

## Hebrews 4:1-8 – Rest for God’s People

God’s Son, is superior to the angels. Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses. Moses was faithful in God’s house as a servant while Jesus was faithful over God’s house as a Son. In the context of the comparison between Jesus and Moses, Psalm 95:7-11 was quoted. Moses did not lead the people of Israel across the Jordan into the Promised Land. The people who followed Moses, who were at least 20 years old when they refused to enter the Promised Land, all died in the wilderness except for Caleb and Joshua (Numbers 14:20-35, 26:63-65). The message seems clear. Don’t fail to enter the Promised Land of heaven. Learn, as a warning, from those who were redeemed from Egypt and followed Moses in the wilderness and who never reached the Promised Land. Tonight’s passage is focused on entering God’s rest.

### **Read Hebrews 4:1-5.**

While many died in the wilderness and did not enter God’s rest, verse 1 states that there remains a promise of entering God’s rest for “us”. What warning was given in verse 1? ESV has “fail to reach it”. KJV and NASB have “come short of it”. NIV has “have fallen short of it”. (4:1)

The readers/hearers of Hebrews had good news preached to them just as the people in the days of Moses. ESV, NASB and NIV all have “good news” while KJV has “gospel”. “Gospel” is a valid translation of this word. Do you think this verse is talking about the message of Jesus Christ or is it talking in general of God’s good promise of entering his rest? (4:2)

In verse 2, why didn’t the message benefit the people during the time of Moses? ESV has “they were not united by faith with those who listened”. NIV is similar with “because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed”. KJV has “not being mixed with faith in them that heard it”. NASB has “because they were not united with those who listened with faith”. Which interpretation do you believe best fits the context? Did they not receive rest 1) because they didn’t have faith when they heard, 2) because they didn’t have faith like those who listened (obeyed) or 3) because they were not like those who believed and obeyed? (4:2)

In verse 3, who enters into God’s rest? Psalm 95:11 was quoted for the second time (3:11, 4:3, 4:5). Rest is mentioned in 3:11, 3:18, 4:1, 4:3 (twice), 4:5, 4:10, 4:11. The one other NT mention of this specific noun is Acts 7:49. The related verb is used in 4:4, 4:8 and 4:10. The one other NT mention of this verb is in Acts 14:18. Obviously, rest is a key theme of verses 4:1-8. (4:3)

In the middle of verse 3, ESV, NKJV, NASB and NIV have “They [certainly NASB] shall not [never NIV] enter my rest”. KJV has “If they shall enter into my rest”. The word at the beginning of the sentence is used over 500 times in the NT and it is most often translated as “if”. The Greek grammar BDF 372(4), 454(5), says that in this context, “if” following an oath, the proper translation is “certainly not”. At the end of the verse there was a switch to creation with the declaration that “[his] works were finished from the foundation of the world” (ESV). NIV has “creation” for “foundation”. (4:3)

In verse 4, Genesis 2:2 was quoted. What does that verse have to say about rest? What commandment in the Old Testament was based on this statement in Genesis 2:2? In what ways did this commandment change the lifestyle of the exiles and their descendants? Verse 5 repeated Psalm 95:11b for the third time. (4:4-5)

### **Read Hebrews 4:6-8.**

Based on verses 6 and 7, what in Psalm 95:7-11 indicates that the promise to enter God’s rest is still open to us? Why didn’t the redeemed exiles enter God’s rest? In 3:19, the exiles did not enter because of “unbelief” (ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV). Is there a difference between “unbelief” in 3:19 and “disobedience” in 4:6? In 4:6, ESV, NKJV, NASB and NIV all have “disobedience”. KJV has “unbelief”. The words in 3:19 and 4:6 are different words which can, based on the context, overlap in meaning. (4:6-7)

In verse 7, the writer of Hebrews observed that David wrote in his time, “today” do not harden your hearts. What was the writer’s interpretation and application of Psalm 95:7b-8a based on Hebrews 4:6-8? (4:6-8)

If you were reading this letter in its original language or in the KJV, verse 8 might make you do a double-take. KJV has “if Jesus had given them rest”. ESV, NKJV, NASB and NIV all have “Joshua” instead of “Jesus”. The word for “Joshua” and “Jesus” are the same word in the original language, Greek. So, who didn’t give the people rest? Jesus or Joshua, the son of Nun? Which makes sense in the context of the chapter? (4:8)

The writer of Hebrews mentioned God’s rest on the seventh day after he finished creating the heavens and the earth. He also mentioned the rest of entering the Promised Land in the days of Joshua. Joshua did lead the people across the Jordan and into the Promised Land. Joshua 21:44a says, “And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers.” But after these two rests, David implied that there was still a rest which was in the future. What was that rest?