

Dentwater Bible Church

Hebrews Message 9
January 28, 2018



Elijah taken up in a chariot of fire by Giuseppe Angeli cir

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Hebrews

Message Nine

THE PERFECT REST OF REDEMPTION

January 28, 2018

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Hebrews 4:9–13

⁹ There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. ¹⁰ For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. ¹² For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (KJV).

THE AUDIENCE REVIEWED

The intended audience of the epistle were Jewish people in the church. Most of these Hebrews were probably genuine born-again believers to Christ. Most church groups in Christianity are comprised of some believers, a number of unbelievers, and some who were attracted by the message of salvation but had not yet made a full commitment of faith in Christ. They undoubtedly had friends who were born-again and caused them to want to learn more of this new faith. Newly born-again believers have an exciting and vibrant message to share regarding their experience. All of these types of people on the road to belief and some who are there, together in one fellowship we call the visible church. Some indeed were regenerated believers who we label the invisible church.

The author makes it very clear though that this group of Hebrews were facing the genuine possibility of intense persecution (10:32–39; 12:4). The Romans, Sanhedrin, and Temple magistrates all were seeking to stop the spread of this new Way (Acts 9:2). Because of this probability of persecution, many of them were considering not being part of the Church of Jesus Christ. They were seriously considering returning to the supposed safety of Judaism.

They were probably hearing from Christianity's detractors that Christ is not God's Son but just at best a mere angel. Josephus writes that the Essenes who kept the Dead Sea Scrolls were preserving books that belonged to them and the names of angels.¹ Within the DSS were found many pseudigraphic books with angelic insight offered such as the books of Enoch. With the Essenes interest in the celestial realm it is not beyond reason to assume their influence caused many to believe that Jesus was an angel of sorts and not the Son of God. This could be why Paul so vigorously emphasized the superiority of Christ over the Celestial realm in chapter one.

¹ Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). *The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged* Wars II, viii 7, 142, (p. 606). Peabody: Hendrickson.

John MacArthur makes the following statement regarding the audience to whom this book was written in his comments on the book of Hebrews.

A proper interpretation of this epistle requires the recognition that it addresses three distinct groups of Jews: (1) believers; (2) unbelievers who were intellectually convinced of the gospel; and (3) unbelievers who were attracted by the gospel and the person of Christ but who had reached no final conviction about Him. Failure to acknowledge these groups leads to interpretations inconsistent with the rest of Scripture.²

THE REST

Hebrews 4:9–10

⁹ There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. ¹⁰ For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his (KJV).

This is the logical conclusion of what the apostle offered as evidence prior to this. The word “special rest” is unique since the Lord Jesus has been sacrificed for us. There is a Greek word which *rest* properly translated would be *sabbath rest*. It is unique since it appears only once in the New Testament and that is here. God’s people enjoy a special rest in that we get to share in God’s own rest which He announced at the end of the six days of creation (Genesis 2:2).

This unique rest is available to believers who approach communion with God through Jesus Christ. The rest experienced by the ancient Hebrews going into Canaan after forty years of wandering is decidedly different from this rest. They were going to be able to find some comfort from the environment they were leaving in the desert wandering. This rest the apostle describes is very different from what they have been experiencing and the enticing language used was appropriate to cause the Jews to want to experience this. Jewish history is filled with political turmoil and wanderings. Even in first century Jewish life they faced many hardships including the animosity of Satan’s agents and the carrying of one’s cross (Matthew 16:24-26; Luke 9:23) which was an identification reality of becoming a member of the Way (Acts 9:2). The person condemned to death had to carry his own cross to the location of crucifixion. Jews in the first century often incurred the wrath of other Jews, including the Sanhedrin, Temple magistrates, and the Romans. Sometimes their families disowned them. The rest offered them by the apostle has much more substance and attraction to free them from the present burdens. The struggle would be over in terms of their state of mind regarding the wrath they experienced. God would provide them with His peace. It is a unique experience with Christ in which the Lord provides His presence, peace, and joy to replace the labor and heavy burdens of life (Matthew 11:28–30).

God’s own rest (Hebrews 4:4) becomes the pattern of the rest of the believer. God’s rest involved the completion of his work and not mere cessation of activity. The Jews had a tremendous amount of work to do in weekly sacrifices. With the acceptance of and belief in

² MacArthur, J. (2001). *Hebrews: Christ - Perfect Sacrifice, Perfect Priest* (p. 5). Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group.

the gospel the rituals and ceremonial washings would be over as a necessary obligation to satisfy God through adherence to the Mosaic Law or rabbinic rules. The Lord Jesus' full work on the cross made it possible for believers to trust Him instead of their own works. This rest remains only for the people of God who have believed that Jesus died and rose from the dead. While the early Christians were all Jews the leaders refused to believe and they tried to prevent others from believing the gospel and following Jesus. God's plan for this earth would not be prevented. Jesus Himself affirmed this.

Matthew 16:18

¹⁸And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (KJV).

So, this special rest remains only for God's people who are regenerated through belief in the gospel. Believers no longer have the need to please God through good works as if to appease and angry pagan god or perform the rituals of Temple worship under the Mosaic Law. Most if not all of the Jews in the audience of this book had been under the yoke of the pharisaical system of non-biblical laws and rule keeping. These Jewish believers would rest from those activities into what Christ had done for them.

Hebrews 4:11–13

¹¹ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. ¹² For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (KJV).

The rest described here is one that is available here and now. It is not speaking of heavenly rest when we leave the earth. But we have assurances of it here while we live in this wicked degenerating evil world. Here people will not listen to the gospel or refrain from falling back into sin and resting in old religious practices instead of God Himself. We have the promises of God as given in the Scriptures to assure us. But we must take advantage of them when the world is pressing in on us. Just as these Jews were seriously considering returning to Temple worship and the ineffective Mosaic Law we must not substitute old ways for the promises of God. Those promises are found in the Word of God our Bible. Each day our sanctification in Christ grows if we stay in His rest. We will not be free of irritants, frustrations, and persecution until we are glorified. We have a choice to make each day whether we will draw closer to Him in obedience or drift away. Some who are lazy in their spiritual life can fall into disobedience. Others who work hard for the Lord do not take time out to rest in Him. This is the difference between the Lord's friends Martha and Mary.

Luke 10:38–42

³⁸ Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called

Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me."⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. ⁴² But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her. (NKJV)"

The Word of God cannot be taken for granted or disobeyed. Jesus says that we must not let the cares of this world keep us from our obligation to the Spiritual nourishment that only the saved person can receive from the Lord.

Matthew 11:28–30

²⁸ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (KJV).

It is only through the Word of God that we can experience the truth of our Lord and what He has assured us. The Word of God vibrates with a life enrichment that only our Creator can provide. He knows us in a depth that no one else can. His Word penetrates our outer façade and reveals to Him what our innermost thoughts and desires are. Nothing can be hidden from God neither can we hide from our selves when we truly study and soak in the Word of God. It reaches deep within us as a *twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* The reference here is to a sword with both edges razor sharp and able to easily pierce the object with which it comes in contact. But here it is not joints and marrow but the thoughts and intents of our inner most being. God want to be there and we must let Him in. We cannot give excuses to God we must simply surrender and obey. The first stage is believing the gospel. Then we are given the Holy Spirit who is the illuminator (I Corinthians 2:14). This is what the apostle is trying to convey to the Jews who had not accepted belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus yet.

Upon belief God's Spirit the Holy Spirit enters us and we are sealed (Ephesians 1:13) for eternity in a special relationship with God. In fact, the Spirit provides us at least nine measures of peaceful rest like experiences.

Galatians 5:22-25

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. ²⁴ And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk (ASV, 1901).

The apostle provides us with a direct command in order to appropriate God's rest that He has for us. He says that we must walk in this life in the Spirit of God. He tells us how exactly to

do that is the book of Ephesians. This is a sequential therapeutic methodology for the restoration of God's peace within us as we contend with the evil in this wicked world. The forces of evil are constantly upon us. But God is greater than them and He has provided for His children (I John 4:4). The wickedness in this world we experience activates our old (prior to salvation) person to play a exert a more dominant effort within us. This is not of God. He wants us to feed the new person of regeneration so we can stand on the promises of God as He assure us of His special rest.

Ephesians 5:15-21

¹⁵Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; ¹⁶redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ (ASV, 1901).

What then are the formulae steps?

1. Be not drunk with wine
2. Fill yourself with the Holy Spirit
3. Speak to one another with psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs
4. Make melody in our own hearts to the Lord
5. Giving thanks to God the Father for all things He provided in the name of the Lord Jesus to us
6. Submitting ourselves one to another (believers) in the fear and submission to Christ

When the evil of this world comes upon us and causes us to be anxious we must step back and follow the apostle's instructions found in Philippians.

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus (ASV, 1901).

Through prayer, supplication (earnestly asking) with thanksgiving to God we will receive God's peace. It is not for us to understand how God does this. We simply are to be obedient to His Word and He will guard our hearts and thoughts through our relation and belief in the gospel of Christ Jesus.

Next message: The Book of Hebrews chapter four continued.

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