

DWELLING IN GOD'S REST – PART ONE

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Introduction:

- When we slog through the day, we go to bed to get rest.
- When we work five or six days, we want a day of rest.
- Occasionally, when we are stressed due to a heavy load of work or studies or difficult circumstances, we want to rest.
- When we get sick, we desire to rest.
- Sometimes, we go on a vacation to get some rest.
- Some people even see death as rest: **Rest In Peace** (engraved on a gravestone)
- We live in a generation that craves rest. **The Word of God speaks the rest we need more than anything else.**

Sam Storms: To be perfectly honest, this paragraph is one of the more complex in terms of its structure and argument of any that you'll find in the book of Hebrews. However, the message that it conveys is clear and easy and forthright and wonderfully encouraging.

1. INVITATION TO ENTER GOD'S REST

Exodus 3:16-17, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to **the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.**"

Deuteronomy 8:1-2, "The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and **possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers.** And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not."

Hebrews 3:7-11, Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart;

they have not known my ways.’ As I swore in my wrath, **‘They shall not enter my rest.’**”

In reminiscence of Hebrews 3:7-11, the author cautions again in Hebrews 4:1-7, ¹ Therefore [in conclusion to the discussion above—they couldn’t enter **God’s rest**], while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ² For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.^[a] ³ For we who have believed enter that rest, 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 somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” ⁵ And again in this passage he said, **“They shall not enter my rest.”**

⁶ Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷ again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”

Five pointers to Rest:

1. **God’s Rest—Hebrews 4:**⁴ For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And **God rested** on the seventh day from all his works.”

Sam Storms, author and pastor: I think what is meant by this is that God entered into a time of triumphant peace and celebratory joy and a glorious satisfaction that came with knowing that all he had made was good.

2. **Israel under Moses in the wilderness** [first generation]—**Hebrews 4:3**, “As I swore in my wrath, **‘They shall not enter my rest...’**” [**The Promised Land was Promised Rest**]
3. **Israel under Joshua in the Promised Land** [second generation]—**Joshua 21:43-45**, Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. **And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers.** Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.”

- ❖ **Hebrews 4:8**, For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. [KJV wrongly uses Jesus, correction in NKJV]
 - The Promised Land under Joshua was not the perfect and final rest.

What is another day later on?

4. **David’s Prophecy of Future Rest—Hebrews 4:6-7**, So God’s rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. **So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today.** God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted [**quoted in Heb. 3:7-11**]: “Today when you hear his voice, don’t harden your hearts.” [**quoted Psalm 95**]
5. **God’s Rest for Believers in the New Covenant. [This is called TODAY]**
 - ❖ **Hebrews 4:1**, Therefore, while the promise of entering **his rest still stands [in relation to the rest given to the Israelites]**...

Note: The Israelites in the wilderness couldn’t enter God’s rest because of their unbelief [**chp. 3**], but the invitation to enter God’s rest is still open...

- ❖ **Hebrews 4:3**, For we who have believed enter **that rest... [which the Israelites failed to enter]**
- ❖ **Hebrews 4:9-10**, “So then, there **remains [still stands, 4:1] a Sabbath rest for the people of God**, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.”[**“Sabbath rest” and “God’s rest” are used interchangeably/synonymously, not pointing to the Sabbath in Mosaic law**]
- ❖ **Hebrews 4:11**, Let us therefore strive to enter **that rest ... [which the Israelites failed to enter]**

Note: The common thing that seems to be the same in all the above discussions is **REST**. [Ex. They failed, but you don’t miss]

Twice God says to the wilderness Israel:

- ▶ “They shall not enter **MY REST**” (v.3)
- ▶ “They shall not enter **MY REST**” (v.5)

What is God’s Rest?

Exodus 33: [Moses said to the LORD] ¹³ Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.” ¹⁴ And he said, “**My**

presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” ¹⁵ And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your **going with us**, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”

For the Israelites, the rest was:

- Freedom from the bondage of enemies
- The enjoyment of God’s blessings.
- All these they inherit because of the presence of God amongst them.

Observation: The temple of God amongst Israel was central and was the assurance of God’s presence with them.

- ▶ Sin separated people from God [from the presence of God]
- ▶ Sacrifices were made through priests to have peace with God [have the presence of God]

Therefore, the rest is the same for OT people and NT people: **The presence of God.**

TWO ASPECTS OF GOD’S REST TO BELIEVERS:

A. God’s rest is the present reality (of His Presence)

In the present reality:

Coram Deo: Living in the presence of God

i. Salvation Rest [Redemptive Rest]

Matt. 11:28-30, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest**. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls**. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

One theologian, “If Jesus is a walking, living, breathing Temple, he is also the walking, celebrating, victorious sabbath.”

- Rest is freedom from living under the burden/power of sin to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from earning God’s favor to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from earning salvation by works to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from the condemnation of sin [hell] to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from the bondage of Satan to *Coram Deo*

- Rest is freedom from superstitious customs out of fear to *Coram Deo*

Augustine of Hippo (354–430): "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

Note: Invitation to unbelievers [Are you just exposed to the Gospel, or have you entrusted yourself to believe and live by the Gospel?]

ii. Sanctification Rest

John 15:4-5, Abide in me [Rest in Me], and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you **abide in me [Rest in Me]**. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever **abides in me [Rest in Me]** and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

- Rest is freedom from self-efforts to live a godly life to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from the power of sin to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from despair in afflictions to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from the fear of death to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from slavery to the things of the world to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from the destructive powers of darkness to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from gaining your identity in the world through worldly accomplishments to *Coram Deo*
- Rest is freedom from seeking love and acceptance from people to *Coram Deo*
- Above all, rest is God's own rest [Presence]. [**Heb. 4:3** and **4:5, "My Rest"**]

Song: There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God, a place where all is joy and peace, near to the heart of God. *O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God, hold us, who wait before thee, near to the heart of God.*

C. S. Lewis: "God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing."

Note: Invitation to believers

Caution: This rest is not indulging in laziness and avoiding spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are the outcome of rest in Christ [Heb. 12 and 13].

B. God's rest is the future experience (of His Presence)—"Already, Not Yet"

Note: The author of Hebrews seems to point particularly to this eternal Sabbath rest.

iii. **Sabbatical Eternal rest [eschatological rest / glorification / the establishment of God's complete kingdom]**

Hebrews 11:16, But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Revelation 21:4, And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “**Behold, the dwelling place of God is WITH man. He will dwell WITH them**, and they will be his people, and **God himself will be WITH them as their God**. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Revelation 22:3-5 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. **They will see his face**, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

NOW FORETASTE BUT LATER FULL-BLOWN SIGHT AND EXPERIENCE.

Hell: 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, **away from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of his might...

The only mandates in the entire passage (Hebrews 4:1-11): Application

- ❖ **4:1**, Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, **let us fear** lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.
- ❖ **4:11**, **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest**, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

How do we enter, persevere, and enjoy God's rest? The next sermon provides three factors.