

**Text:** Hebrews 4:1-10

**Title:** God's Rest

**Date/Location:** November 14, 2010 at FBC

## **Introduction**

The concept of God's rest has permeated chapters 3 and 4. In chapter 3, it is introduced in verses 11 and 18. In chapter 4, the word "rest" occurs 8 times (v. 1, 3 [2x], 5, 8, 9, 10, 11). But what is this rest? It obviously sounds good, but what exactly is it?

### **A. God's Rest can be missed, v. 1-2, see 3:19**

How? By unbelief, v. 2. Message + Faith = Rest. The "good news" was not the "gospel" per se.

### **B. God's Rest is entered by belief, v. 3a**

Those who believe "do enter" or "are entering" in the present.

### **C. If God is mad at you, you don't enter God's Rest, v. 3b**

God is angry with sinners and sin – John 3:36, Rom 1:18, Eph 5:6, Col. 3:6.

### **D. God's Rest is somehow like the rest God took from creating, v. 3c-5**

1. We've already said that God's rest is like the promised land. Here is another "likeness" of God's rest.
2. Some suggest that our rest is identical with his
  - \* This cannot be the case because that rest is from the creation work. People have never done such work, so they cannot rest from it.
3. We have a clue that our rest is different because verse 4b says God rested from all *His* works. We don't do "God's works." Therefore, our rest is not precisely identical but it is *similar* to God's rest in that it is like how He ceased from His work. See more on this later.
4. The reference to God's rest from the foundation of the world says that a rest from God has been available since back then, and still is.

### **E. God's Rest is not the promised land, v. 8**

It is *like* the promised land rest but it is not the same. Chapter 3 was concerned with that promised land rest in the historical situation of Israel, but chapter 4 carries it to a whole different level.

The grammar is like this: If Joshua had given them rest (but he did not), there would not be anything else about another day (but there is).

### **F. God's Rest is still available, v. 6-9, 1**

The offer has not been closed, but like coupons, there is an expiration date. The promise still stands. This is a key contention of the passage that is developed in these verses.

Verse 1 simply states the fact—a promise remains of entering His rest and warns that we do not miss it. But how is this stuff about the Promised Land and from the Psalms relevant today?

The thought is not too hard to follow:

First, back in the Exodus/Joshua time, Joshua helped the nation procure the Promised-Land rest.

Second, Psalm 95:7-8 says "Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts..." That is, "today" is the era when David wrote Psalm 95. God inspired that writing too, and basically says that there is a rest that required the Psalm's readers to hear and have a soft heart too, just like in the Exodus generation. This is the more significant "rest" of which Hebrews is concerned, something beyond just a land promise at the time of Joshua's conquest of Palestine. The "today" saying means that there is still a danger of missing something—something which David calls "rest."

Third, God inspired Hebrews to say the same thing in our day! He told us to beware in 3:12 because we might find in some of ourselves an evil, unbelieving heart.

Fourth, note that God's oath "they shall not enter My rest" does not close the rest of God for all time to all people. It is simply God's response to unbelief in all ages. Those who do not believe in Him, God promises, will not enter His rest! By saying "Today" in the Psalm and again in Hebrews, God is telling us there is still a salvation-rest available.

So, the promised-land-rest is "upgraded" to the salvation-rest in the Psalms, and re-upgraded as salvation-rest in Hebrews 3-4. The same kind of benefit is presented, and the same kind of dire warning and promise with life-and-death consequences hangs in the balance.

Matthew 11:28-30 is a reference to "rest" that dovetails with what we are talking about.

## **G. God's Rest is a cessation of works, v. 10**

A. For God, "his works" refers to His work of creation. On the seventh literal day of history, God ceased that creative work. He did not need to "rest" as in "renew strength" but He did cease from creating. He created in six days and rested the seventh to be a pattern for his people of the kind of work/rest that He wished for us to follow, and the structure of the week.

B. God's rest is not a ceasing of all activity. After all, John 5:17 is true.

C. For the believer, "his works" raises a question. Are we talking about:

1. His works before he is saved? Certainly this is true in the sense that "works" do not earn entrance for anyone into the rest that God is talking about here. The liability of this interpretation is that it puts God's good works of creation in parallel with man's bad works in attempting to achieve salvation. The parallel does not seem very fitting.

2. His works after he is saved? The difficulty here is that believers are told to do good works, not to cease from them in this life.

D. The answer revolves around the notion that while we "are entering" God's rest, there is a final culmination in which we are able to fully enjoy a "Sabbath rest" with God after life is over. A life of rest is marked by obedient works, and the rest is fully achieved after death or the return of Christ when we can cease the struggle against sin in our striving for good.

## **Conclusion**

The main point of the passage is to tell the readers, and us, that there is such a thing still available as God's rest. Entrance into it, however, is not an automatic thing. In fact, the odds against it are quite high, if you calculate just from the number of people who did not make it in Exodus and how many do not make it today (Matthew 7:13-14)! We must give a reverent hearing to the Word in light of this. MAP