

*For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant.”*

– Deuteronomy 31:19-20

Sadly though, as the Lord pointed out, despite the fact that Moses had spent forty years teaching the wilderness generation, they still did not learn or understand the knowledge of God. Their hearts were hard and rebellious. They did not inhale the words of God, so they could not exhale faith in God.

And so, when they were given the same “No Water” test in 1405 BC that they had been given forty years earlier in 1445 BC they again failed miserably with the same hardness of heart and bitterness toward Moses and God.

In fact, their statements at the time indicate their minds were hopelessly deluded with the kind of worldly thinking that suppressed the knowledge of God and misrepresented the facts of reality. While remembering Egypt - the land of their oppression, abuse and slavery - as good, they described their resting place with the Lord as “this evil place”. They remembered the land of their slavery as a kind of paradise with grain, figs, vines, pomegranates and water, but the wilderness, where the Lord had daily manifested his works, Words, and ways as evil. They were calling evil good and good evil. The account of this event is recorded in Numbers 20:1-13:

*And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh...  
Now there was no water for the congregation.  
And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against*

*Aaron. And the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place?*

*It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.”*

*Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces.*

*And the glory of the Lord appeared to them...*

Numbers 20:1-13 occurs 40 years later. This Meribah is different from the “Massah Meribah” of Exodus 17, which was just a few days outside of Egypt. Numbers 20 took place in the Desert of Zin while Israel was staying at Kadesh. There, Moses was told to speak to the rock, but instead he struck the rock. This was called the waters of Meribah because Israel quarreled with the Lord.

Based on their history, the Israelite believers should have faced their “no water” problem by resting in faith and believing that the Lord had a plan, a purpose and a provision. They should have gained confidence over the last forty years by having seen and heard the Lord’s works, words and ways. But there had been no imbibing of these truths into their disillusioned souls. After forty years of instruction and experience this generation should have been able to exhale faith in God from souls having inhaled truth, while resting peacefully in the knowledge of God. But they had failed. Because of their unbelief it was impossible for them to enter into God’s rest. It was not that God was forbidding them to enter - but that they had allowed themselves to become incapable of it.

Looking back, David would write 400 years later from Jerusalem inside the Promised Land to warn his own generation to avoid the same mistake and not miss out on the Lord's rest. In his warning, David quotes the Lord's words that explain the wilderness generation's situation: *"they have not known my ways, therefore I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest'"* (Psalm 95:10-11).

Once again it is clear that God was not punishing them by keeping them out, but giving up on them after forty years of trying to get them into his rest. The fact that they could not enter God's rest was the simple result of their refusal to learn the ways of the Lord. Since they refused to learn for forty long years, the opportunity was taken away. It was over. They died and fell in the wilderness, having never learned to trust their Creator, Deliverer and Provider. They missed out on the chance to live their lives in God's rest - and, it appears, they missed the chance to enter an eternal life of rest with the Lord, as well.

In 63 AD, a New Testament letter addressing believers in the Jerusalem church used the example of the wilderness generation and David's advice to his own generation as a platform to call them to secure their souls in the rest of God. These believers had faced persecution from unbelieving Jews and were about 36 months away from their nation starting a war with the Roman Empire that would result in the total devastation of their culture, land and holy city.

Considering their present suffering and the great turmoil to come, these believers needed more than just a vague religious concept of a home in heaven someday - they needed a living faith that not only guaranteed eternal life in the future but also secured their souls today, as they lived in union with their Savior God through daily struggles, cultural oppression, and eventual national overthrow. They may have had hope in Christ for eternity, but what about

hope for today? Would they collapse and put God on trial the moment they faced hardship, persecution, and the loss of everything they had?

A true faith is enduring in life and in eternity. If your faith collapses in life, it is possible you do not really have faith for eternity. If the wilderness generation could not trust the Lord for water after they had seen him deliver them from Egypt, it is possible for us also to reject the Lord in life even though we claim to have recognized his deliverance from sin and death. If the Lord has delivered you from sin and death to bring you into his eternal kingdom, then he also has a plan and purpose for everything you face in your life - both good and bad.

If you cannot handle life, then you need to learn God's ways and make every effort to enter his rest. Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Hear his Word and learn his ways. Prepare your soul for life today.

**Prepare your soul today by learning God's ways and making every effort to enter his rest.**

The New Testament letter referenced above is the Book of Hebrews. It was written to believers in Jerusalem around 63 AD using David's words from 1000 BC when he addressed the failure of the wilderness generation, who lived during the years of 1445-1405 BC. He writes:

*Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,  
 "Today, if you hear his voice,  
 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion  
 ("Rebellion" from Ps. 95:8 Hebrew "Meribah" from "rib" meaning  
 "argument" or "lawsuit"),  
 on the day of testing in the wilderness,  
 ("testing" from Ps. 95:8 Hebrew "massah" meaning "trial", "test")  
 where your fathers put me to the test  
 ("test" from Ps. 95:9 Hebrew "nasah" meaning "to test", "to try")*

*and saw my works for forty years.  
Therefore I was provoked with that generation,  
and said, 'They always go astray in their heart;  
they have not known my ways.'  
As I swore in my wrath,  
'They shall not enter my rest.'"*

*Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.  
But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.  
For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.  
As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?  
And with whom was he provoked for forty years?  
Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?  
So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.*

*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.  
For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.  
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.  
For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."  
And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest."*

*Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."  
For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.  
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.  
Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.  
And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."*

Hebrews 3:7-4:13

Interestingly, the admonition, "strive to enter that rest" can sound contradictory. The word translated "strive" in Hebrews 4:11 (Greek *spoudazo*) means "to make haste, to give diligence to, and to be swift". It is sometimes translated as "make every effort".

The author was therefore admonishing his readers to swiftly be diligent to make haste to "enter that rest"!

He is therefore also telling us that as long as today is called "today" we are to make every effort to enter God's rest. And since from the beginning, every day has been called "today", the Lord has offered this rest to every generation in history. We enter God's rest when we hear, understand, and continually trust the Word of God, which reveals the ways, the plans, and the purpose of the Lord. The Word

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.

**Rest for the soul happens when we are confident in God’s plan.**

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.

**Those who understood and trusted the Word of God were able to stabilize themselves in the midst of confusion, problems, and persecution.**

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.

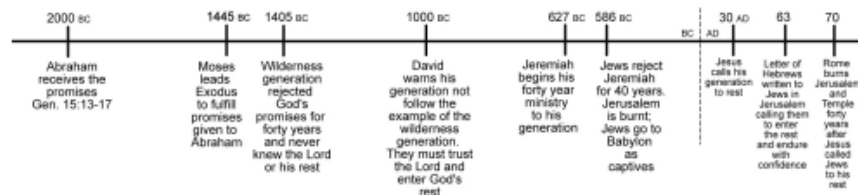
Hear and understand the promises of the Lord *today* so that you may enter his rest.

*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.

We will need to be faithful to the Lord - even while everyone else is

