

of God gives us a solid foundation of the knowledge of God that we can hold in our minds to keep our souls at rest. This rest is the peace that passes understanding.

But, entering this rest is not automatic for a believer in Christ. Entering God's rest is not instantaneous, it is not an emotion, and it is never separated from a knowledge of the truth. This rest is constantly under assault and can be destroyed by the worry, panic, and fear that come when our souls begin to focus on the "wisdom of this age" and the deceitful scheming of this world. The truth of the Word of God in our soul can be replaced with lies and deception. We need to make every effort to enter that rest and maintain that rest in our souls by concentrating on the knowledge of God that empowers us.

Do not let the pressures and the afflictions of this world cause you to retreat out of the strong tower built in your soul. It is in this strong tower, filled with the knowledge of God, that the believer can rest in the promises, plans, and purposes revealed in the Word of God.

5 - FAITH REST

In at least five places in Scripture people are invited to enter a place of rest for their souls by trusting the plan and promises of the Lord:

1. The Exodus Generation from 1445-1405 BC
2. David's Generation in 1000 BC
3. Jeremiah's Generation from 620-586 BC
4. Jesus' Generation in 30 AD
5. Believers in Jerusalem in 63-66 AD

The Exodus Generation - 1445-1405 BC

- Exodus 33:14 – And he said "My presence will go with you, and I will give you *rest*."
- Joshua 1:13 – Remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, "The Lord your God is providing you a place of *rest* and will give you this land."

David's Generation - 1000 BC

- Psalm 95:11 – Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my *rest*."

Both Jesus and Jeremiah spoke of this place of rest for a person's soul if that person could hear the words of God and learn God's ways:

Jeremiah - 620-586 BC

- Jeremiah 6:16 – Thus says the Lord: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and

walk in it, and find *rest* for our souls.” But they said, “We will not walk in it.”

Jesus - 30 AD

- Matthew 11:28-29 – [Jesus said] “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find *rest* for your souls.”

Just like in Jeremiah’s day, the people of Jesus’ day would end up rejecting the Lord’s offer of rest for their souls:

- Matthew 12:6-8, 14 – I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath... But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

Believers in Jerusalem - 63-66 AD

- Hebrews 3:18 – And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his *rest*, but to those who were disobedient?
- Hebrews 4:1 – Therefore, while the promise of entering his *rest* still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.
- Hebrews 4:3 – For we who have believed enter that *rest*, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my *rest*” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.
- Hebrews 4:8 – For if Joshua had given them *rest*, God would not have spoken of another day later on.
- Hebrews 4:9 – So then, there remains a Sabbath *rest* for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s *rest* has also rested from his works as God did from his.

- Hebrews 4:11 – Let us therefore strive to enter that *rest*, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

This rest for the soul happens when we are confident in God’s plan. God’s rest is not found in external circumstances or achieved with internal distractions. The rest that the Lord invites us to is obtained and maintained only by believing the promises of the Lord.

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In 1445 BC the people were promised that the Lord would lead them through the wilderness to the land promised to their forefathers. In 1000 BC David spoke of trusting the Creator God to be the sustainer and provider of his people throughout time. Between 620 and 586 BC Jeremiah encouraged his generation to return to the established truth revealed to his people by God through the prophets and the writings of Moses. In 30 AD Jesus, the Living Word, invited the people to come to him and learn from him. In 63 AD the author of the book of Hebrews spoke to those who had heard and trusted in the promises of Jesus Christ. Each of these generations had people who secured their souls by trusting the Word of the Lord, but they also had large numbers who refused to listen, refused to understand and refused to believe the clear teaching they heard.

Those who believed and maintained their confidence in the promises of God despite the particular opposition each faced (e.g., perils of the wilderness, fears of life and persecution for believing the truth) prepared their souls for rest. Those who understood and trusted the Word of God were able to stabilize themselves in the midst of confusion, problems, and persecution. They grew stronger. They matured to produce fruit. And, their understanding and faith increased.

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Those who refused to believe or could not maintain their confidence in the Lord during times of confusion, problems, or persecution were either eternally lost or could not grow into mature believers. They either perished for all eternity or lived fruitless lives in this age before their Lord.

Hear and understand the promises of the Lord *today* so that you may enter his rest.

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

- Isaiah 26:3

Have you not known?

Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.

Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;

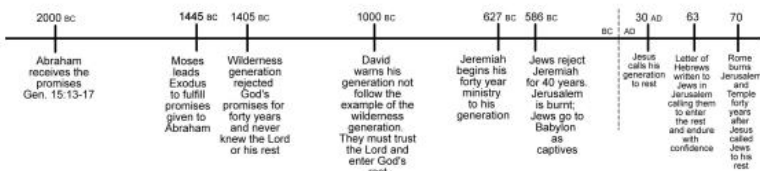
but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;

they shall mount up with wings like eagles;

they shall run and not be weary;

they shall walk and not faint.

- Isaiah 40:28-31



6 - GOD'S WAYS AND PROMISES (PREPARING YOUR SOUL)

Believers today have been given God's Word and heard his voice in our lives just as they did in the Exodus generation in 1445 BC, David's generation in 1000 BC, Jeremiah's generation in 600 BC, Jesus' generation in 30 AD and the people living in Jerusalem who received the New Testament letter of Hebrews in 63 AD.

Like them, we have a choice to either receive or reject the Lord's invitation into his rest. If we can understand God's Words and trust his ways as revealed in these promises, we will be able to stabilize our souls for rest and prepare our minds for action - not only in the good times, but even in the worst times. We will be fruitful in season and out of season because we will have entered into and remained in God's rest. Doing so is absolutely necessary because the day of evil comes to each one of us individually - and will come to us as a nation. We must prepare our souls now.

To do this we must first hear the promises and understand the ways of God. Today we have an opportunity to inhale the doctrines of truth. If we do this, we can live daily in God's rest exhaling both the character of the Lord and the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

If you know the character of the Lord and the fruit of the Spirit, you also know that much more is involved than just joy and peace, because not every situation in life demands joy or peace. Sometimes in this fallen world, living among those in rebellion to God, we will also need to be faithful, just, humble and good.

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We will need to be faithful to the Lord – even while everyone else is compromising. compromising God's Word and twisting his created order. We will need to remain in God's rest while we think and speak faithfully of his ways - even while being mocked for not compromising, and being identified as evil for not twisting the reality of his created order. These will not be easy fruits of the Spirit to produce if you have lost confidence in God and left his place of rest.

We will need to be just and seek justice – even when our culture is oppressive. We will need to be just and seek justice - even when our culture is oppressive. We will need to be just and fair - even when a bribe determines innocence or guilt. We will need to speak fairly, honestly, and justly - even when the path to survival requires lies, compromise, and betrayal.

Are churches today preparing our souls for situations like this?

God's Word does. And he defends his Word with his very nature, and backs it up with a promise. You can remain committed to justice in the midst of a society bent on compromise and still maintain your place in the rest of God.

We will need to “walk humbly before our God” – even when doing so is identified as arrogant and uncooperative by men who demand we bow before them. We will need to “walk humbly before our God” - even when doing so is identified as arrogant and uncooperative by men who demand we bow before them. The humble cannot be weak. There is a time when humility before the Lord will require you to rise up as mighty in the face of rebellious men. You will be in God's rest, but this will not be tolerated by those who do not understand that their momentary greatness in this age was given to them by the Lord - or that it is already passing away.

Stay humble, my friend, and do not fear the lions!
We will need to be good even when men declare that “good is

evil”, and identify “light as darkness”. These will be difficult times for us. But know also that they will not be spiritually productive days for the “Christian” who has compromised his testimony to tolerate wickedness, cooperate with evil, live patiently in sin, and make peace with the unrighteous.

We will need to be good - even when men declare that “good is evil”, and identify “light as darkness”.

A good man in these days will have to be a strong, confrontational man willing to live independently in the rest of his God - more a battle-hardened warrior than a religious social organizer.