

ENTERING HIS REST (HEB 4: 1-13)

READ Hebrews 4:1

“Therefore...” given what we saw in Ch 3; given that there are consequences for unbelief even for God’s covenant people, you unbelieving Jews need to heed this warning and take action.

It is important at the outset that we define what it means to “enter God’s rest.” For those O.T. Israelites under Moses’ leadership “entering God’s rest” meant taking possession of the Promised Land, the land of Canaan. This was the place of God’s blessing – “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exo 3:8 and 17 other places). But instead, they forfeited God’s blessing – “they failed to enter because of unbelief.” (Heb 3:19) And God judged them severely for it.

OK, so what about those of us living on this side of the cross, both Jews and Gentiles – what does it mean for US to “enter God’s rest”? We too have a promise of a future home, a dwelling place with God. In fact, that was the subject of Cindy’s lesson last week, the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. When we place our faith completely in Jesus; we fully trust Him to save us; we believe what God’s word tells us; we confess our sins and repent; we call out to Him to save us, what happens? “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13). God saves us. We then enter God’s rest. We begin a new relationship with Him. It is a peaceful relationship, one that fully satisfies our soul. We gain “entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11). We become “children of God” (Phil 2:15), “fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17). Paul says that “by grace you have been saved and raised up with God and seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-6). I’d say we got a better promise than those O.T. Jews got, wouldn’t you?

This passage offers a word of warning to Jewish unbelievers. Many Jews back then and even today have the mindset that because they are

descendants of Abraham and part of God's covenant nation, that they are automatically "in." God's covenant promise to Abraham which Peter reminded the Jewish people of in Acts 3 was "in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed." How was that promise ultimately fulfilled? Through their Messiah, thru Jesus. Salvation does not come thru personal effort, thru religious rituals, by good works, by keeping the Law. It comes through faith in Jesus. We enter into a personal relationship with the living God. We enter His rest. We have the assurance of a future home with the Lord not because of anything we did or because of who our ancestors are. Our salvation is the result of what Jesus did for us by His sinless life, death on the cross (payment for our sins) and resurrection from the grave (conquering death and hell). It's all about Jesus!

That last phrase, "you should seem to have failed to reach it" might better be translated, "lest you think you have come too late to enter into the rest of God." Hey, whether you are an unbelieving Jew or Gentile, God's rest is still available to you. It's not too late!

READ Hebrews 4:2-3

V 2 "Us" is the Jewish audience being addressed by the writer of Hebrews and by application to us here in this room. We've been given good news, the Gospel message, John 3:16. We can be delivered out of our bondage to sin. Thru faith in Jesus we have the hope of a bright future. "Them" refers to thee faithless Israelites who failed to enter the Promised Land. They also were given good news. READ Exodus 6:6-8.

Threefold promise – (1) be delivered from Egyptian bondage, (2) become God's people, (3) be given a good land to live in.

But the good news, "the message they heard" did them no good because of their unbelief. "They were not united by faith with those who listened." "Those who listened" is a reference to Joshua and Caleb who tried to remind the people of God's promise to them. Caleb tells the people of Israel, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to

overcome it." (Num 13:30). Caleb believed God's promise and said, "Let's go get 'em!" But the people did not listen. They were not united by faith. Hey people, just having the information isn't enough. You need to do something with it. James 1:22 says, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." Hear it, believe it and then obey it.

V 3, If you believe God you will enter His rest and if you don't, you won't. The writer of Hebrews again quotes from Psalm 95, God's judgment on unbelieving Israel. From the foundation of the world, God had set up a way for us to enter His rest, to have a relationship with Him. O.T. saints looked forward by faith to God's promise of a coming Messiah who would save His people from their sins. N.T. saints look back at that promise fulfilled in Jesus. We enter His rest by faith in what Jesus did for us. Belief, evidenced by acts of faith, brings God's blessing while unbelief produces only God's wrath.

READ Hebrews 4:4-7

God's rest began after the 6 days of creation. At that time Adam and Eve were enjoying being in God's rest. They could have stayed there forever except for one thing. Unbelief which led to disobedience. When they believed the serpent's (Satan's) lie instead of believing God, they forfeited God's rest. It is because of unbelief that man cannot enter God's rest. You must believe the good news, the Gospel message to enter God's rest. And when is the right time to respond in faith to God? "Today." Second Corinthians 6:2 says, "Behold, now (today) is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." And for the third time (twice in Ch 3) the appeal goes out: "Do not harden your hearts!"

READ Hebrews 4:8-10

Real true rest did not come thru Moses or Joshua or any other human agent. True rest comes only thru **God**. This rest is a **spiritual** rest.

V 9 The writer of Hebrews is addressing a mostly Jewish audience. Here the message is that there's a future rest for God's covenant people.

READ Revelation 14:12-13

A future rest is promised to the saints, both Jews and Gentile, because both come to God the same way, thru faith in the Jewish Messiah, in the Son of God, in Jesus. Here we see rest from the problems of this old world.

READ Hebrews 4:11-13

This warning section of Hebrews concludes with an invitation. God's word always demands a response. But this call that goes out has an edge to it, quite literally. God's word is said to be living and active, sharper than any two edged sword piercing the soul. It can save and comfort and encourage. But, as in this case, God's word can bring judgment.

Don't be like those faithless Israelites who failed to believe and trust God. You know what happened to them. You don't want to go down that same path. You don't want to "fall by the same sort of disobedience" (v 11). Unbeliever, that is the path you're on right now. If you stay on that path you'll face the wrath of God.

You all know v 12. You've heard it quoted often. But the context here in Hebrews is one of judgment. When it comes to this matter of entering God's rest, which you do by faith in Christ, you need to be diligent. You must be honest and real with God. God's word penetrates the heart. He knows whether or not your faith is real.

V 13 Don't think you can fool God. God sees who you really are. You can't run and hide from God. One day you will stand face to face with the living God – "naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." This is serious business. Do not harden your heart! Surrender your life to Jesus and enter God's rest today. It's not too late. How does a sinner approach God? "fear" (v 1), "faith" (v 2), humble and honest (v 12-13).

Next week the writer of Hebrews begins to paint a beautiful portrait of Jesus as our great high priest. That will go from 4:14 thru 8:13.