
FROM
ENCOURAGEMENT
TO
APOSTASY
WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN CHRISTENDOM?

By Arlen L. Chitwood

Christians are warned over and over in the Book of Hebrews concerning the goal of their calling. This is *the central subject* of the book, it is *the central issue* within the Christian life, and it should be *the issue which occupies the central place in every activity of every Christian at all times*. This overall matter is set forth in the Word of God to be *that important in God's sight*.

Beginning of Our Confidence

In Heb. 3:13a, Christians are told,

"But exhort one another *daily* [lit., 'each day,' 'every day'], while it is called Today [the present time]..."

And this is to be done in order to avoid, at all costs, following a similar course of action to that which the nation of Israel followed at Kadesh-Barnea (*cf.* Heb. 3:8, 13b). For, according to Scripture, Christians will

occupy positions with Christ on the throne, as His "companions," *IF...* Christians will hold positions of this nature with Christ in that coming day only *IF*, during the present day, they hold *the beginning of their confidence* "steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:14).

(The word "companions" rather than "partakers" [KJV] would be the preferred translation of the word used in the Greek text in Heb. 3:14, the word *metochoi*. This is the same word which the writer of Hebrews also used in 1:9 [translated "fellows"] and in 3:1 [translated "partakers," as in 3:14]; and the preferred translation in these two instances as well would be "companions.")

Holding "the beginning of one's confidence steadfast unto the end," with a view to being "companions" with Christ in that coming day, must be understood within the framework of the type.

Caleb and Joshua held the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end; the remainder of the nation, however, didn't.

Relative to entering the land, overthrowing the enemy, and occupying the position for which they had been called, Caleb and Joshua said,

"Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Num. 13:30).

But the remainder of the nation manifested an entirely different attitude and took

an entirely different approach toward the matter. They feared the inhabitants of the land, they wept through the night, they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and they sought to appoint a new leader and return to Egypt (Num. 13:32-14:4).

This is where the difference lay, and, contextually, Heb. 3:14 must be understood within this framework.

Confession of Our Hope

In Heb. 10:23-25, the same command is restated after a slightly different fashion in connection with Christians assembling together. In verse twenty-three, Christians are exhorted, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith [lit., 'the confession of our hope'] without wavering." Then, in the following two verses, Christians are told to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works...exhorting one another"; and Christians are to conduct their affairs among one another in this manner "*so much the more*" as they "see the day approaching [that coming day when one's present hope will be realized]."

Contextually, in Hebrews chapter ten, a central purpose for Christians assembling together (actually, *the central purpose* in the text) — "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..." (v. 25) — is with a view to exhorting one another relative to the hope of our calling (*cf.* vv. 23, 25).

And to do this, Christians would have to be knowledgeable, after some fashion, concerning this hope. They would have to talk about and discuss this hope with one another, for there could be no exhortation apart from some type knowledge of the facts surrounding the Christians' calling.

In other words, in the light of Heb. 3:13; 10:23-25, Christians are to assemble together with a view to talking about and discussing among themselves the things surrounding their calling. They are to talk about *that land out ahead* (that heavenly land), *the enemy therein* (Satan and his angels), *the necessity of present victory over the enemy* (through the spiritual warfare), and *the hope set before them* (that of one day occupying that heavenly land with the "King of kings, and the Lord of lords," as Christ and Christians ascend the throne together [replacing Satan and his angels] and exercise the rights of the firstborn).

And, with these things in view, Christians are to spend time exhorting one another ("daily" in the text [3:13]) *relative to the importance of keeping their eyes fixed on the goal out ahead*; and they are to carry on an interchange with one another after this fashion *so much the more* as they "see the day approaching."

And that's exactly where we are today — at a time when Christians should be exhorting one another "so much the

more," for we are living very near the end of the present dispensation, very near the end of man's allotted six days (6,000 years), immediately prior to the fast-approaching seventh day (the Lord's Day, the Messianic Era, to last 1,000 years).

But...

Are Christians though assembling together today with this purpose in view?

Hardly!

Christians, by large, know *little to nothing about this whole matter*. This is not something which they talk about, discuss; nor, much less, is it something which is uppermost in their thoughts, governing their actions, *allowing them to exhort one another daily*.

Consequently, Christians are assembling together today for purposes which *completely ignore* that which is stated in Heb. 10:23-25. This is how complete the leaven has done its damaging work.

Are conditions going to improve? Are Christians going to one day wake up?

Not during the present dispensation!

The present dispensation, according to Scripture, will end in *total apostasy relative to Christians understanding and manifesting an interest in the Word of the Kingdom*; and that's exactly the direction in which the Church has been moving for centuries.

And, not only has the Church been

moving in this direction for centuries, but the Church continues to move in this direction today — a direction which, for all practical purposes, has carried the Church completely away from "the faith" which was held almost universally among Christians during the first century.

Christ's statement, "till the whole was leavened" (Matt. 13:33), and His companion statement that at the time of His return He would not find "the faith on the earth" (Luke 18:8), *must be taken at face value*. Christ, in His omniscience, knowing the future as well as the past and present, stated the matter *exactly* as it would exist at the end of the dispensation.

After two millenniums, at the end of the dispensation, the leavening process, according to Christ's statement (*cf. Matt. 13:3-33*), would be *so complete* that, correspondingly, the message surrounding "the faith" *would no longer be heard in the Churches* — in so-called fundamental and liberal Churches alike. And the Church as a whole, with respect to this message, would be as the Laodicean Church in Rev. 3:14-21, "...wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

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