews points out that Israel had a mighty deliverance from an Egyptian bondage. They left in a hurry, with a **"future"** hope burning in their hearts. They knew God was on their side.

However, what the Hebrews letter stresses in Israel's history is not their past deliverance but the lack of faith of the nation, while under God's control. The writer of Hebrews has concerns about what took place after their deliverance; after Israel crossed the Red Sea. The writer does not paint a rosy picture of faith.

After the drowning of the Egyptian Army, Israel was no longer hotly pursued; but they doubted and feared, nonetheless. Hebrews gives them a poor report on their **"present"** tense of salvation. While walking on their wilderness journey, it was as if God wasn't around, anywhere. Their exhibition of stubborn hearts caused the older generation to miss the Land of Rest that God had waiting for them to enter.

Although, Canaan was but a "type" of the real rest which Jesus has secured for believers today, we **must allow** the warning of Hebrews to say what it says. *"Therefore, let us fear (reverential fear) lest, a promise left us of entering into His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it,"* Hebrews 4:1.

PLEASE OBSERVE CAREFULLY: In Hebrews 4:1, the word "fear" is in the **Aorist Subjunctive** used as an **Imperative**. According to Greek Scholar

Spiros Zodhiates, *"An Aorist Subjunctive Imperative (aosi) usually forbids an action which is not in progress, and thus commands that it not be started."*

In his "Word Studies in the New Testament," Marvin Vincent, D.D. says Hebrews 4:1 is saying, *"Since this promise remains, let us fear to distrust it."*

Baptists don't fear about their past salvation. However, because of that great salvation that one experienced when saved, Baptists (and others) seem numb to the warning given in Hebrews. Baptist doctrine tends to make them very comfortable in their salvation.

Along with Matthew 7:21, Baptists need to hear what Hebrews means; what is it truly saying. Vincent, once again, on Hebrews 4:1, "The writer is saying, *"be fearful that we fail to trust"* the rest brought to us by Jesus.

It seems clear that, if we fail to rest in the finished work of Christ, our present day salvation will come up short in many areas. Our time may be squandered; emotional outbursts will occur; and, even Bible reading suffers.

We must ask ourselves, 'how serious do we take our salvation?' And, 'How can we walk by faith unless we are resting in His finished work?'

Like a lazy man, who works harder not to work, than finding a job and working, saved church members expend a lot of energy, WORKING to avoid what they are called to do. Then, they quote "Not of works" from Ephesians 2:8-9. It would be hard to say that such a person is resting in Christ's finished work.

And, so our doctrine must harmonize with His rest. Any teaching that denies a finished salvation, from its start, cannot produce a rest in the heart of anyone. And, while 'once saved, always saved' is the beginning to understanding God's salvation, we must not miss this message in Hebrews. Resting in Christ starts with learning. We have to learn to live within an obedient rest; one that follows all the way the LORD leads - without murmuring.

The serious Bible student learns that Salvation is to be understood in terms of tenses. There is the PAST, when we were saved; the FUTURE, when that salvation will take us into the Kingdom Age; and, then, there's the PRESENT TENSE of salvation requiring us to follow all of Christ's teaching.

In the Great Commission, Jesus said, *"All Power (exousia, right of authority) has been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."* Matthew 28:18-19a.

Salvation of the LORD is inseparable. It is finished and, therefore cannot be divided. It can be ignored and, it can be neglected. *"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation;"* Hebrews 2:3. Here, one may neglect salvation, itself; that which saved him and keeps him saved.

In the Parables, Jesus tells us to be ready, be on the alert and many other admonitions, which are indicative of trusting Him. Thus, Hebrews instructs us,

"Since the promise remains, let us be fearful **not** to trust it," 4:1.

Concerning, "fear," it is clear that disobedience caused Israel to fall in the wilderness. They did not enter the rest of the land of milk and honey because of unbelief. So, the writer says, "Let us labor (give diligence) therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief," 4:11.

Romans 8:25 may shed a little light on the two phrases, "Let us fear" and "Let us labor". "But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it."