

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

"Faith Rest"

Hebrews 4:3-10

Recap

1. Given the position Christ has over Moses (3:1-6), Paul argues that Israel responded negatively to Moses (3:7-11). It was indeed a "provocation" (3:8) and the Lord was grieved" (3:10).
2. Based on the O.T. illustration, Paul appeals to his readers not to make a similar response to God (3:12 – 4:2).
3. It is clear that God brought Israel out of Egypt in order to bring them into the Canaan land (Deut. 6:24). The dual activity of God was natural and expected. Regretfully, the nation at large failed because of unbelief (3:19).
4. The truths taught here are throughout the Bible. The doctrine of justification (Ro. 4, 5) has the benefit of the doctrine of sanctification (Ro. 6-8). The one benefit is concomitant with the other. So with salvation (Eph. 2:8, 9) has the concomitant benefit of God for-ordained good works in which a saved person will walk (Eph. 2:10).
5. God's work is always to bring a person out of Egypt and into the promised land. It is a package deal. What God does to save a soul is consistent with God's holy character.
6. An additional benefit in salvation is "rest." It is this benefit which attracts attention now. The word is found eight times in the English text (vv. 3 (2 times), 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11). Consider the sorts of rest or rest benefits for a believer.

1. PROVISIONAL REST -- PAST vv. 3-5

a. For Believers v. 3

This is a peculiar class of people, as the Greek connotes (πιστεύσαντες pisteusantes). Let' s not generalize where God specifies. It is not by works, change of character, church, or any other thing, but faith. This is God' s only strategy for rest- faith! Faith in Christ alone!

b. After God vv. 4, 5

What is talked about here is divine. God was in fact refreshed after the days of creation (Ex. 31:17). This may seem preposterous, but it is true. But this rest was broken by sin (Gen. 3). From that point, God set about to make restoration (Gen. 3:15; John 5:17). The Cross came and Christ shouted that it was finished (Jn 19:30). He obtained a perfect and eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12; 10:12). God has found perfect rest in the work of the Cross (Ro. 3:24, 25).

It is up to "believers" now to rest where God rests – in the work of Christ' s shed blood. When one accepts the announcement of Christ' s finished work, rest comes (cf. 2 Chron. 32:8). This is the present rest of faith; it is found rest (Mt. 11:29); it is peace with God (Ro. 5:1). It means that one rests from his own works and depends completely upon Christ' s! Hallelujah.

The present tense "enter" (εἰσερχόμεθα eiserchometha) (v. 3) is preceded by an aorist "believe" (πιστεύσαντες pisteusantes). When the latter is true, the former will be also! Oh, that true children of God would enter NOW into this rest which is theirs. Christians don' t need special seminars to get peace; they need simple faith . Glory to God!

2. AVAILABLE REST – PRESENT vv. 6-8

a. A Select People v. 6

Unbelief was manifested in disobedience (vv. 3:19). What a tragedy. One cannot but feel the impact of this account and its appeal. But God' s resting did not exhaust all that was there to enjoy. His Word about rest was not spoken in vain. Some will yet enjoy it. "Some," (τινός τινος) not "none," is in the Book!

The Exodus generation refused it and failed. They ended in defeat. But the promise still waits for fulfillment. There are some who will enter due to once for all faith. The verb "preached" is an aorist passive pointing to the fact that certain ones actually were the subjects of

a bombardment from the Lord, but they were not persuaded to enter. But the rest still remains and some will enjoy it!

b. A Select Time vv. 7, 8

Moses and his generation had the offer given to them. Now 500 years later the offer is given again by God. It is "in David" because this is the manner of inspiration: God speaking in a man (2 Pet. 1:22). Thus, God set a limit for another day to announce His rest. The verb "limit" (ὀρίζεται horizein) means to set a boundary and thus to designate a day. What marvelous grace is explored here.

The noun "Jesus" (v. 8) should read "Joshua" for they both have the same root. The name means salvation (cf. Acts 7:45). The point is that the offer of rest was not exhausted in Joshua' s day, but 500 years later it is still being offered. The physical and temporal rest of Canaan is superseded by a soul rest which is gloriously provided in the Lord! God' s true rest may still be accepted or refused. Why, oh why, do men fail to enter into the heavenly rest of God (Isa. 57:20).

It would appear that the soul rest provided the true believer is something to be enjoyed right now. Here is a great existential experience! It is available up to this very hour. Take it as your very own (Phil. 4:6, 7).

3. PREDICTABLE REST -- FUTURE vv. 9, 10

a. Stated

It is clear that God affirms with one bold word that a true and complete rest still awaits the people of God. The phrase "people of God" (λαὸν τοῦ θεοῦ lao tou theou) is a dative of personal interest of a group named His "people." Apparently by this expression, God is ruling out dispensational distinctions here. All who are His will enjoy a rest prepared for them! No matter what the issue is then, it will be a glorious rest from the Lord. The kind of rest which awaits the people of God is termed a "Sabbath rest" (σαββατισμός sabbatismos). This is a hapax legomenon for the New Testament. Up to now Paul has used a generic term for rest (κατάπαυσεν katapausen) but now a special and unique word. It is one which points back to God' s original ideal rest. It is a perfect experience of all having been accomplished, just like God' s original one.

b. Described

By virtue of what is stated here, it appears that the rest involved is one which has not to this point been realized, but it will be. The eternal state is in mind. It is what God promised Daniel (12:13). God spoke of it to Zephaniah (3:17). It will be entering into of completeness. No more to do, but now to enjoy! It will be the time of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1).

Recapitulation 1) At the moment of salvation there is a "rest" for a believer. It is claimed on the basis of faith alone. 2) Once saved, there is "rest" for the believer to enjoy. That is also experienced through faith. So there is rest (I have it) and rest (I enjoy it) and then 3) There is a "Sabbath rest" which will be when all our labors are over! That is rest in Glory. Remember, all "rest" is based upon the finished work of Christ at Calvary. Because He shouted, it is done (Jn 19:30), you may "rest." Hallelujah!

Conclusion Some take it that the warnings of Hebrews are for the Jews alone. This is utter nonsense. All of God' s Word is written for our learning! It is all profitable (2 Tim. 3:16,17). What God may have said to the Jews is nonetheless for us in matters of instruction. If there were ever a day when we needed carefulness, it is today. Paul warned the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:31) and we need the same (Acts 20:29, 30). Paul also pointed out what would happen in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1-5). The answer to the situation is sound doctrine (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-4). Nothing should be taken for granted (2 Pet. 1:10). The Spirit should have full sway in our total beings. Amen and amen.