

The Superiority of Christ

Jesus – Better than Joshua and the Promised Land Rest

Hebrews 4:4-11

Introduction

The Book of Hebrews compares and contrasts the Old Testament Covenant and the New Covenant in Christ.

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- God's dealings with the Jews vs. God's dealings with the followers of Christ.
- Old Testament ritual and bondage vs. New Testament grace and freedom.
- Old Testament prophets with Jesus, the fulfillment of prophecy.
- Angelic beings to the Son of God who created them.
- Moses as the Lawgiver vs. Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law.

The final verses of Chapter 3 are a warning to those who are unsure or uncommitted to following Jesus as God's Messiah. In verse 16, the writer takes us back to when the children of Israel left Egypt for the Promised Land. "For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, *led* by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the Wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." ([Hebrews 3:16-19 NKJV](#))

A whole generation of Israelites failed to enter the Promised Land because of their disobedience due to their unbelief. They failed to enter Canaan even though God had redeemed them out of Egypt. If you want a biblical picture of missing God's best for your life, this is it! A whole generation perished in the Wilderness and failed to enter the promised land. The cause of this failure to enter Canaan was due to their fear, unbelief, and disobedience. When God commanded them to go up and possess the land, they gave way to fear and disobeyed God's command.

It's not beginning to follow God that matters most; it's how you finish that counts. The scripture says, "By faith, they kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, and by faith, they passed through the Red Sea." They started out with Faith! But through the wilderness experience, they failed to grow in Faith and instead grumbled and complained against God. They had Faith enough to leave Egypt; but not enough Faith to enter Canaan.

The Hebrew Christians were facing the same situation. They began with Faith in Christ but were faltering in Faith under persecution. When Israel was about to enter the land of Canaan, Moses used the words: " He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in to give us the land." The call to holiness requires us to cease from the life of wandering and murmuring and enter into the rest of God.

Many find the Christian life too hard to live. They do not believe with Caleb, "We are well able to possess the land." They are afraid of the cost and the sacrifices needed

to secure the victory even though God has already assured the outcome. That is the behavior that hardens the heart and prevents a person from entering into the rest of Christ.

Where are you in your walk of Faith? Do carnal pursuits plague you, or are you seeking spiritual growth? Are you a babe in Christ, or have you grown up in the Faith that moves mountains? Are you still in Egypt, in the Wilderness, or ready to possess the Promised Land and enter into the rest of God? The only way to enter that rest is to walk the path of Faith and complete obedience.

Chapter 4, verse 1, says, " Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "SO I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,' " although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." (Hebrews 4:1-3 NKJV)

The writer begins by talking about entering the rest of faith.

I. The Rest of Faith

Israel had example after example of God's ability and willingness to provide for them even in the Wilderness. But instead of becoming convinced of God's love and protection, they gave in to fear and carnal desire making them unfit for Canaan and the Promised Land. God's plan was the land of promise, with rest instead of desert wanderings, with abundance instead of want, and with victory over every enemy instead of defeat.

Some believers only know Jesus as the Saviour who has delivered them from Egypt through His atoning work on the cross. But Christ wants us to know Him as the glorified Prophet, Priest, and King of Heaven; he saves and sanctifies us completely, writes God's laws upon our hearts, and leads us into the presence of His divine rest. The Hebrew writer is warning us to turn away from fear and murmuring and grow in Faith until we find ourselves continually at rest in the presence of God. He says, "Make sure you don't fall short of it!"

Some think that the rest of Canaan is the type of Heaven. It isn't! The Canaan life was life in a land that had to be fought for and conquered. The Wilderness is where God proves His miraculous power and provision to you. Canaan is where you prove God's power and provision to the world. Egypt is where you escape from your enemies by the power of God. Canaan is where you are victorious over your enemies by the power of God. The life of faith begins when we learn to trust God for victory over sin.

Our faith continues to grow as we yield ourselves and our circumstances to God and live in obedience to God's will. That is how we learn to enter the rest of Faith. Faith

lives in the promise, in the will, and the power of God. This is the rest of faith the Hebrew writer wants us to enter.

Canaan is not a picture of entering Heaven through death. It is a picture of dying to self, fear, and unbelief by claiming, by Faith, the death of Christ as sufficient to give you an everlasting life of victory, strength, and resurrection power. The Promised Land is waiting. The Rest of Faith is provided.

Don't fail to enter this rest of Faith because of fear and unbelief! Unbelief closes off your heart from receiving the Faith of God. It sucks the life out of the power of God that wants to work through you. And it steals from you the very promise of God's Word. By its very nature, Faith is a resting in the Promiser until the promise is fulfilled. Only faith can enter into rest.

Joshua and Caleb were the only two of a whole generation who had enough faith to enter into the rest of the Promised Land. Moses led the people out of Egypt. Joshua brought them into the land of promise. Both picture the work of Jesus as the Messiah.

Joshua was a great leader and general who led Israel to victory in the Promised Land. But Jesus is better than Joshua since He has led us into the presence of God, giving us spiritual strength and victory to be overcomers and rest and be at peace in Him.

Faith causes you to let God work in and through you. Faith is not promoting yourself or denying your circumstances. Faith faces any situation and rests in the sufficiency of God. Faith does not need help; it is God's help! It is not troubled by need or weakness; faith is the victory that always overcomes. Faith trusts in the Lord with all its heart and never trusts in human understanding. In every way, faith acknowledges the Lord knowing that the path of God always leads to rest and peace.

The Hebrew writer tells us to trust Jesus. Give up and forsake the Wilderness. Follow the Lord and enter His rest.

II. The Rest of God

In verse 4, the writer explains more fully the rest of God, "For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS"; and again in this place: "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST." Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "TODAY," after such a long time, as it has been said: "TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day." ([Hebrews 4: 4-8 NKJV](#))

It allows God to be all and do all; the rest is in God Himself. It is His own divine rest we enter by Faith. We are the work of His creation. Faith causes us to see that as His creation, we can find rest nowhere but in the Creator. When we surrender to Him, to His will and His working, we can enter into the rest of God. In His perfect rest, we can cast all of our cares upon God and be free of all care and anxiety.

Even though God is the cause of all movement and change, He, Himself, is immovable and unchangeable. The rest of God can not be disturbed by anything. By faith, we see what the rest of God is and realize that God allows us to share in it. Faith enters in and partakes of the rest of God. Faith honors God, and God honors faith.

To enter the rest of God, you must partake of the faith of Christ. You must receive the Holy Spirit's insight into the finished work of Christ on the Cross and embrace the salvation Jesus imparts.

Creation is a perfect picture of the connection between finishing a work and entering the rest that follows. God rested on the seventh day from all the physical work of creation? The same is true of Jesus. After the finished work of Jesus on the Cross, He returned to Heaven and rested from His work of providing salvation. Christ put away sin, tore in two the veil in the temple, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

When we receive Christ, we partake of His divine nature. The faith of Christ in us - maintains and perfects His work in us – so that with confidence and boldness, we can rest in His divine presence.

Jesus is greater than Joshua, who brought the Israelites into the Promised Land. Joshua was never wholly able to secure rest and peace for Israel in the Promised Land. But Jesus, through His perfect faith, brings us into the presence of God and into the rest of God. Ephesians 2: 4 says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." ([Ephesians 2: 4-7 NKJV](#))

Why is it so few Christians enjoy this rest? Could it be that, while they know Jesus as their Moses, the great deliverer from Egypt and sin, they do not know Jesus as their Joshua, the general who gives us victory in battle and brings us into the promised eternal peace and blessing? Those who do not partake of Jesus in His heavenly life and power are destined to a weak and feeble Christian life. We need to follow Jesus into the presence of God and enter the spiritual rest of God.

Those who enter the rest and peace Christ can face whatever the world throws at them; suffering, persecution, prison, beatings, even death. Why would we do that? Because we know how valuable it is to abide in God's presence and live in the rest of God.

The rest of God is a rest we find in His fellowship. God sees everything. God knows everything. In His presence, there is no fear. God calls to us to rise above earthly, human reason and sense and learn to know Him by the Spirit. To enter the rest of God means that we walk the walk of faith in humility and obedience. To enter the rest of God means we forsake all and follow Jesus into God's presence.

III. Rest From Works

Do you feel you have a ways to go before entering into the rest God has for you. Verse 9 says, "There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His." (Hebrews 4:9-10 NKJV)

There is a sabbath rest for the people of God that is yet to come. Canaan was a shadow and symbol of the real Sabbath rest that remained, waiting its time, till Christ the heavenly Joshua came and opened life in the Spirit to us.

There are two distinct stages of God's work. The first was the physical work of creation. The second is the spiritual rest He enters when the physical work of creation is finished.

During this time of spiritual rest, we see God undisturbed and at peace within Himself, watching over His work of creation. After the creation and certainly since the Fall of Man, God focuses on the development of the life He has entrusted to us. It is a rest from the work of Creation, for a higher work of spiritual development that is now being carried out. It is a work of securing our sanctification and perfection.

There are also two stages in the Christian life – the carnal and the spiritual. The one in which, after conversion, we seek to live and work for God through human strength and wisdom. The second is found in yielding to the spirit of Christ, ceasing from human striving, and resting in the guidance and spiritual power of the Spirit. Sadly, many Christians cannot set aside their own thoughts and works and rest in Christ.

The motto of many Christian leaders is, "Do something, even if it's wrong." They will follow and use the ways of the world to disciple carnal Christians. What a complete misunderstanding of God's call to rest. To rest in God is to yield to the highest activity of God. Our work must be His work. If He does not will to do the work, then we should not be doing the work. The Apostle Paul says, "To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." (Colossians 1:29 NKJV)

We Enter the rest of God when we cease from self-effort. We enter the rest of God when we yield to the Holy Spirit's guidance. We enter the rest of God when we surrender our will to God's. The apostle Paul told the Romans, "For *the death* that

He (Jesus) died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise, you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ([Romans 6:10-11 NKJV](#))

We are called into the rest of Jesus, into His finished work. We are called to sit with Him in heavenly places resting in the Father's love. We do not fear those things which can destroy the physical body because we have a spiritual body that awaits us!

Conclusion

Verse 11 says, "Let us, therefore, be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience." ([Hebrews 4:11 NKJV](#))

The book of Hebrews is profoundly practical. Its message causes us to seriously consider what kind of Christian life we are living and do whatever it takes to enter the rest of God. Let us give diligence. The word means, Make haste—be in earnest, put your whole heart into it, see that you do it; enter into the rest.

Do not fall after the same example of disobedience. Don't make the same mistake so many others have! The danger is real—the loss will be terrible. God has sworn in His wrath that we will not enter His rest unless we listen and obey. We must have an earnest desire, a willing readiness, a firm resolve, to enter God's rest.

God is not calling us to be casual or carnal Christians. He calls out to Revelation 12:11 believers who rest in God and defeat Satan. How do they do it? It says, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." ([Revelation 12:11 NKJV](#))

Jesus is greater than Joshua because He brings us into the spiritual rest of God. Today, if you hear His voice, don't harden your heart in unbelief; enter into the spiritual rest of God.