

Text: Heb 4.1-9

The title of our message is “I Need a Rest.”

Coincidentally, Debbi and I are headed off on a vacation on Tuesday!

The title of the message has little connection with my plans for the next two weeks!

What do we mean by the word “rest” or even the word “vacation”?

“rest” — “a bodily state characterized by minimal functional and metabolic activities”¹

“vacation” — “a respite or a time of respite from something”²
[suggests the example of an *intermission*! So hockey players go on vacation between periods!]

A vacation isn’t usually a rest: it is just a different kind of activity, which will be what we are doing while we are off for a bit.

The Bible term for “rest” is also not the same as “minimal function” but different function. It’s more like a vacation; except we will find that it has no end.

I’ve given our text as the whole passage we are working on. This won’t exhaust our subject. Actually, it will just get us started.

I’m reading a few articles on the subject of Rest in the Bible. Our text is actually the end of the story, so we are looking at it from the wrong end of the telescope in a way.

I plan to lay out an introductory message today, but I might have a little digression on rest when we get back. (That depends on how rested I am!!)

We will also not exhaust our text today. I’m still thinking about everything our passage is saying.

But today: ***I Need a Rest*** — what am I talking about?

Read Heb 4.1-9

¹ Frederick C. Mish, ed., *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

² Mish.

Some writers divide up these references as if the mentions of rest are all different things. We who are believers have a rest, Israel had a rest (which they missed) and God took a rest. What do we mean by this and how is it relevant to us right now?

Proposition: You don't want to miss the rest God has for you.

I. The full meaning of rest

I am afraid my "full meaning" will merely scratch the surface of meaning!

A. Those who participate (or could participate) in rest in our passage

1. We, us, believers — (1, 2, 3, 9)
2. The Exodus generation (2, 6)
3. The Conquest generation & following (8)
4. God (4, 5 "my rest" [cf. 3], 9)

This reference is a key to understanding the whole concept.

B. The unifying characteristics of rest

1. We can enter, they did not enter: implication, the rest for us is the same as the rest for them
2. The rest has a Sabbath characteristic
 - a. God rested on the seventh day (4, cf. Gen 2.2)
 - b. There remains a "Sabbath rest" (9)
 - 1) Note: not "sabbath" but "sabbath rest"
 - 2) Word is rare, related to sabbath, but not the same
 - 3) Speaks of quality of rest, not a specific day
 - c. God's rest:
 - 1) not cessation of activity (he spoke to Adam after creation)
 - 2) but ceasing from creation for a new purpose
 - 3) It was a period of rest God *shared* with his creature, Adam

3. God's Sabbath rest is always available for believers
 - a. God's works were finished from the foundation of the world (3)
 - b. God would have given the Exodus generation rest, but they disobeyed (2)
 - c. God's rest is available "Today"
 - 1) To any who heard in David's day (7)
 - 2) To any who believe in the Hebrew's day (3)
 - 3) To any who believe in the "today" day (9)

It is all one rest that is available.

C. The distinguishing characteristics of rest offered

1. On the one hand, rest meant entering the promised land and winning victory
 - a. Missed by the Exodus generation
 - b. Attained by the Conquest generation
 - c. Yet... not attained completely (8)
2. On the other hand, the physical entrance to the land points to some future spiritual reality

I think we need more study on this, so when I come back from my "rest" (vacation) I plan go into more detail.

For now, though, let's explore a bit of Scripture to help our understanding.

II. The future fulness of rest

- A. Rest isn't simply dying and going to heaven (a better place than here, but not that rest God promised) (Ps 116)
 1. Section 1: The cords of death encompass me (the Psalmist) (1-4)
 2. Section 2: The good God delivers my soul (5-11)
 - a. He was brought low, God saved him (6)
 - b. He returns to his rest (7)
 - c. He is rescued from death and walks in the land of the living (8-9)

3. Section 3: The Psalmist rejoices in communion/fellowship with God (12-19)

Rest involves full communion with God, not as a disembodied spirit, but as a resurrected man.

B. Rest is offered “in that day” when God restores the remnant “a second time” (Isa 11.10-11)

1. The nations resort to the root of Jesse: his resting place will be glorious (10)

2. Then the Lord will recover his people the second time (11)

The language of the kingdom lurks behind the vocabulary of rest.

C. God has settled on Jerusalem for his resting place (Ps 132.13-14)

1. The middle east is not in rest today

2. But God’s rest is available today, by faith

Rest involves perfect communion with God in a place where the labors and trials of this life are over and God’s great day has begun.

III. The present opportunity for rest

A. God’s rest lost

1. In the beginning of God’s rest, he put man in the garden to cultivate it and keep it (Gen 2.15)

Gn 2.15 ¶ Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

2. When God’s rest was lost by man, it was lost by unbelief (Gen 3.8)

Gn 3.8 ¶ They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

3. On the way to God’s rest, the Exodus generation *failed* of God’s rest by unbelief (Heb 4.4, 6)

B. God's rest spurned by our world

1. Nostalgia: joined a group on Facebook with people from my home town
 - a. They talk about places that used to exist in our town
 - b. They remind each other of the fun they had

I recall how busy and active the young people in my high school were, full of life, but far from God.

I know some of them died already: drug overdoses, alcoholism, car wrecks

Most of them had no interest in fellowship with God, and still don't — a future of rest, walking with God, holds no interest to them

They are hard workers, laboring for what they can find in this life, but no hope of the next.

2. The many activist movements are pushing for rest in this life
 - a. The many "rights" groups: gay rights, trans rights, racial rights ... all of them find something wrong with their world and labor to set it right (to no avail, it's never enough)
 - b. Green theology claims if we will just do a little more, we can achieve a paradise on earth
3. On the other hand: those pushing for business success, political power, popularity ... all of them are dissatisfied with the world they are in and think human effort can achieve rest

C. The significant words of our text (Heb 3-4) (NAU)

1. Rest – 10x
2. Enter – 9x
3. Day – 7x
4. God – 7x
5. House – 7x
6. Today – 5x

Heb 4.7 He again fixes a certain **day**, "**Today**," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

Conclusion:

Proposition: You don't want to miss the rest God has for you.

You live in a world where everything men pursues ignores God's rest. Men don't want it.

They want something... but not God.

Don't be among those who turn back and turn away from God's rest.