

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#9 God's Rest: The Offer Remains

Jesus Christ Is Our Sabbath Rest:

Matt. 11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

The key to understanding how Jesus is our Sabbath rest is the Hebrew word *shabat*, which means "to rest or stop or cease from work." The origin of the Sabbath goes back to Creation. After creating the heavens and the earth in six days, God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made" [Genesis 2:2]. He ceased from His labors because the work of creation was finished. This is important in understanding the establishment of the Sabbath day and the role of Christ as our Sabbath rest.

C. The Sabbath, Shabbat, Relates To Me Because It Is A Sanctifying Sign

Examine another purpose for which the Sabbath was given.

Note: In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deut., God is clearly addressing the Israelites when He commands them to observe His Sabbaths.

Exodus 31:13-17 "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for IT IS A SIGN between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I Am The LORD Who Sanctifies You. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'" [Sabbath linked to Creation]

Ezekiel 20:12 "Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them."

Why did God not mention the Sabbath during the approximate 2500 years of silence?

The Sabbath was especially instituted as a sign of separation for Israel.

Therefore as a special sign for Israel, it was not given until after their deliverance from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea.

1. A wedding ring is a reminder of a present and sanctifying [set apart] relationship.

I am set apart to my spouse.

2. The sign of the Sabbath [Shabbat] is a reminder of the sanctifying [set apart] relationship between God and Israel.

Isa. 58:13-14 Isaiah described the Sabbath as turning from one's own ways and own pleasures and taking delight in the Lord. Focus your attention on the Lord.

Consider: "We are to remember: God is the Creator; the One who redeemed us by His finished work on the cross. He is also our Sanctifier. The POWER that created all things is the POWER that creates in the soul of the believer the image of Jesus Christ.

True sanctification is received through obedience to submit to Him to do His work in us. The Sabbath [rest in Him; relationship] is the sign of obedience. We are sanctified through obedience."

Four "Rests" in Scripture:

1. Creation Rest: Gen 2:2

"Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man's thought and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship. There would have not been an idolater, an atheist or an infidel. The keeping of the Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to the true God, the Creator that made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of waters."

God's Sabbath Rest is a picture of our rest in Christ through salvation.

Justification = Peace With God

Canaan rest is a picture of our present rest as we claim our inheritance in Christ.

Sanctification = Peace OF God This requires my submission to Jesus Christ.

2. Canaan Rest: Failure at Kadesh Barnea: Num 13-14

Note: Failure To Expect God To Act caused the disobedience of Israel in the wilderness, In Psalm 95, David indicates: *Offer To Enter God's Rest Was Still Open*

a. David calls God's people to worship & celebrate the LORD. Call To Obedience

Note: They are dwelling in the land when David writes this.

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

² Let us COME ["to go to meet God face-to-face, to be in His presence"] before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. ³ For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

⁴ In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.

⁵ The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.

⁶ O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

[Wiersbe: "Some people who enjoy lifting their hands and shouting do not enjoy bowing their knees and submitting. True worship involves realizing the awesomeness of God and experiencing the fear of the Lord and a deeper love for Him. Our singing and jubilation must become adoration and we are prostrate before the Lord in total submission, lost in wonder, love and praise. He made us, He saved us, He cares for us.

Why should we hesitate to fall before Him in total surrender?"]

⁷ For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Today, If You Will Hear His Voice: ⁸ "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, ⁹ When your fathers tested Me; They tried Me, though they saw My work.¹⁰ For forty years I was grieved with that generation,

And said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.'

¹¹ So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest."

- Hearing & heeding God's Word must be present for true worship.

Jesus admonishes us:

Take Heed THAT You Hear: Matt. 13:9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Take Heed WHAT You Hear: Mark 4:24 Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.

Take Heed HOW You Hear: Luke 8:18 Take heed: So pay attention to how you hear. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what they think they understand will be taken away from them.

- "Respond to God's Word now - Today.
How tragic when worshipers go home with full notebooks and empty hearts.
- "The way we treat the Word of God is the way we treat the God of the Word."

b. David cites 2 tragic events in Israel's history:

- Their complaining at Rephidim Ex. 17:1-7
- Their unbelief and disobedience at Kadesh Barnea Num. 13-14

Israelites had 14 months at Sinai and then departed for Kadesh Barnea; the gateway to Canaan. They refused to trust the Lord, obey His orders and enter the land and claim their inheritance. In spite of all they had seen Him do, they hardened their hearts and refused to do God's will. They went backward in unbelief instead of forward by faith.

God judged His people and consigned them to 38 years in the wilderness while the older generation died off. It was the world's longest funeral march.

"They shall not enter into my rest."

The fact that God repeats His promise of rest through David in Psalm 95, centuries after Israel had entered Canaan, is used to indicate that Sabbath-rest is the substance [real thing] and Canaan-rest but a SHADOW.

Paul said the debate over which day is correct is irrelevant. The weekly Sabbath is not the real Sabbath. It is a picture or a reminder of the real or true Sabbath which is a REST. Colossians 2:16-17 Therefore let no one sit in judgment on you in matters of food and drink, or with regard to a feast day or a New Moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ Such [things] are only the shadow of things that are to come, and they have only a symbolic value. But the reality (the substance, the solid fact of what is foreshadowed, the body of it) belongs to Christ.

1. Every lamb that was brought as an offering was a shadow of the work of Jesus Christ; the Lamb of God.
2. Every burnt offering, every bit of incense that was offered, was a picture of the fragrance of Jesus Christ.
3. The Tabernacle was a shadow or picture of Jesus Christ. The high priest, his garments, his office were all a shadow of Christ as our High Priest.
4. The Jewish Sabbath is a shadow or picture of that rest.

5. All Old Testament shadows pointed to Jesus Christ.

They were predictions of the coming One who would fulfill all these remarkable things.

Mark 2:28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Just as the Sabbath day was originally instituted to give man rest from his labors,

Jesus came to provide us rest from laboring to achieve our own salvation by our works.

Because of His sacrifice on the cross, we can now forever cease laboring to attain God's favor and rest in His mercy and grace.

6. When the work of Jesus Christ was finished, the shadows were no longer needed.

[Picture of a loved one as opposed to finally being with them; no longer need the picture]

The Sabbath was given to commemorate the fact: God finished His work on the 6th day and

rested on the 7th. He blessed the Sabbath and made it Holy. God's creative work was done

forever. A Sabbath breaker was put to death in Numbers 15:32-36 to make the point that working on the Sabbath brought death.

New Testament: Jesus' custom was to attend the synagogue on the Sabbath. [Luke 4:16;

Mark 1:21] Jesus taught the validity and authority of the OT law. [Mt. 5:17-20; 15:1-6;]

But He also went out of His way to perform miracles of healing on the Sabbath which was against the Law. Be consistent with God's will; not the letter of the law.

Human need takes precedence over ceremonial requirements. What's external and physical in the Old Testament often becomes internal and spiritual in the New.

[His warning that anger is related to murder and lust is as bad as adultery.]

This was to prove: The real meaning of the Sabbath was internal and spiritual.

He said the Sabbath was made for man.

3. Rest of Hebrews 4

Context of Hebrews - Jewish believers facing persecution at the time this letter was written.

Their faith will be tried. But the promise of rest is still available - the OT promise of rest was unfulfilled, but not withdrawn. It is available to those who want it.

The ENTIRE purpose of this letter is to get the Jewish believers to enter into the fullness of rest - of what was promised to them.

1. Why the intense persecution? They incurred the wrath of the religious community when they renounced Judaism. They faced the possibility of martyrdom. - Heb 12:4

2. They were seeking to re-identify themselves with established Judaism to escape persecution.

Remember: Your ancestors' hearts became so hard they wanted to return to Egypt.

Imagine wanting to exchange their freedom under God for slavery in Egypt.

The Hebrew Christians were in danger of "going back".

Consider: Many are tempted to give up their confession of Christ and compromise during times of persecution and suffering. The fires of persecution have always purified the church because suffering separates true believers from the counterfeit.

3. Through an exposition of OT concept of rest, author exhorted them to hold fast to their confidence in Christ [Heb 3:6, 14].

a. Meant to encourage them to face hardships boldly as the day approached:

their land would be burned [Heb 6:7]; temple worship would disappear [Heb 8:1].

True believers who Are Resting In Christ are willing to suffer for Christ and they hold firmly to their confession of faith and their confidence in Jesus Christ.

4. Uses quotes from Ps. 95 to warn them that their lack of faith and confidence in Christ could jeopardize their rest in Jesus Christ.

5. God's rest in Ps. 95, 2, 6: refers to Israel's worship before the personal presence of God. This could be forfeited by hardened, rebellious hearts like the Exodus generation. [2, 8, 10]

Wiersbe: Writer of Hebrews used the Israelites' failure to warn Christians not to harden their hearts and thereby fail to claim what God had for them. In this exhortation, he explains the danger of doubting and disbelieving the Word because of hardness of heart.

It was God's desire and will that the Israelites enter their glorious inheritance in the land of Canaan. When they reached the border of their inheritance, they delayed because they doubted the promise of God. They were "out of Egypt," but not yet "in Canaan."

The wilderness wanderings represent the experiences of believers who will not claim their spiritual inheritance in Christ, who doubt God's Word and live in restless unbelief.

Heb. 3:7-15, 18-19 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice,

⁸ Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,

⁹ Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years.

¹⁰ Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in *their* heart, And they have not known My ways.'

So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. [G2663]

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.¹³ But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 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."

¹⁸ And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, [G2663] but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of UNBELIEF.

1. God had delivered His people from Egypt, had cared for them, revealed His power in many signs and wonders. Israel saw ALL of this and benefited from it, but the experience DID NOT bring them closer to God or make them trust Him more. All that God did for them did not benefit them spiritually. They actually hardened their hearts.

2. The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart. Their hearts wandered from God and His Word. They did not believe God would give them victory in Canaan.

3. Their heart became so hard, they wanted to return to Egypt.
Imagine wanting to exchange their freedom under God for slavery in Egypt.

4. The sin of Israel is stated in Heb. 3:12: "Departing from the living God."

a. The Greek word gives us our English word apostasy. [ONLY place this word is used in Heb.]

b. Does apostasy mean abandoning one's faith and therefore being condemned forever?

That does not fit into this context.

c. Israel departed from the living God by refusing God's will for their lives and stubbornly wanting to get their own way back to Egypt.

d. God did not permit them to return to Egypt. Rather, He disciplined them in the wilderness.

e. God did not allow His people to return to bondage.

Application: Believers who doubt God's Word and rebel against Him do not miss heaven, but they do miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today.

They must suffer the chastening of God.

Heb. 4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.

Lord, make me willing to be willing for absolute surrender to you.

Surrender to enter His rest.