

## Week Six: Jesus Provides Rest

### Introduction

It is unbelief that causes our restlessness. The cure for unbelief is the Word of God.

### Digging Deeper

Read Hebrews 3:12–4:10

After warning his readers about Israel’s disobedience in Heb. 3:12–19, the author begins chapter four with the declaration that “a promise remains of entering His rest” (Heb. 4:1). In other words, he is saying that the gospel invitation is still open to all—Jews and Gentiles—who will believe. Therefore, he admonishes his readers, “Let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it” (Heb. 4:1).

The only sure-fire way to make sure that one will eventually obtain the promised rest of salvation that comes by faith alone is to measure one’s obedience, which is a barometer of one’s faith in God. Lifelong disobedience is a sign of a lack of faith, while true faith will result in a trajectory of obedience. Indeed, again appealing to the exodus event, the author notes that “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” (Heb. 4:2).

In Heb. 4:3–10 the author makes the point that it is foolish to not believe in God’s promises, for God’s promised rest of salvation is an event “finished from the foundation of the world” (Heb. 4:3; cf. Matt. 25:35; John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). It is finished. Salvation is freely available to all. Said differently, the picture of God resting from his work during the creation week (cf. Gen. 2:1–4) ought to be a reminder to us that we have ceased from our strivings and now rest in Christ through salvation.

### Bible Study Questions

*Read Hebrews 3:7-19, 4:1-11*

1. Read Psalm 95:

Psalm 95 was regularly used in first century synagogue worship. In it there are two main parts; an invitation and a **positive** exhortation. What do those main parts teach? What does Psalm 95 have to do with our Hebrews passage?

2. Verses 7-11 of chapter 3 constitute a serious warning. What are the Hebrews and us being warned of?

The present passage is being used to draw similarities between ancient Israel in the wilderness and the present circumstances of the Hebrews of Italy. Both faced trying times and crisis of belief.

### 3. Read 3:12-19

How does this section reveal a pastor's heart? Knowing this pastor's care for the Hebrews to whom he is writing, has your opinion about the tone of this section changed? What is the result of an unbelieving heart? What happens when we are deceived by sin? What are the consequences of unbelief? (v.19) In spite of all that God had **demonstrated** to his people, they grumbled in unbelief. What had God demonstrated to the Hebrew Christians? What has he demonstrated to us? (Romans 3:21-26)

### 4. Read 4:1-11

Discuss the following from Raymond Brown.

“It is true that no believer can hope to achieve his own sanctification no matter how hard he tries. It is God's work to make us holy. But neither can any Christian hope to be conformed to the likeness of Christ in his everyday life simply by making sure that he does nothing about it. It is a strenuous, costly business to be a Christian. Believers must *strive* to enter the rest of the people of God. (Hebrews 4:11) Christian pilgrims in the contemporary world must realize that, in light of a passage such as this, it will not do to confess a merely nominal allegiance to Christian truth or pay occasional lip service in meetings and services to faith in Christ.”

## Group Application Questions

1. Have you ever doubted your salvation because of your lack of obedience toward God? What should believers do when they struggle with assurance of salvation?
2. Do you think that most people who attend church have saving faith? How could you appropriately confront someone whose faith does not seem authentic?
3. What can you do to encourage fellow believers whose lives are more characterized by anxiety than by the promised rest they have in Christ?

## Prayer

Read Psalm 119:41-48

1. Praise God that his mercy and salvation has come to us through Jesus Christ.
2. Confess ways that you have not trusted and remember God's Word this week.
3. Thank God that his Word is both powerful and delightful in our lives.
4. Ask God to make his Word clearer to us this week as we read and study it.

\*Digging Deeper and Group Application Questions were adapted from Richland Hills Community Church, Kent Hughes' Hebrews Commentary (An Anchor for the Soul), and The NIV Application Commentary by George H. Guthrie.

