

Heb. 3:16-4:10

Elon Musk just recently put out on his own social media platform a statement about whoever said money doesn't buy you happiness was right. But what happened in response was so powerful. The vast majority, and I mean almost 100% of the comments came back to a gospel presentation where others were telling him to try **Jesus**. As of two days ago, there was one post that got 6.8 likes and it told the story of Solomon (who was the richest man in the world) who at the end said **he denied himself no pleasure and found them to all be meaningless**. The writer went on to quote **Mark 8:36**, which asks "*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*" It was such a beautiful outpouring of people who want Elon to put his faith in Jesus.

- But here is the tie to today's study. Let's suppose that Elon is also touched and calls out to Jesus to be saved. If he does so because he is a prudent man who can take in data and make good decisions, **is it an act of faith or logic?** Another example is **Scott Adams** (the cartoonist who created Dilbert). As he was dying, he wrote "many of my Christian friends have asked me to find Jesus before I go. I'm not a **believer**, but I have to admit the risk-reward calculation for doing so looks attractive. So, here I go: I accept Jesus Christ as my lord and savior, and look forward to spending an eternity with him. The part about me not being a **believer** should be quickly resolved if I wake up in heaven. I won't need any more convincing after that. I hope I am still qualified for eternity."
- First, I want to be clear that I am so grateful to hear of so many who have shared their faith with both of these men. **It really is encouraging**. And I truly hope both men will have made it into heaven. Yet, is intellectual assent or knowledge of God enough to do so? No. In order to be saved one has to put their faith in Jesus. This is why Christians are often called believers, refereeing to someone putting their faith in Jesus.

And here are the next few questions, does that one-time act of faith give you the ability to enter His rest? And if so, what is that rest? Is His rest for now, for eternity, or both? I ask these questions because as we come to this section of **Heb. 4** (starting actually in **3:16**), we enter a powerful portion which uses **1) a nation** (comprised of specific generations) who were under the Old Covenant, and **2)** compares them to **individuals** (and only individuals) who are under the New Covenant, in order to make the key point today (let's read that again).

- And let me just say, although this picture is so powerful and spot on, **because of the complexity of bouncing back and forth between a nation under the OC and individuals under the NC**, some have made this much harder than it was intended to be (I think). Meaning whoever wrote this (and I still stand with Paul), had the ability to track all of the crossovers in their mind, and believed we'd be able to do so also 😊.
- So **my goal is to make sure we take away the main point** more than dig out all of the little nuances. Because that is what Paul was trying to do. And the main point is powerful.
- And I'm going to do so by first providing some of the key pieces here. The **first** is I will announce when we're switching from one group to the other (when it's the nation/generation under the Law, or the individuals who have placed their faith in Jesus). So pay attention to "*they*", "*them*", and "*us*", or "*we*" types of language. **Second**, remember that **Hebrews** is a book that uses **types and shadows** (meaning the OT is often used as a picture [although **real pictures**] to illustrate the greater truth that would be fulfilled in Jesus). Meaning there isn't always a one-for-one exchange when bouncing back and forth (think big picture). **But all along God has been telling the story of His plan of redemption**. Often through **types and shadows** (**Heb. 8:5, 9:23-24, 10:1, 1 Cor. 10:11, Rom. 5:14**). **And** we must place all of this on top of the theme being prominent up to this point, which is to show **Jesus is greater** (greater in power, perfection, and fulfillment) than anything which came before His being born in human flesh. In the first two chapters He was shown to be greater than angels. And here He is shown to be greater (funny misspelling 😊) than Moses and the Law.

And let me give you the ultimate spoiler. For the New Covenant believer, **Jesus is our rest!** And the rest we have in Him is something the Old Covenant could not provide. **The OC saints still came in through faith**, but they could only wish to see Jesus' day (**Matt. 13:17**). If you grasp this, the rest is easy. **Jesus is greater!!!**

We are picking up now at **3:14** (although we covered **14-15** last time. Being spoken to the NC believers). And **verses 16-19** (the new material today) **speak of the generation that came out of Egypt under Moses**.

¹⁴ *For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,*

¹⁵ *while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." ¹⁶ For who,*

having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? ¹⁷ Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? ¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Again, we need to look at this from a **big picture** lens, and start with the questions, why was God **angry** and what was their big **sin**? And the obvious answer he is providing for us here is because of their **unbelief**. We've spoken before about the fact that unbelief creates unfaithfulness and breeds disobedience. And I suppose we could now go into a lesson about sin and disobedience to God. But I'm afraid that might cause us to miss the main point. And that is that **unbelief** is the foundation of what he is speaking about here.

- Now we need some background. **1)** When God called Israel to take the blood of a lamb and place it over the doorposts of their homes so the angel of death would pass-over their houses and only kill the firstborn of Egypt, **the people acted in faith for their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt**. This is a picture of initial faith in the blood of the Lamb (Jesus [1 Cor. 5:7]) for deliverance from our bondage to sin (Rom. 6:6).
- But **2)** when they were in the wilderness and arrived at Kadesh Barnea, from there God set them to take the land He had given them, so they sent out twelve spies to bring back a report. And after ten of the spies gave a negative report, saying the land was incredible but they had no chance of taking it, even though God had promised to give it to them, **they chose unbelief** (Num. 13-14). So, God had them wander the desert 40 years, until that first generation died out, **and therefore never entered His rest**.
- So **they started in faith but did not continue in belief**. They had to make a decision to continue on in faith in God and His promises, or to go back. And several times they even spoke about going back to Egypt, where they were under bondage (Ex. 14:11-12, 16:2-3, Num. 14:1-4).

Now we switch to the Holy Spirit speaking to these Jewish Christians under the New Covenant. But **he's still using the illustration of those who came out of Egypt under Moses and the Law**.

¹Therefore, 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.

Let's start with the gospel being preached to both those who **1)** came out of Egypt under Moses **2)** and the group of Hebrew believers who put their faith in Jesus. Remember that **the gospel** simply means **good news**. Now, for certain, the good news of the coming Messiah was preached from **Gen. 3:15** forward (the protoevangelium- "first gospel"). **But go back to what we just discussed in the last verses** (which is also a picture of the good news of Jesus coming).

- That generation **1)** placed their faith in God's deliverance from bondage by placing the blood of the lamb over their doors. **2)** But in the wilderness they chose to not believe God's promise of entering the land He had given them, that they might find rest from wandering in the wilderness. **3)** They had a choice to make; **to either continue moving forward in faith or to go back**.
- Now, **what was this foreshadowing?** For these Jewish believers in Jesus (those alive when this letter was written), **1)** they placed their faith in the blood of the Lamb to deliver them out of their bondage to sin, setting them free to experience all that God had for them in this new life in Him. And now, **2)** just like the generation who came out of Egypt, **they had to choose to enter into and occupy the rest God had given them**. And as we talked about last week, that is peace with God which brings the peace of God. **3)** Their other option was to turn back to trying to keep the Law to try and be justified by their works.
- And this is where the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant comes in, because under the **Old Covenant** the best you could get was a picture, foreshadowing, or momentary tastes of God's **rest** (the promise remained unfulfilled), because **it was a conditional covenant**, which was placed to show no person could keep it. But the **New Covenant** has a promise of eternal peace with God, because of the death and resurrection of God the Son on our behalf. And he is reminding them that they too must choose to continue in the provision of God's **rest**, or choose to go back to a covenant that could never give them real and lasting rest.

Folks, what is highlighted so powerfully here is that the New Covenant of God's grace, through Jesus, means that **it is no longer about works of the Law. It's about faith!** Rom. 3:28, "*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the Law*". Gal. 2:16, "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the*

works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ...” And Paul’s point is it’s a continuance of, or staying in that faith, that is of issue here. And for anyone who goes back to the Law, neither the Law or Christ will be of any profit to them (Gal. 5:2-4). And that my friends is something to fear (Rom. 11:20).

And now **verse 3** makes **the comparison** between these two groups, saying;

³ For we (NC saints) *who have believed **do enter that rest, as He** (God) **has said: “So I swore in My wrath, ‘They** (those who came out of Egypt) **shall not enter My rest,”**” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For He (God) *has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”*; ⁵ and again in this place: *“They shall not enter My rest.”**

Ok, here we have another picture these Hebrew believers would have gotten. **God is using the example of the finished work of creation to point to the finished work of redemption.** When He created the heavens and the earth, each day is prefaced with *“So on the evening and the morning of the ___ day”*. But on *the seventh day* that is not present, because the work was finished completely. It’s not as though God took the seventh day off and returned to complete it on the eight. No, **it was finished.**

- But then comes the fall of man. We had undone a significant portion of what God had done perfectly. And so God sent His only begotten Son into the world to do **the work of redemption**. And when it was done, it was done forever. Jesus then rested from the work of redemption because there was no more to be done! Therefore he can say to these New Covenant saints in Jesus that they **do enter that rest** because they have believed. You know, it really isn’t dependent upon us, other than what we do with placing our faith in Jesus.
- But for that generation (and nation) coming out of Egypt, who were under the Old Covenant, **they couldn’t really enter the type of rest we have in Jesus, because they didn’t have Jesus!** They had the Law, which no one could keep. And his point is that these current believers in Jesus would be fools to go back to the Law. Remember, this is the point Paul is making.

Folks, you and I can’t add anything of value to the finished work of Jesus Christ. And He wants us not just to have Salvation rest, but submission rest- which only comes when our faith is continued in Him and His promises. It comes through trust in Him. Which makes it possible to surrender or submit to what He chooses or allows in our lives.

- In the **Old Covenant** God had established a **Sabbath day** for the people. But in this **New Covenant** He has established a **Sabbath life**- He wants us to **rest** in Him by faith.
- The work is finished. If we do not obtain it, it’s because of our unbelief. And if we do obtain it, it is not of our works. It’s not a reward for some type of work. We don’t deserve His blessing. He blesses us because He is good and He loves us. Faith is our part. The rest comes from Him.

⁶ *Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience* (speaking of the disobedience of unbelief still), 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.*

Now some of the Jews who were still under the Law and were pressuring these Jewish Christian converts to return to temple worship, would argue the second generation in the wilderness had entered into the rest when Joshua had taken them into the promised land. But here we find around **500 years later** that David (third time quoting **Psa. 95**) declares they had not yet taken hold of it. And we know that’s true **1)** because even then those who entered chose not to take all that God was delivering to them and told them to take (**Josh. 13:1, Judges 1:27-36**). **2)** So they stayed in a pretty constant place of battle with those they did not get rid of (that’s the opposite of resting). And that brought them to the events recorded in the book of Judges (**Judges 2:1-3**).

- And **3)** when David was inspired to write this Psalm, we know he lived in a place of constant battle. So much so he could not build the temple of God, because He was a man of war and had much blood on his hands (**1 Chron. 22:7-8**). So **4)** His son Solomon built the temple and the land had rest (**1 Chron. 22:9**). **So is this the rest spoken of?** Well Solomon had his own battles and due to His disobedience in amassing horses and wives (**Deut. 17:16-17, 1 Kings 10:26-29 & 11:1-3**), when he died the kingdom was split in two (**1 Kings 11:9-13 & 1 Kings 12**). And even warred with one another at various times (**1 Kings 14:30, 2 Chron. 13:3-16**). **But don’t miss that there is a promised rest for the nation of Israel still to come** (we don’t have time to cover that today).

- And 5) when Paul wrote this to the Jewish believers of his time, the Jews were under Roman occupation. **But here is the difference.** In Jesus, our rest is not dependent on our outward circumstances, because our rest is in Him. He is our rest. And no one can take Him from us.

Folks, don't harden your heart towards God in unbelief when things aren't going the way you had hoped, or when the world is disintegrating in front of you. This is where our faith in Jesus is providing something for us the world can know nothing of.

- I was just listening to a program which was pointing out the scores of people who are coming to faith in Jesus because of the unfolding Epstein files. What's happening is they are seeing a level of evil they were not sure existed before. And with that, they have determined there must also be an ultimate force of good. And being that God will punish evil and bring justice, now makes perfect sense to them. And **they are coming to Jesus in faith, to find His rest in this fallen world.**
- And how sad is it when there are those who put their faith in Jesus initially (some time ago) and still have not entered into **submission rest because of unbelief in His finished work.** **There remains a rest for God's people. Have you entered into it?**

And now he ties it all together, saying;

¹⁰ *For he (any person) who has entered His (Gods) rest has himself also ceased from his works (the works of trying to justify yourself) as God did from His.*

It's not that the creation work exhausted God, He simply finished it and therefore, being there was nothing more to create, He just rested and desired to enjoy it- with you.

- And the idea is that if we want to enter Gods rest, **we will have to acknowledge, believe, and continue to believe** that He also completed the work of our redemption.
- Folks, our rest is **in** Jesus, because Jesus **is** our rest. This letter is an encouragement in continuing in the faith and not turning back to things that never worked before.
- It's grace. Receive it, live in it, **rest** in it, and go nowhere else. Because you can't find it anywhere else.