

Jesus: Our Great High Priest Forever
(Week 8)
Hebrews 4:1-13
"Our Rest"

Introduction

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you REST."

Matthew 11:28

The writer of *Hebrews* desperately wanted us to fully understand the importance of trusting in Christ, in order to obtain all that God has in store for us. To miss out on Jesus, is to miss out on, well... everything! What good does it do to hear the message of the gospel and not believe it? The answer is; it does no good whatsoever. As we have said previously, the purpose of good preaching is to inform the hearers, so that they can make a decision to respond to what they have heard. To say that we believe in Christ but refuse to follow Him is not true belief at all. True belief will take us all the way to the finish. The author gives us a very practical illustration to demonstrate this reality more clearly.

The Children of Israel, who started out saying that they wanted to follow God, failed to place their faith in Him, and because of their unbelief, they were never allowed to enter the Promised Land. Instead of trusting God, they tested God. They had "heard" the message from Moses, but they did not combine what they heard with faith (**vs. 2**), and therefore, they all died in the wilderness, missing out on the "rest" that God had in store for them. They missed out on the promised "rest" of Canaan. They had labored intensely under the heavy yoke of slavery in Egypt, and God longed to give them rest from their labors. All that was required of them to enter into that rest was faith. What a tragedy it is for someone to miss out on the "rest" that God has promised for us. We will learn today, that as believers, our "promised rest" is found in a person, and His name is Jesus! He longs to deliver us from the bondage of sin and give us rest, if we will only come to a saving faith in Him. So you see, the promised rest that God offers to us freely can only be received by... FAITH. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (**Hebrews 11:6**).

In **Hebrews Chapter Four**, we are shown how that the rest that God offers to us all is clearly demonstrated by the institution of the Sabbath:

"For somewhere (Genesis 2:2), He has spoken about the seventh day in these words: 'On the seventh day God rested from all His works.'"

Hebrews 4:4

The reason this passage is given to us in this context is to explain that God has a "Sabbath Rest" in store for us, similar to the one that He instituted at creation. Just as God "rested" from His labors on the seventh day of creation, we have been given the opportunity to find our "rest" in Christ.

Have you ever really thought about why God "rested" on the seventh day of creation? Was it because He found Himself exhausted from simply speaking the universe into existence? Of course not! To fully understand the meaning of God's "day of rest" we must examine the Hebrew word used to describe it in **Genesis 2:2**. The word translated "rested" in this verse is the Hebrew word "*Shabath*", and it means to "cease from labor". In other words, after the sixth day of creation, God ceased from His work. Why? Because He saw that it was very good, and the work was, therefore, completed (**Genesis 1:31**). There is no need to labor any more after a job is finished would you not agree? When God had completed His work, He stopped working! Simple as that. He wasn't tired. He was just **finished**.

When the children of Israel left Egypt, God commanded them to take a day of rest from their labor as a commemoration of the day that He rested from His:

"Remember the 'sabbath' day by keeping it holy (set apart). Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to The LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns for in six days The LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, The LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy."

Exodus 20:8-11

You see, God instituted The Sabbath Day as a way for the Israelites to cease from their labor and focus their attention fully upon Him. Now let us look together at how this applies to Christ. After God had completed His awesome work of **creation**, He rested from it, because HE WAS FINISHED. And likewise, when Christ completed His great work of **salvation** on the cross, He declared "It is FINISHED", and He "sat down at the right hand of God The Father (**Hebrews 1:3**). The Sabbath, therefore, was not just given to look back to something, but to look forward to something as well! The Sabbath spans from Creation to Salvation. You see, Jesus IS the believer's Sabbath Rest. In Him, we find the fulfillment of ALL the promises of God. In Christ, we are offered REST from WORRY, REST from WORKS, and ultimately, REST from this WICKED WORLD.

Rest from WORRY (vs. 1-2)

"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." **Hebrews 4:1 (ESV)**

I quoted the English Standard Version (ESV) of this verse, because the NIV doesn't do it justice. The verse is intended to serve as a warning, that if we do not place our faith in Christ, then we most certainly have something to be afraid of! The NIV translators opted to use the words "be careful" instead of fear, but the greek word "*phobeo*" definitely means "to be afraid". To be lost and undone without the saving grace of Jesus is most definitely a thing to be feared. But Jesus died to give us rest from all our worries and fears. To be in Christ is to no longer be afraid of the judgement that shall come upon this wicked world.

"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and He in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the judgement, because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." **1 John 4:15-18**

So you see, if we are in Christ there is no longer any need to fear the judgment that the writer of *Hebrews* is speaking of here. Jesus has given us "rest from our fears."

Not only that, but in Christ, we also find rest from the worries of every day life. When we belong to Jesus, we have no need to worry for anything, for He is our provider and protector. Many Christians go through life worrying about things that are already forever taken care of. For the Child of God, worry is a colossal waste of time and energy. Put your faith in Christ. He can handle whatever worries and fears you might have. Don't be like the children of Israel, who stopped trusting Him every time they encountered a difficulty. This world is a rough place to be sometimes, but Jesus has committed Himself to get us through this "wilderness" on our way to the Promised Land. So stop worrying and find rest in Christ. Put your faith in His promises:

"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet, I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will He clothe you — you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well." **Luke 12:25-31**

Listen to me Church. Jesus has come to be our “Sabbath Rest” from worry. Put your faith in Him. He alone is able to give you **REST**. Don’t live like the pagans do. This world says that its not safe to “put all your eggs in one basket”, but *The Bible* tells you that in order to find rest, you must put all that you are **IN CHRIST**. There is no safer place than that. Do you truly believe it? Then stop your worrying and live in the peace that only He can give.

Rest from WORKS (vs.3-11)

“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest, also rests from their works, just as God rested.” **Hebrews 4:9-10**

Before Christ came, the people of Israel were doing all they could to “build themselves up” by obeying The Law in the hope of being ultimately accepted by God. Unfortunately, no matter how hard we may try, we just don’t measure up (*Isaiah 64:6*). The good news? Where we could not be perfect, Christ came to be perfect **FOR US**. Therefore, we can find rest from our “working” to please God. Jesus came and was completely obedient to the Law of Moses, and then, died on the cross to pay for all the times that we were not! Now THAT, my friends, is why they call it “The Good News” (**vs. 2**)!

When I was a kid, I LOVED to play baseball. I mean its such a great game, what’s not to love about it? We played all the time at my school. But I must confess, as much as I loved the game, I was terrible at it. When we chose up teams to play at recess, I was ALWAYS the last one picked, EVERY SINGLE TIME. It was humiliating to say the least. It wasn’t for lack of trying on my part. As I said earlier, I loved the game, but I just didn’t have what it took to play it well. The other kids in my school were all better at it than I was, but looking back on it, none of them ever went “pro” either! Didn’t matter how much I practiced, or how hard I tried. I just wasn’t cut out for the game that I loved so much.

I find that I have the same difficulty with *The Bible*. I absolutely LOVE The Word of God. Been studying it several hours a day now for many years. I never grow tired of its wisdom and its lofty standard. It reveals to us the very nature of God, and He is spotlessly **perfect**. I want to live up to that standard so very much, but I find that I just don’t have what it takes. Now matter how bad I want to or how much I practice, I’ll never “go pro” at obedience. Can I get a witness? Thank God, for Jesus. He came to be obedient for us! He promises that if we will simply put our faith in Him and turn away from our sin, then He will substitute HIS righteousness for ours, before The Perfect Holy Father. Now I’m not the smartest guy who ever lived, but there is no way that I am going to pass on a gift like that! Jesus came to be my “Sabbath Rest”. He has **finished** the work for me, so I can now cease from my laboring to please God with my feeble attempts to “be good”. Now, I just desire to be good for Him, because He has been so good to me! I don’t have to earn His love. He has already given it, and it is His love that makes me want to be better now. And not only that, as I rest in Him, He gives me the victory over my sin so that I can serve Him all the more:

“In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And His commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our FAITH.” **1 John 5:4**

So you see, I have stopped working to please God. Now I live **for Him**, because thanks to Christ, God is already pleased with me! **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16).** Just give me Jesus, and everything else will take care of itself. In Him, we have been given **REST** from works!

Rest from this Wicked WORLD (12-13)

“For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

Hebrews 4:12-13

At first glance, **verses 12-13** in this text may seem to be out of place. The writer goes from talking about the rest we find in Christ to the piercing power of the Word of God, but we must remember, that this section of the letter is given as a warning against unbelief (**3:7 - 4:13**). Taken in this context, these two verses regarding the Holy Scriptures are perfectly placed. The final result of unbelief will in fact be settled before The Great White Throne of Judgement, when all those who rejected the message of the gospel will stand before Christ to give an account for their sins (**Revelation 20:11-15**). And what will be used to judge those who stand condemned before Almighty God upon that dreadful day? The Word of God, that’s what. When The Word is used to shine the Light upon the lives of the lost, they will be left without excuse and will finally hear the words of Jesus saying, **“I never knew you. Away from Me you evildoers.”** (**Matt. 7:23**). When the unbeliever is finally judged by The Word of God, everything in their sinful heart will be laid bare before Him (**vs. 13**). The Greek word translated **“laid bare”** (*Trachelizo*) is actually a wrestling term used for when a wrestler seizes his opponent by the throat and holds him so that he cannot escape. This should serve as a warning to those who scoff and reject the truth of God’s Word. For it is this same Word that will be used to judge them in the end.

But now for the Good News in Christ! Those who are in Him have no need to fear the judgment! They have a final “rest” awaiting them that is eternal. That final “rest” is called Heaven, where we will spend an eternity with The LORD. Suffering and sorrow will be but a distant memory there. If you are trusting in Jesus today, then be encouraged with these words:

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’”

Revelation 21:3-4

So there you have it, to believe in Jesus is to one day find REST from this wicked world. Those who have despised His truth will be thrown into the lake of fire to be remembered no more, and those who have been mocked and persecuted by them will finally be at **rest**! Can you imagine what it will be like when everyone around you is in love with Christ? Can you imagine what it will be like when we see Him face to face for all eternity? This my friends shall be the ultimate rest we will one day come to know in Jesus. *The Bible* tells us that He will be the glory that illuminates that wonderful place (**Revelation 21:23**). But until then, as we journey through this darkened “wilderness”, we must fully rely upon Him, trusting His perfect peace to find our rest; rest from **worry**, rest from our **works**, and ultimately, rest from this **wicked world**. Just as Joshua led the children of Israel out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land (**vs. 8**), Jesus, our “Joshua”, is leading us to a better Land of Promise! He is the perfect fulfillment of the Sabbath Day. Jesus’ offer to every believer is Heavenly Rest! So hear the words of Jesus and by faith, accept the wonderful invitation He offers you today:

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

And ALL of God’s people said... TRUTH!!!