



NG Study Guide: Hebrews 4:1-13 :: “Jesus Offers Greater Rest” [10.15.23]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: All people have a deep longing to experience true rest. Only by placing our faith in Jesus and growing in obedience to His word, will we experience greater rest.

Subject: The promise of rest in Christ

Object: Experience rest for your soul

Context: Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians who were being discriminated against for their faith, and scorned by family and friends. And they were reminded of the hope that they are offered in Jesus, who is greater than the prophets [1:1-3], angels [1:4-14], Moses [3:1-6], and the Promised Land [3:7-19]. Last week we looked at how the author reminded the Jewish audience that their ancestors wandered in the wilderness because of their unbelief. And the rest that they would experience, that was promised in the Land, would pale in comparison to greater rest that can be found in Jesus.

1. Faith and rest [1-5]

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. ²For 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. ³For 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. ⁴For 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”; ⁵and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.”

A. Promised Land Rest [1-3]

“Therefore” is pointing back to Hebrews 3:7-16 where the author unpacks the reality that there is a greater rest, a rest for the soul, that is available in Jesus, but *must* be received by believing [1]. The promised rest that was given to the Israelites was to be found in the Promised Land. After being in exile, God would give them their own land to live in. The first generation did not enter that rest in the Promised Land because of their unbelief [3:19]. The author is warning its Jewish audience to not fall into the same trap of unbelief that those who were wandering the desert fell into. He warns that his audience should not be tempted to believe that they have “come short of it” or missed the rest [1] because it is still available to them through the new covenant.

Verse 2 tells us that the gospel was preached to the reader as well as to wandering Israelites (and to us). The term gospel is not necessarily referring to the saving work of Jesus instated by the new covenant, but rather the gospel of redemption that is available to God’s people throughout the course of history.

The word they received obviously would have profited them, however, it was not mixed with faith [2]. If they had faith it would have been incredibly profitable in their redemption as well as entering into the Promised Land, avoiding God’s wrath [3; Deuteronomy 12, Psalm 95:11]. *Their hope was found in the rest, but not in the one who was providing the rest.* They were seeking rest from their oppressor, they were seeking rest in a land that

they possessed, and they were seeking a lifestyle of rest in freedom. The reason God's wrath was enacted on the wandering generation was because of their unbelief [2].

B. Sabbath Rest [3-5]

The rest from work that God modeled to us on the seventh day of creation [vs. 3,4] wasn't for His benefit, but for ours. God has been completely sovereign in His rest, since before the foundation of the earth was laid [3]. But He modeled it for us at the conclusion of creation. This is where we get the celebration of the Sabbath, the second holiest day of observation on the Jewish calendar is the Sabbath, just behind Yom Kippur [Leviticus 23]. It was a day designed to break from the work of the week. However, the break from work was desired by the people, but the actual purpose, to gather with others to worship God and rest in Him was not always observed. It was an intentional rhythm that still experience today to come together in community to worship and re-center our lives on the Living God. They were so consumed with strict obedience from abstaining from work that they lost the intention of the holy day. Again, the promise of rest was desired, but it was apart from the provider.

C. Faith is the prerequisite [1-5]

Throughout the course of human history we have all desired rest; including God's people whom He set apart. However, the irony is that we will never experience true rest for our soul apart from faith in God. *The prerequisite to experiencing rest for our souls: faith in Jesus.* Verse 2 clearly shows us that the reason that people do not experience rest is because they hear the gospel, but it is not accompanied by faith. If we truly desire rest for our soul, we will only find it by placing our faith in Jesus.

2. A better rest in Christ [6-10]

⁶ Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, ⁷ 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." ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. ⁹ There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

The author then points out that in Psalms 95 David indicates that there is still a rest that we can enter, and that will be available [6-7]. What is the rest that he is talking about? It's not the rest of the creation, it's not the rest of the Promised Land, but rather the rest for our souls that comes from the redemption that God offers us. And the author of Hebrews knows that the rest was available to them, and to us today: rest for our souls found in Jesus. So when we hear the gospel [2] we don't harden our hearts [7], but we respond with faith in Jesus. The perfect object of our faith. The rest that remains for the people of God [9] is a rest that we find in this life and the life that is to come. The rest in this life is not an absence of difficulty and suffering, but a peace in the midst of it, knowing that the object of our faith is in control and our future is secure with Him.

There will be a day when we fully enter into the rest that God has for us, where there is no pain, suffering, mourning, or death in His presence [Revelation 21]. And because of this promised rest, we can face the struggles of today and experience His rest through them. An old hymn states, "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future, life is worth the living, just because He lives." The rest that Jesus offers us gives us the ability to experience peace in times of turbulence, all while knowing that at our final destination, we will experience a perfect rest in His presence.

3. Experience true rest [11-13]

¹¹ Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Therefore – referring back to the fact that Christ has offered us a better rest. We are called to be diligent to enter that rest [11]. But how? First through faith [2], and then through active obedience.

A. Faith leads to obedience [11]

Obedience indicates that faith exists. If faith doesn't exist, there is no point in being obedient. If we want to enter into the rest of Jesus, then we must be diligent in obedience to God [11]. If I do not have faith in someone, why

would I do what they ask? On the contrary, if I do have faith in them, obedience is a natural response to their request.

B. Obedience to God's Word [12-13]

We are called to be obedient to God, and how do we know what He is asking us to do? He tells us in His Word. Therefore, we diligently take in God's word, so we know His commands, so we can live in obedience, so we can enter His rest.

It's important to remember that the Jewish people whom the author was writing to were facing persecution. Therefore the imagery and concept that God's word is a two-edged sword that pierces to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow [12] isn't stated to instill fear, but rather bring comfort. They have access to God's word which will allow them to live according to the commands of His word, but also know they are equipped to battle and face persecution. We see a comment on the fact that all actions are known to God, and all creatures must give an account [13]. This is not to instill fear in God's people to live in obedience, but rather, it brings comfort to them, allowing them to know that God is not unaware of the actions of those people, and they will be judged accordingly.

C. Obedience leads to rest [11-13]

In the same way, if we have faith in Jesus, and the object of our faith is secure, then why wouldn't we be obedient to what he calls us to do in His word so that we can live the healthiest, most God-honoring life possible?? If we desire to experience rest, we must first place our faith in Jesus, then begin to live according to His word. This is how we can diligently enter into His rest [11]. We all have this deep-rooted desire for rest for our souls, though we may search and try to find it through things in this life, it can only be experienced through Jesus. Saint Augustine famously said, "You have made us for yourself, oh Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

Study Guide Qs:

- 1. Most often, our deepest longings for rest are in times of difficulty. How does faith in Jesus lead to rest for your soul?***
- 2. Share a time when you sought rest (apart from Christ) and never found it (or found the rest to be empty).***
- 3. Share a time when you experienced rest in Christ, even in spite of a difficult situation.***
- 4. How does obedience to His word lead to rest for your soul?***

"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

- 1. A commentary on Hebrews 4: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/hebrews-4/>**
- 2. An article on how to enter into God's rest: <https://www.gotquestions.org/enter-Gods-rest.html>**

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

- 1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?**
- 2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?**

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?

2. Here is a disciple-making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

[Invite neighbors where you live, work, study, play, and worship to the Fall Festival at CN on 10/28.](#)

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Notes:

1. Preparation and participation: Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better. As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

5. The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples. Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.