



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
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Sermon Title: The Sabbath Rest!

Sermon Text: Hebrews 4.1-10

Related Text: Mark 2.23-28

## I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

What things do you participate in that give you a good sense of accomplishment? When you imagine heaven, do you picture similar activities?

## II. Introduction

The author of Hebrews continues to encourage and exhort the Jewish Christians to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, and to do so, develops the idea of entering into God's rest. The concept of God's rest stems from God's own "resting" after the divine activity of creation (Genesis 1.1-2.3). "Rest" is the promise given to Israel while enslaved in Egypt – rest in the land promised to them. And the idea of entering God's rest is articulated by Psalm 95.7-11, suggesting that there is still a "rest" to come.

## III. Study the Context – Read Hebrews 4.1-10

- 1) Notice the first word, "therefore." To what does it refer?
- 2) In referring back to the promise to Israel of entering into God's rest (in the Promised Land) and the rebellion of the generation in the wilderness, the author repeats the warning to the Hebrew Christians to persevere in trust in Jesus Christ. How does the phrase in verse 1 "none of you be found to have fallen short of it" repeat the call to "hold firmly to the end the confidence we had at first" found in 3.14?
- 3) In verses 2 and 3 the author equates the message of God that Israel will be led to the land where they will find "rest" with the gospel message that through faith in Jesus Christ people enter into God's "rest". How does the author relate hearing and faith?
- 4) In verses 3 (second half) through 5 the author takes his readers to the Genesis account of creation. Take a moment to scan through Genesis 1.1 to 2.3. How would you define what the meaning of "God rested from all his work" in 2.2? If "God rested from all his work" but continues to uphold the cosmos, what does "God rested" denote?
- 5) In Exodus 31.12-17 God commands the keeping of a Sabbath – a day of rest. Take a look at this passage. How is the keeping of a day of rest from one's usual work a "sign" of relationship with God (verse 13)? How does keeping the Sabbath enable people to "know that I am the Lord" (verse 13)?
- 6) Look at Mark 2.23-28. What significance does Jesus give to the Sabbath Day? For whom is it established? Who is to benefit from it?

Note: The Sabbath Day is a gift to human beings. The Israelites were made holy (or "set apart") by God. The call to take a day each week to suspend normal work and to focus on God, family, relationships, and spiritual renewal was one of the ways God's people become holy. The Sabbath also gives us a picture of God's rest. God "took a Sabbath day" following the work of creation. However, God remains very active in the work of sustaining the cosmos, relating to human beings, bringing new life through Jesus Christ, and much more. This suggests that Sabbath rest is more of a moving from work that is toilsome (since the Fall when sin impacted humankind's work in a negative way) to work or activity that is filled with delight, renewing, and re-creating. Think of an activity you enjoy – gardening, a sport or a hobby. When these things are done without turmoil or frustration they (some of which involve work) are truly "restful".

- 7) Back to Hebrews 4. Verses 8 through 10 refer to Joshua leading the new generation of Israelites into the land and into God's "rest." But, the author (with Psalm 95.7-11 in mind) knows that God still spoke of another rest – beyond the rest of the people being in Canaan again. This "rest" is the result of trusting in Jesus with a persevering faith.
- 6) But, look at verse 10 again. If anyone enters this rest (trusts in Jesus) "also rests from his/her work." From what work do they rest?

Note: One way of understanding this "rest from one's work" is that the believer is able to rest from any personal effort to earn God's forgiveness and grace and enter into "rest" by entering into a trusting, faith-based relationship with God. Another way of seeing this is that by trusting in Jesus, one enters into God's kingdom in which work is given new significance – work, caring for others, parenting, etc., all take on a new dimension of participating with God in the activity of the Kingdom. This also points forward to our involvement with Jesus Christ, reigning with him in heaven – that is, doing significant activity (work) in a fully-restored world in which work is truly delightful (look at Revelation 21.1-4). Then – when we cross over to heaven and ultimately exist in a fully restored earth in which God is fully present – we will know the full meaning of "god's rest."

#### IV. Apply It – Reflect and Respond

- 1) Do you practice the keeping of a Sabbath Day – a day for activities that help you focus on God and important relationships, and by which you are renewed? If not, what steps can you take toward developing that pattern?
- 2) Do you think much about heaven? When you do, what do you imagine it to be like? The Bible pictures heaven as a fully restored earth in which God is fully present, where sin, disease and death are destroyed, and where resurrected human beings will be engaged in amazingly delightful work. How does this description encourage and motivate you?
- 3) Jesus Christ is active now making things new. What things in your life need to be made new – Spiritually? Emotionally? Relationships? Behaviors? Would you ask our risen Lord to make you new?