

God promises me rest – what does that mean – how do I enter it

Let's read Hebrews 4:1-11. In this passage of God's word, God implores every Christian to enter His rest as a primary purpose of that Christian's being born again. In these scriptures God identifies His rest as the spiritual equivalent to the Christian of the physical Promised Land to the nation of Israel. God had already delivered Israel out of Egypt via the Red Sea, corresponding to the New Birth of the Christian, when He exhorted them to enter the Promised Land. Israel refused to enter that blessed land when God offered it to them with devastating results to those who refused. A similar choice is before each of us Christians, will we enter God's rest and be of the fullest use to Him, and enjoy His blessing, or not?

Heb 4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His (God's) rest, let us fear (be afraid to distrust the promise-Amp.) lest any of you seem to have come short of it. (Oh how our God wants us to trust Him. Rest is all about trust and trust works by love, Gal. 5:6 – that is, it works by how much I love Him.)

Our heavenly Father has made a promise to us Christians that we can enter into and live in His rest while we live on the earth. This opening scripture of the fourth chapter of Hebrews asks me, with some urgency and alarm, have I honestly entered into God's rest (*permanently, or have I just been an occasional visitor*)?

What exactly is this rest that God promises?

According to Strong's the word here translated rest is Greek NT word #2663 katapausis (kat-ap'-ow-sis); it is derived from NT word #2664 and means reposing down, i.e. abode: NT word # 2664 is katapauo (kat-ap-ow'-o) from NT # 2596 Kata (down) and NT #3973 Pauo (To stop); and means to settle down, i.e. to colonize, or to cause to desist:

Literally the word rest means to stop working. Stop working what kind of works? The works of the flesh. And what are they? Works that I initiate and carry out independently from God, they can be very gross or they can be very religious but they are neither inspired by nor energized by God, hence they are (*spiritually*) dead works. When I enter God's spiritual rest and make my home in Him these dead works have ceased:

Heb 6:1 **...Let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,**

Is this then some slothful abandonment of doing any work at all as some have misinterpreted it to mean? No, on the contrary as Andrew Murray asserts in his exposition on the book of Hebrews (P. 152) "It is a yielding oneself up to the highest level of activity". But the activities, and they will be abundant, are now strictly led and directed by God, these are what God calls good works (*hence they become God works*).

2 Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work.

God's promises, like this promise of rest, are useless if not heard and believed in my heart

Heb 4:2 **For...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.**

(Note: entering God's rest or the Promised Land is included here as part of "the gospel")

Heb 4:3 **For 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.** *(God's good works intended for Israel were waiting for them in the Promised Land - Amp. God's good works are waiting for the Christian, if we enter His rest, but if we don't those works, touching other lives, won't be done, to our and their loss)*

In these verses God draws a parallel between the people of Israel before they entered the promised land and the Christian who has not yet entered God's rest. To the Israelites a physical land was promised, an abundant land in which God would defeat all their enemies, supply their every need and be their God. To the Christian still largely living in the flesh, God promises a spiritual land, an abundant land in which God will defeat all his enemies, supply all of his needs and be his God. And the door of entry into both promised lands – the physical and the spiritual – is simply believing and obeying the promise. The Israelites to whom the promise was first made did not enter the land because of unbelief. Today many Christians have not entered God's rest because of unbelief. As Andrew Murray says in his commentary (P. 145): "Only faith can enter into rest" It works by love.

John 6:29 **Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."** *(and Hebrews chapter 4 is part of His word He has sent) (God's intent with Israel was always to bring them out of Egypt so that He could bring them into the Promised Land. Likewise His purpose for each Christian is to bring us out of Satan's Kingdom in order to bring us into His rest, which is His spiritual Kingdom where His will can now be done in us. Does God get angry when His primary plan for His people is defied, by His own people? Oh yes, because now they are no longer available to Him.)*

Since in God's rest all works independent from Him have ceased He calls it a Sabbath

Heb 4:4-8 **For 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 (This is one type of Sabbath and is reflected in the ten commandments)"; And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, 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" (This is now another type of a Sabbath)." **For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day** (or another and different Sabbath day – this time a continuous Sabbath- it's called "Today" and means a continuing "Now" or unbroken "Present" in which our hearts remain always tender to God and so we always hear Him).**

Smith Wigglesworth in his devotional for March 8 says "Enter into God's rest. Oh this is a lovely rest! The whole life is a Sabbath. This is the only life that can glorify God. It is a life

of joy, and every day is a day of heaven on earth.” The New Covenant Sabbath then, since the Old Covenant of Law which included a seventh day Sabbath has been replaced, is not now a certain day of the week but rather a permanent every day place of abiding in Christ, having ceased from all of my own works – this Sabbath is God’s rest.

So what kind of Christians live in God’s Sabbath rest? Those with a hearing heart - meek

Heb 4:9 **There remains therefore a Sabbath rest (Amp) for the people of God.**

Andrew Murray comments (P. 151) that “Canaan was but a shadow or a symbol, the real Sabbath rest remained, waiting its time, until Christ”. In order to enter Canaan Israel had to cross the river Jordan. The word Jordan means “descending” and the word Canaan means “on bended knee”. What kind of Christian can enter spiritual Canaan where self dependence is replaced with God dependence and life is lived on spiritual bended knee – only the humble. No proud and therefore hard hearted Christian ever enters into God’s rest but only the tender hearted who can continue to hear God’s voice. And what word does scripture use to describe those who with tender hearts continue to hear (by continuing to obey) God’s voice – the Meek. It is only the hearts of the meek who continue to receive the witness of God’s word and God’s Spirit and obey Him. Consequently only the meek inherit God’s spiritual Canaan or promised land, only the meek enter God’s rest:

Ps 37:11 **But the meek shall inherit the land, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.**

Matt 5:5 **Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the land.**

(Can any Christian become “meek” and enter into God’s rest? Oh yes, Jesus said in Mat. 11:29 “Take My yoke upon you” – His yoke is His Spirit, it’s an easy yoke, but to take it we must take off the existing yoke of our flesh, which is a hard yoke – “And learn of Me for I am Meek and Lowly of heart and you will find rest for your souls).

How can I come to a place where I have ceased from my own works – only through death

Heb 4:10 **For he who has entered His (God’s) rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.**

My own works could not get me born again (*Not of works lest anyone should boast* – Eph. 2:9), neither can they advance me any deeper into Christ and the knowledge of God. Isn’t it time therefore that I abandoned them altogether, especially the works I engage in to try and compensate for those times when I’ve missed it and sinned. They are all dead works or words since the life of God is not in them. How do I cease from them? Andrew Murray comments (P. 153) “And how does one rest and cease from works? It is by ceasing from self. It is the old self life that insists on proving its goodness and strength and presses forward to do the works of God. It is only in death that we cease from works. Not through the death of the body but the death to self in the death of Christ, through faith.” In other words by my reckoning Christ’s death to His flesh, with its sin nature, now, to be mine.

Rom 6:8 **Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,**

Rev 14:13 ...**Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...that they may rest from their labors...**

To be dead to self is to be alive in Christ and to be living in God's presence under the control of the Holy Spirit. Andrew Murray says (p. 154) "This is the rest of faith in which a Christian ceases or rests from his own works" (but abounds in God's works). He continues

For the unconverted:	It is I and not Christ
With the weak Christian:	It is I first and Christ second
After some spiritual growth:	It is Christ first but still I second
To those who die with Christ:	It is Christ and not I (for the I is reckoned to be dead)

(D L Moody the great Evangelist said "Why don't you turn your life over to Christ fully – He can do a lot more with it than you can?" And become a Galatians 2:20 Christian.)

God exhorts us with urgency to enter His rest – why? – (1) because it is our spiritual home (2). It's the only place where what we do has any eternal value, (3) It's a primary purpose for which Christ died- so we could crucify and die to our flesh, in Him, (4) It's a foretaste of Heaven and therefore God's way for us to eventually transition from this life into the next.

Heb 4:11 **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.** *(To not enter is to fall – from Grace)*

Andrew Murray, as one who had entered God's rest, comments (P. 155) "*Let us be diligent to enter – the word means make haste, be in earnest, put your whole heart into it, see that you do it; enter into the rest. Lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience - The danger is imminent and the loss will be terrible.*" What is the loss? It is the loss of the real Christian life of abiding in Christ and bearing fruit. Now the "good" of being born again but remaining a wilderness Christian becomes the enemy of God's "best" of entering His rest. The absence of rest can only mean restlessness, a troubled soul weighed down with anxieties not enjoying the contentment and peace of a life that is fully hidden with Christ in God.

There is a temporary rest, meaning that in some areas of my life I am yielded to God - but in other areas I am not yielded and consequently I am still troubled by my three enemies, *(who rely on my unwillingness to submit to God – my protector – in order to operate in my life - Since clearly I'm not dead to it I will still be constantly yielding to sin – I may have fallen into the deception that "partial obedience" to God is tolerable since I presume it is better than no obedience. Actually partial obedience is the same as total disobedience as King Saul discovered to his entire loss in 1st. Samuel 15 – My problem fundamentally is a love for God problem because love always obeys, John 14:21, 23 – and – what God My Father requires of me, like submission Heb. 12:9, He also enables me to do, Phil. 2:13).* So, there is a rest of God waiting for me in those areas of my resistance too – if I will just be diligent to enter in and cease from my own works. Come on home and rest fully in God.

Matt 5:5 **Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the land** (and enter God's rest)