

Hebrews

Hebrews 3:12-4:13 – Part III

January 18, 2009

I. Introduction

- A. Overall Emphasis since **Hebrews 1:1** – Listen to Jesus! What he says, do. If he sends, go. Where he leads, follow.
1. In relation to our study today, Jesus says: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you **rest**. [29] Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find **rest** for your souls. [30] For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (**Matthew 11:28-30**)
 2. Today, my intention is to talk about the two kinds of “rest” spoken of in Hebrews and what they mean for us today.
- B. Prayer
- C. **Hebrews 3:12-19, 4:1-13** . . . Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. [13] But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. [14] For **we have become partakers of Christ, if** we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, [15] while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me (*God*).” [16] For who provoked Him (*God*) when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? [17] And with whom was He (*God*) angry for forty years? Was it not with those who **sinned**, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? [18] And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were **disobedient**? [19] So we see that they were not able to enter because of **unbelief**. [4:1] Therefore, **let us fear if**, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. [2] For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but **the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith** in those who heard. [3] For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, “As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,” although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. [4] For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; [5] and again in this passage, “They shall not enter My rest.” [6] Therefore, since it remains for some

to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them **failed to enter because of disobedience**, [7] He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." [8] For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. [9] So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. [10] For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. [11] Therefore **let us be diligent to enter that rest**, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. [12] For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. [13] And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

II. Two kinds of rest spoken about in Hebrews – (1) Eternal Rest, (2) Earthly (Current) Rest

A. **Eternal Rest:** That rest we enter into upon dying and leaving this earth to go and be with God for ever and ever. One day, the eternal kingdom of God will include a new heaven and new earth where we will dwell with God for ever and ever.

1. According to the scriptures, this place of rest, this eternal kingdom of God, is not a place without labor or work or activity. The kind of rest God is speaking of is a rest from all that would enslave us, oppress us, harm us, ruin us, and destroy us by keeping us from loving and serving God.
2. This place of rest, this eternal or heavenly kingdom has qualities to it that make it a place of rest. As we look at these qualities, I urge you to consider that these same qualities are essential to entering into God's earthly rest today.
3. God's eternal kingdom –
 - a. is a place dominated by the visible, universal, and personally experienced presence of God.
 - b. It is a place dominated by universal rule of righteousness and personal holiness. This means it is a place free of sin, the devil, and the ungodly influences of the world. **For example:**

- (1) it is free from all that enslaves us to thoughts, words, and deeds that drive us away from God and compel us to turn against God
 - (2) it is free from our flesh – a flesh that is highly susceptible to the enslaving tactics of sin, the devil and the world
 - c. It is a place dominated by faith, and therefore free of unbelief. All who are there live totally and completely by faith in God – which is demonstrated by total and complete submission to the will and word of God – which results in total and complete contentment with the ways of God – which produces total and complete inner peace for all who live there. Can there be any greater joy than this?
 - d. It is a place dominated by love, which means it is a place free of fear – for there is **no one** there with evil motives or hidden agendas or selfish interests. There is **nothing** there that seeks our harm or works against our good or comes upon us to our hurt. There is **nothing** there to afflict us or sicken us or diminish our joy. There is **nothing** there that can in some way get in the way of our love and adoration of God. There is **nothing** there that will disrupt or damage or break relationships. There is **nothing** there that is not perfect love – and therefore it is a place free of fear.
 - e. This is the eternal rest God is speaking of here in **Hebrews 4** – an eternal rest we enter into by faith in the saving and sanctifying work of Jesus Christ. An eternal rest we secure by remaining faithful to our Savior until the end of our days here on the earth.
4. To magnify the significance of the rest we will enjoy one day in God's eternal kingdom, I want us to take a few moments and look at the devil's final resting place – the Lake of Fire – for in this place there is no rest.
- a. **Revelation 14:9-11** . . . Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, [10] he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. [11] "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever;

they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

b. **NO REST** – that is a powerful statement when contrasted to the **ETERNAL PLACE OF REST** promised to God to all who come to faith in Jesus Christ and persevere to the end.

(1) Imagine the suffering of body and mind from being tormented by fire and brimstone 24/7 without end. The physical suffering alone would be bad enough, but add to that the mental anguish of never getting a moments or an hours or a days break from the physical suffering. In other words, there will be **no rest** from the anguish.

(2) From another perspective, imagine being in a place dominated by self-willed, self-ruled, power-hungry, greed-driven, self-centered people who will do anything to lessen the anguish of body and mind. Add to that the fact that this is a place where there is no righteousness of any kind to offset the evil inclinations, choices, and deeds of those who are there. In other words, there will be **no rest** from the selfishness and meanness of like-minded people.

5. We have much to rejoice about and look forward to when it comes to the **REST** God has promised to all who are His children through saving faith. Indeed, this world is not our home – God’s eternal kingdom is our home. We are not citizens of this earth but rather travelers passing through a country that is not our home country while making our way home.

B. **Earthly (current) Rest:** The “Sabbath” rest we enjoy today as children of God.

1. This is a rest from:

a. Enslavement by a master who has no one’s interests but his own in mind.

b. (rest from) Fear of the enemy’s threat of attack, plunder, and even death.

c. (rest from) General anxiety, restlessness, discontentment, insecurity, hopelessness, and despair.

d. (rest from) Working for our salvation by trying to appease God and satisfy His demands regarding sin.

- e. However, this is not a rest from labor or even warring, but it is a rest from enslavement, fear (of the enemy), and trying to appease an angry God.
2. One significant truth taken from the Eternal Rest and applied to our Earthly Rest is that rest is found in the Holy Place and in the Holy One. What this means for us today is that we cannot find God's rest apart from a serious and diligent pursuit of holiness.
- a. To see what I am talking about, let me show you some differences between Egypt and the Promised Land.
 - b. The major difference is that God's visible and known presence was in the Promised Land – but not in Egypt. Why?
 - (1) Egypt represents our enslavement to sin. There was no rest for Israel in Egypt once they were made slaves by Pharaoh. But there also was to visible presence of God in Egypt. There was no temple or priests or sacrifices in Egypt.
 - (2) The Promised Land represents living in the known and personally experienced presence of God. But it also represents holiness of place and people. God put His temple in the midst of His people in the Promised Land. God's visible presence was with His people in the Promised Land. God gave Israel priests in the Promised Land. Why? The Promised Land was a sanctified, holy land – and God was there along with the rest He promised His people.
 - (3) Now I know the first temple was built in the wilderness and that God's visible presence was with Israel in the wilderness – but they were on their way to the Promised Land. (*It is hard to find perfect examples*)
 - c. What is the point here? Holiness of life is essential to experiencing God's rest here and now.
3. Yet faith is just as important as holiness. If the lack of faith kept Israel from entering God's rest, we can be assured that faith is essential for entering into God's rest – including experiencing His rest here and now. Wherever and whenever we allow unbelief to enter our thoughts, choices, words and deeds, we will lose the rest we have from God in this life – and things like fear, anxiety, anger, bitterness, fighting, and sinful choices and behavior will enter in.

Therefore, God's rest, here and now, is experienced by those who have a solid yet growing faith in God and confidence in the goodness of God.

- a. **II Chronicles 32:7-8** . . . "Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria nor because of all the horde that is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. [8] "With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles." And the people relied on (*rested in, leaned on*) the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.
 - b. **II Chronicles 32:7-8** . . . "Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria nor because of all the horde that is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. [8] "With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles." And the people relied on (*rested in, leaned on*) the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.
4. Two further conditions of experiencing God's rest here and now –
- a. Experienced by those who have a keen sense of God's presence and who enjoy ongoing communion and companionship with Him.
 - (1) **Psalms 37:3-7** . . . Trust in the LORD and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. [4] Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. [5] Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it. [6] He will bring forth your righteousness as the light And your judgment as the noonday. [7] Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.
 - b. Experienced by those who are willing to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him to act on their behalf
 - (1) **John 14:27** . . . Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.
5. Reminder – God's rest here and now is not a rest from labor or even warring. It is a rest from enslavement, fear (of the enemy), and trying to appease an angry God.

6. Jesus – our example of living in God’s rest here and now:
 - a. **Matthew 8:24** . . . And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep.

III. Conclusion

- A. Jesus speaks these comforting words to us today: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you **rest**. [29] Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find **rest** for your souls. [30] For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (**Matthew 11:28-30**)
- B. When we seek God’s rest God’s way, we will find it.