

Sent: Wednesday, 19 October 2016 1438
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Hebrews 4

The "big idea" of Hebrews 4 is about finding "rest"! The promise of true rest that's "remaining" and "available" and something you really do not want to miss! Whether believer or unbeliever! It comes only through a relationship with God who, the author of Hebrews says, "spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways; and, in these last days, has spoken to us through His Son...through Whom also He made the world" (Hebrews 1:2).

In a way, this passage (Hebrews 4), as "Shepherd's Notes" notes, gives a "thumbnail sketch of the interaction between God and man in history"! It was God Who introduced the whole concept of "rest" after He finished His work of creation! Not that He needed to rest from labors for Himself, but as a model for man! Adam and Eve probably had a taste of that true rest, "walking with God in the garden in the cool of the evening," that is until the "fall" after which Adam and Eve "hid themselves from the presence of God" (Genesis 3:8) and the relationship was broken! The "rest is history"!

After The Fall, God set in motion His eternal plan and purpose to restore man to that relationship. He called Abraham and established a people and a nation and a "promised land" (the land of Canaan) where, among other things, they would find "rest"! However, suffice it to say, that the "children of Israel," God's chosen people, did not find true rest under Moses and Joshua, as Hebrews 4 notes. Therefore, it remained open and unfulfilled even at the time of David, long after Israel had been in the land, as evidenced by the fact that Psalm 95 spoke of it coming on "another day"!

The author of Hebrews tells his readers that their forefathers were "not able to enter that rest because of unbelief"! They "did not profit from the word they heard! The Word of God! Because it was "not accompanied by faith"! Therefore, there "remained" a promise of rest!

All that changed with the coming of Christ and His "substitutionary work" on the cross! Hebrews 4:3 proclaims that, "we who have (now) believed have entered that rest"! At the time of salvation, a person "enters that rest"!

We see from this passage the criticality of hearing and believing the "good news" of the Gospel of Christ! The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 10:9-10,17, "that if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation. So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God!"

The Apostle John quotes the very words of Jesus in John 5:24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life!"

Jesus also says in Matthew 11-28-29: "Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest! Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul."

We see, in Hebrews and elsewhere in Scripture, the criticality of the Word of God in salvation in finding "rest for our soul" and in living life in this world! Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the Word of

God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged 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! 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 Word of God is like a "two-edged sword" in the sense that it exposes and condemns the impact and horrors of sin and death, but gives comfort and nourishment and brings peace and joy and rest (and lots more!) to those who believe and follow Him! The "Shepherd's Notes" notes that the Word of God is the "strongest possible antidote to taking a destructive path"!

The Word in Hebrews 4:9 says that there remains (still!) a rest – a Sabbath rest! – for the people of God! The ultimate rest that God instituted in the beginning (which we cited in Genesis) and so we have come full circle!

Hagner writes, "The people of God, now understood to be the church, have been provided with a Sabbath rest, made possible...by the finished work of Jesus Christ. That great reality of Sabbath rest, with its security, well-being, and peace, is the rightful inheritance of the saints. Though in its fullness, Sabbath rest will be realized only in the eschaton (i.e., the final age to come), it can be experienced now. Thus, we are encouraged to, "make every effort to enter that rest, to experience it ever anew in the "today" that God gives us!"

Therefore, while we often struggle through this life and even experience times of "unrest in our spirits" (even as the Apostle Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 2:13), we are no longer alone! It is from the Word of God (the Bible) – in fact, in Hebrews 4:14-16 – that we learn that, "...since we (also) have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God... who can sympathize with our weakness... we can draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and grace to help in time of need!" Wow!

I have to leave you with one more verse! The words of Jesus in John 14:27-28: "Peace I leave with you! My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. You heard that I said to you, "I go away, and I will come (again!) to you!"

There is a great old hymn that really captures, I think, the real essence of this lesson called "My Faith Has Found a Resting Place"! Written in the early 1900's by Eliza Edmonds Hewitt, who served as superintendent of the Northern Home for Friendless Children in Philadelphia and was an invalid for most of her life! Here are some of the words (I'm singing it as I write!):

"My faith has found a resting place, not in device or creed: I trust in the Ever Living One, His wounds for me shall plead! I need no other argument, I need no other plea; it is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me!" There are three more verses! Maybe we can sing it together next week!

Men, have a great – and restful – week! Now on to Lesson #5 and more on the great "High Priesthood of Christ"!

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