

July 23

Scriptures: Read Hebrews 6

Key Verse: “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 baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment” (Hebrews 6:1,2) (NIV).

Overview

Notice what the author calls “elementary teachings”: repentance, faith in God, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection, and eternal judgment. These are the foundational doctrines and are to be learned early. But, for those who are “going on to maturity”, there is a need to understand the reasons behind these “elementary teachings about Christ”. Remember, the author has addressed this book to “Hebrew” believers — these are people who have a rich heritage and tradition in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament (see the Introduction to Hebrews, the last paragraph, for further discussion on this). The author is describing in colourful and rich word pictures the world of “the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf” (v.!9-20a, NIV).

So, speaking to Hebrews, the author goes back to the very beginning of Hebrew history. He talks about the promise God made to Abraham: “When God made His promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for Him to swear by, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘I will surely bless you and give you many descendants’” (vv.13-14, NIV). He refers to the promise and the oath as “two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie...” (v.18, NIV). In a culture where a promise (or contract) was sealed by swearing in the name of someone greater than oneself (a king or patriarch etc.), these words had special impact. First of all, God’s promise is enough — there’s no need for an oath. But God, for good measure, seals His promise by swearing by Himself — His own holy name is written on the promise. God will not fail. That’s why the Hebrew believers “have fled to take hold of the hope... as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (vv.!8b,19, NIV).

That hope “enters the inner sanctuary”; that is, it is more than just wishful thinking. Rather, it’s a hope that is somehow personified in Jesus who has already gone before us and has “entered on our behalf”. The Son is our Hope, and He is also our Priest.

Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for the wealth of spiritual knowledge we can tap into by reading Your Word. We ask for Your special help for all of us to go on to maturity in our walk with You.