
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Hebrews

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Hebrews 4:1-11: “A Rest for God’s People!”

General idea: God is great and we are to proclaim His most spectacular wonder and partake of His blessings. His rest is open and available to us who know and trust Him; His rest, the eternity of Heaven, is our great reward now and forevermore. At such a magnitude, we should tremble in awe and wonder—even fear that we may miss it. We will fail so much and miss His plan and rest if we are so prideful we never receive Him as Savior and Lord. For His good news is He offers us this plan, and there is no better plan! He has prepared a place for you! You are His and He wants you! But we have to believe and in trust Him; if not, we have no place in God’s Kingdom now or in eternity. Christianity comes with a catch—an obligation or an entrance fee so to speak, and it is so simple people reject it, and so hard others can’t stand it. Yes, our grace is free without works or effort on our part, but it requires our belief in Christ to receive Him and His work in our lives. Being a Christian is all about Christ, Who He is and what He has done; it is not about you or me, other than we respond in faith and resound His love by living a life of gratitude for Him which is our rest of comfort now, until one day we enter His eternal rest. This has been promised to us, spoken by the prophets, written down in the Scriptures, and lived out by our Lord. This rest is not just about eternity; it is trusting in Him for our lives now, so we are fruitful now. Life that has no worry or strife as our hope and life are working by and in Him. We can rest in Him now and in eternity! So let us listen carefully to Christ, hear His voice, and obey His call and precepts!

Contexts and Background:

This passage continues to parallel Psalm 95:7-11, as it testifies to us in the spirit of how Israel rebelled and disobeyed God in the Exodus and so many other countless times. Their rebellion was because they did not trust in God; they bullied their own way and will while complaining to God that things did not go their way. Their hearts were hard and consequently they failed at rest, as in the trust of our Lord and heeding His Commands. They sought their way and not His way, living through strife and trouble as a result when they could have had blessings and wonders beyond their desires. When we rebel by our deeds or attitude, we do the same. We must also ask *how much do we give up when we fret and complain and refuse to heed His call, plan, and principles?*

Commentary, Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Promise of entering.* A reference to the people of God given the opportunity to enter the Promise Land but refusing to go. They rebelled and disobeyed all

because they refused to trust the God who had already demonstrated His Power and Protection. Yet, God still made His salvation available to them and to us today. God wants us to trust Him and not rebel so we can have all that He has to give. When we fail, we fail to ourselves and others, and our potential, our opportunities, and so much more are lost (Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-13; Heb. 6:5).

- *My rest.* Here suggests that this type of rest is spiritual and eternal, that those who believe in Christ and take His work by faith are saved and can enter His rest. This phrase has three main meanings here; one: it is a colloquialism for heaven that points to our future hope and reward. Secondly, it refers to how God rested after His creation and calls us to a Sabbath, to rest, to take care of ourselves and in so doing have hope and trust in Him. Thirdly, He wants us to know and have as believers a glimpse of rest as His Spirit dwells in us and we are in relationship to Him so we can trust and be content in Christ. The warning connected with this rest is to not stray from Him. This passage uses all three meanings. (See previous study for more information. Gen. 2:2; Psalm. 95:7-8; Joshua 1:13).
- *Let us be careful/fear.* Refers to God's divine judgment. We must take our Christian life seriously and be aware there are natural and supernatural consequences for sin and disobedience. This is "fear," as in to respect God, and we are to be scared as a motivational tool that we can mess up our lives by our own hand when we should have taken His Hand of care and love. This is not the fear of pending trials or circumstances as our faith is to be in the Lord not others or things (Heb. 10:27-31; 11:27; 12:21; 13:6).
- *Have fallen short.* For us to enter His rest requires His work and to be then received by our faith. Being disobedient, as in not receiving His salvation, prevents us from rest; and a Christian life without faith and growth equals a purposeless and wasteful life that says *I do not trust in Christ. I live for myself*, which acquires little and even brings judgment. We have to take God's just anger and our faith seriously, and see the peril of a lack of true spirituality (Num. 14:21-35).
- *Gospel/good news preached to us.* This means "God delivers" and salvation is from, and only from, God, Christ as Lord. This refers to the person and Work of Christ, how He delivered us out of sin and into new life. It is by His life and sacrifice that we have the Kingdom and abundance of life here and forevermore. This also refers to how God delivered Israel out of bondage as proclaimed at Sinai. (Heb. 2:3).
- *We who have believed.* When the early Israelites left Egypt and traveled to the Promised Land of Canaan, it required a great act of trust and faith. This was a prelude to God's offer of salvation and eternity. This is also about faith alone, just as in accepting Christ as Savior and furthermore as Lord requires

further trust and obedience. God's promises are real and effectual, but we have to see them, believe in them, and declare them in our lives just as we declare our Joy (James 1:1-3).

- *Because of their disobedience.* The people under Moses' command and lead failed; with few exceptions, they did not get their rest. If we do not obey, we lose out; when we obey we win so much. Disobedience gives us a rotten deal when God had the best plan in mind and in hand.
- *Today.* Meaning the "day of divine grace." This is a call to respond to and trust God, hear His call, and heed His voice. This means we live for now. Now is the time in which we live, take it seriously, and do what is right. This also means we live for Christ by faith, take seriously our faith and life, pay close attention to His promises and His warnings, and enjoy Him in this life and not just yearn for the life to come. The warning with this phrase is that the offer does not last forever nor is He obligated to give it or extend it; it will not last indefinitely yet it is offered—His grace is given. The question is *will it be received?*
- *If Joshua had given them rest.* An example of further disobedience in not subduing the land. After Joshua's generation, Israel was all but lost and God had to start over with Gideon. This also points to the Promised Land, which as important as it was, was not really about the Land. The Land does not fulfill the promise of God; it is all about the relationship of God to His people. The Land was just a place to live, know Him, and make Him known to the world. In the Hebrew, *Joshua* is the same name as *Jesus*. Our Hope is in Christ, not in what He gives or can give us either then or now (Josh. 13:1-2; Heb. 7:11; 8:7).
- *Remains....Sabbath-rest.* Means "keeping the Sabbath," and refers to our trust confidence in Christ and a prelude to heaven and our Hope to come. This is our reward for faith in Christ and our motivation to live right now to be our best for His glory. This is not our rest, such as a break from work or exercise; rather this is His rest, in which Christ invites us to partake.
- *Rests from his own work/works/labor.* A metaphor of resting after work, or we rest after our work; God did the same as a demonstration that as corporal beings we need rest and proper care. This also means we do not make the effort of our salvation, we cannot work for it; He works and we rest in His work for our salvation. This means God delivers us from sin and thus we can trust in Him. We trust in Christ, not in our works, to earn salvation or to please Him. God is pleased by our faith and obedience, but this does not earn us salvation or rest. Rather, our obedience is from our thankfulness for Who He is and we live because what He has done. Then He delivers us to eternity where there is no toil of labor, weeping, or suffering in our final rest in Him (Rev. 14:13).

- *Make every effort/strive to enter/be diligent.* Meaning working to rest, or making haste so to rest. Thus, this simply means to be zealous and diligent for the faith! This is not about earning one's salvation by works; rather it is the call to receive our salvation by faith and thus receive His rest. This is also a warning not to follow Israel's bad pattern of disobedience demonstrated in the desert and in the Land.

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

This part of Hebrews gives us three rests. One is to rest in His victory as in take care of ourselves and honor God and His creation. Then, we are to rest our faith in Christ, to trust in Him, and to be content and joyful and not burdened or stressed. Unless your life is in dire peril or your family is in danger or you have nothing to eat or your life's work and possessions are gone, you do not have problems—you have inconveniences. So look to Him and not to circumstances and temporary situations; by doing so, when something really important or dire does come, we are prepared to deal with it with active faith and perseverance. And then our eyes can be on the third rest. As we live a triumphal life in Him, we will see and hear Him say, *well done my faithful servant* and rest in Him for eternity (Matt. 25:23)!

The point being, we must heed God's call, His plan, purpose, and principles all associated as His rest. Why? We belong to God and our call is to trust in Him, not in traditions and what has come before. We are to seek Him and what is to come in life and in ministry, and in His second coming. This world is a mere shadow to things to come; we are bound for Heaven where glory awaits us. So how do we live now? With our eyes upon Christ! We must live lives as we have declared who Christ is, by faith and lived out by deed. We are to think about Jesus, and ponder His precepts and call so He is our life and our all-in-all (James 1:12-18; Rev. 2:10).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How do you spend your free time or rest? How does your rest glorify God?
2. What are some of the natural and supernatural consequences for sin and disobedience you have seen or experienced? How do you feel about them? Are they fair? Do they help people take their lives more seriously?
3. Why does God hate complaining and pride? How have you seen this as a cancer to faith and your spiritual growth?
4. Have you ever experienced that when you do not obey, you lose out and when you do obey you win so much? How has disobedience given you a rotten deal when God had the best plan in mind and in hand?
5. What about your trials and circumstances—do they cloud you from Him and your faith and trust in what He can do?
6. How much do you think you give up when you refuse to heed His call, plan, and principles? What about when you fret and complain in your daily life?
7. How is God great? What have you felt or how has Christ impacted you? How have you proclaimed His wonders? How do you feel that you will now and forevermore partake of His blessings?
8. What does it mean to you that heaven is your great reward now and forevermore and Christ has a place prepared for you?
9. How can you better live your life as you declare who Christ is by faith and live it out by deed?
10. How does Christianity come with a catch or an obligation or an entrance fee so to speak? His grace is free without our works, but how then will you live?
11. What do you need to do to hear Christ's voice, listen carefully to Him, and obey His call and precepts?
12. What have you done to walk in faith and trust in God? What helps you be a good model of His Way to other people around you? What do you need to do so more and better?