

# Jesus gives better rest than Joshua

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Date: 05 September 2021

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[ 0 : 00 ] before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Amen. Jesus gives better rest. Have you ever, or have you this week perhaps, found yourself desperate for rest, exhausted and at the end of yourself and longing for rest? I imagine for a lot of us, that's a silly question because we are perpetually busy, busy, busy and life is often exhausting.

Well, for the last couple of weeks, we have been watching on the television what is described as the world's toughest race. It was taking place in Fiji. It's called the Eco Challenge, where contestants had 11 days to travel 671 kilometers across parts of Fiji. It was a brutal course.

So, there were, for example, they had to swim in almost freezing water conditions for eight kilometers. They had to climb a thousand-meter waterfall. They had to build their own rafts and then sail for 40 kilometers downstream. It was an incredibly tough race. And along the course, there were various checkpoints. And if you didn't reach the checkpoint in time, the team was knocked off the challenge. And so, there was various checkpoints, but then there were four base camps.

And the base camps were really significant because there you could dry your clothes, you could get warm food, you could meet your crew, and you could get to sleep. And so, it was amazing.

You know, some of the toughest people in the world, obviously competing in this race, but so often as the days went on, you would see contestants crying, crying their eyes out as they reached camp because they were just so tired and so glad for a chance to rest for more than a few minutes. No wonder in those kind of conditions. But, you know, those are extreme. But our life, often, if we're honest, it can be really exhausting, can't it? And the Christian faith can also be an exhausting journey. And so, the promise of rest that we find in the Bible, therefore, should strike us as profoundly good news. For those of us who were here last week, as Craig was preaching for us, he said the message there was to keep listening to Jesus so as not to miss out on God's rest.

[ 2 : 44 ] And that theme really continues. And so, this week, we're going to think about, well, what is this rest that's on offer that keeps getting referred to? Why is it that we say that Jesus offers better rest?

And then, how do you and I enter the rest that Jesus offers? Because if rest is a wonderful gift, then we need to know how we can get it. So, first point, Jesus offers better rest than Joshua.

Now, let's begin very briefly following the logic of our author. So, he begins in the first three verses back with the wilderness generation. So, the people that came out of slavery, led by Moses.

But what happened to them? The message they heard was of no value to them because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. There was this wilderness generation who missed out on the rest that was on offer to them because they lacked faith in God's Word of promise.

And so, there's a warning from the author. But at the same time, there's hope. Because in verse 1, we're told the promise of entering this rest still stands. And in verse 6, therefore, since it still remains for some to enter that rest. So, there is hope for us. There is still a rest from God that's on offer. But the wilderness generation, they didn't receive it because they lacked faith.

[ 4 : 11 ] So, then our author moves from Moses to the next leader to Joshua to think about what happened in his day. So, if you've got your Bible, verses 7 and 8. In verse 8, we read, if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day.

So, he draws attention to Psalm 95. We saw Psalm 95 last week. And Psalm 95 was written by David many, many years after the people of God had entered into the promised land.

And the point that our author is making is that if Joshua and entering the promised land was the end of the promise of rest, God wouldn't have inspired the writing of Psalm 95. Wouldn't have inspired David to say, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. The land, the promised land was not, in other words, the fulfillment of the rest that God has in store for his people. But, verse 9,

there remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God. So, the promise of entering that rest still stands. The wilderness generation didn't get it, Joshua, and his generation didn't experience fulfillment, but the rest and the opportunity of it still stands. What's the encouragement then to the church? The church in the first century, the church in the 21st century. Verse 1, let us be careful not to fall short of it. Verse 2, let's be careful to value the rest that God is offering.

Verse 11, let's make every effort to enter that rest. The basic point is God promises rest. This rest is clearly a big deal, and we are to learn from history so we don't miss out. Okay, so hopefully that much is clear, but the big question still to answer is, well, what is this rest, and why is it so important to our author? Why should it be important to us? And what becomes clear is this is much more than, you know, having a few hours in a camp to get warm and well-fed before you carry on on a trek. This is much more than carving out 30 minutes of me time in the middle of a busy day. This has even got much more in view than just a regular keeping of the Sabbath. Now, all those things are good, especially keeping the Sabbath is good, and it's refreshing, but this is pointing to deep, spiritual, eternal rest that we find in Jesus when we come to know and enjoy God as our Lord, as our Savior. To help us see that, three words we can pick out from our passage. The first verse 9 is the word Sabbath. Sabbath, of course, is associated with the idea of rest. And what we discover, as the author talks about Sabbath, is he is saying this rest that's on offer to us is an invitation to enter into God's rest, to rest just as God rested, having completed the work of creation. And that Sabbath rest is then built into the life of the people of God, wasn't it? So, the Ten Commandments. But what's interesting about the Ten Commandments is that in the book of Exodus, so Exodus chapter 20, where you find the Ten Commandments first recorded, they're told to keep the Sabbath because God rested on the seventh day. So, Sabbath there is tied to creation, entering the rest of one's Creator. But then in Deuteronomy 5, where the Ten Commandments are recorded again, it's not about creation. They're told to keep the Sabbath because God rescued them from slavery and took them out of Egypt towards the promised land. So, Sabbath there is connected to the idea of redemption and rescue.

So, for Adam and Eve, go back to Genesis, day one for them was to be a day of rest, resting in God's place and enjoying God's presence. And of course, that was the ideal for their every day and for our every day that whatever we're doing, we're enjoying the presence of God. But the Sabbath was that in particular. But then for Israel out of Egypt, as they took their Sabbath, they were remembering that God had given them rest from slavery, rest from oppression to become God's people, resting so they could worship their Redeemer God. So, true rest isn't just stopping our activity.

[ 9 : 12 ] True rest is knowing and enjoying life with God, our Creator, our Redeemer. So, then we can see why it becomes a big deal for our author. So, Sabbath helps us to see why rest is a big deal. I also want to take us to the idea of sacrifice, which isn't in our text. But if you look with me at verse 10, we read these words, anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works.

Now, if you've been with us since we started this study, you will know that the author likes to draw from the Old Testament. He likes to find references, images, and apply them, and to see often them fulfilled in Christ. Now, we also, if we read ahead, we know that for the next four or five chapters, our author is going to be concentrating attention on Jesus as high priest and sacrifice.

So, when it says in verse 10, anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, it is very likely that this is a reference to the Day of Atonement, which you find in Leviticus chapter 23.

So, if you have a Bible, you can turn there or you can listen. I'm just a couple of verses here, so I hope that we'll see the connection. So, chapter 23 of Leviticus, verse 26, the Lord said to Moses, the 10th day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves and present a food offering to the Lord. Do not do any work on that day because it is the Day of Atonement when atonement is made for you before the Lord your God.

Then in verse 31, you shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come wherever you live. It's very likely that these works that are being recalled here in Hebrews 4 takes us to the Day of Atonement when the people are told, rest, because God is working, and God is working to atone. God is working to make you clean from your sin. That's not something that the people could participate in, so they rested, and God worked, and God atoned for sin. God is the one who established right relationship between himself and his people. So, the rest is a rest from any attempt at a do-it-yourself religion, a religion based on our works and our effort, that exhausting treadmill of trying various practices and rituals and obedience and observance that never gets

anywhere closer to God and his kingdom that never bring us into that deep rest that's only found when we trust in Jesus.

[12:17] One last thing to notice at this point is the idea of a signpost. So, we were thinking about signs this morning, so we'll think about the idea of a signpost. Verse 8, if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. The rest in the promised land was pointing forward to future rest. Life in the promised land points the people of God forward to a greater hope still to come. There is a book by Vaughan Roberts called *God's Big Picture*, and he helpfully captures the goal of God in salvation as being God's people in God's place under God's rule and enjoying his blessing. And now, that was beginning to be worked out at the promised land, but that was never completed in Joshua's day or David's day or Solomon's day. It will only be completed under the rule of Christ. So, one big question still to answer. So, hopefully we've seen that rest is a big deal. It's really important biblically. But the big question still to answer is, how does Jesus offer better rest than Joshua? Why am I saying that? It's because the rest that Jesus offers is so much greater. You know, when you think about Israel led by Joshua and the rest that they enjoyed. So, they had the end of their 40 years of wilderness wandering, the point at which they are finished with fighting so they can take possession of the land and begin to settle down, that rest would be sweet, wouldn't it? No longer wandering in the desert, no longer fighting enemies.

But we know from Old Testament history that that rest that they enjoyed was short-lived. Often because of lack of faith and because of sin, enemies would come, oppression would come, exile ultimately would come. So, that rest was never complete and always pointed forward to something greater. So, we need to see how does Jesus supply that something greater? How is He that rest who satisfies? Remember our verse at the beginning, Matthew 11, 28, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. There's a wonderful promise that Jesus makes. Who is Jesus? Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. The book of Hebrews has reminded us in so many ways. Jesus is both our Creator and our Redeemer. Jesus is the one who restores us to right relationship with God, which is at the heart of the Sabbath. It is in Jesus that we can live knowing and enjoying our God.

So, Jesus fulfills the Sabbath. Jesus gives that deep rest that we need. What about on the theme of sacrifice? Well, Jesus fulfills the Day of Atonement.

Jesus is both the whole burnt offering, that vivid picture of the just anger of God against sin, and it's poured out on Jesus at the cross. But Jesus is also the scapegoat of the Day of Atonement, the one who carries away the sin of His people. So, we rest in Jesus, because in Him and only in Him, we know that our sin has been paid for. No condemnation now I dread. In Jesus, there is deep peace for our soul, knowing all is well between us and our God. And when we think about the time of Joshua as a signpost, we need to recognize that Jesus is the destination, that that rest was pointing forward to. Jesus is the cold. Jesus is the rest. That soul rest is only found in Him.

[16:16] That spiritual, eternal rest that we were made for, we only find in Him. And so, the author is encouraging us to trust in Jesus, to fix our eyes on Jesus. And when we do, we're heading towards our true home. We're heading towards eternal rest. When the trials and the journey of faith will all be complete, where rest with Him is the prize that we will enjoy forever. So, Jesus offers better rest than Joshua. So, it's important for us to reflect on our lives and to ask ourselves, well, which Joshua am I following? Jesus, of course, means Joshua. God saves. The Joshua of the Old Testament, he gave rest that was largely temporary and physical. We can pursue rest that is temporary and physical. We can live for our own comfort. We can spend a lot of energy pursuing our own pleasure. We can prioritize the physical over the spiritual. Now, we can be so taken up with now that we fail to take eternity seriously.

We need to choose which Joshua to follow. Will we pursue spiritual and eternal rest? Will we rest on Jesus alone for salvation? Will we believe, trust, live on the reality that peace with God is the greatest rest that we can ever know, even while life is crazy busy? Will we live backwards? Will we recognize that if eternal rest is the goal, then I need to have that set in my agenda day by day by day? Because Jesus offers better rest. The second point that our author would make and does make very forcefully is that we should make every effort to enter and to enjoy that rest. I was reminded of a quote by Churchill in the House of Commons in 1948.

It said, those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat its mistakes. And the author of the book of Hebrews would clearly agree with that sentence and that sentiment. And he urges in so many ways in chapters three and four for Christians not to seek rest in any other way, not to try and

find rest from any other person other than the Lord Jesus. And so, the message of this section is really God has promised rest, and so we are invited to trust Him. Jesus gives us that rest so we are to believe in Him, to understand that enjoying that rest requires our faith to be working, so we need to strive to enter and to enjoy that rest.

So, by way of application and to see how He encourages us to make every effort, there are three lettuces. Sounds a bit like a vegetable, but let us. First of all, let us fear in verse 1. In the Greek, so in our English Bible here it says, therefore, since the promise of entering as rest still stands, let us be careful. In the Greek, it begins, let us fear. There's the emphasis, let us fear that we don't miss out on the promised rest. Let us fear in case we make the same mistakes as Israel did in the past. They were promised rest, but they failed to believe, so they didn't enter. It's a lesson for the journey of faith. Craig was speaking to us last week about the importance of finishing well. People in Moses' generation didn't finish well. We have to watch out so we don't miss out on God's rest. He says to them in verse 1, don't fall short. He says to us, don't fall short of that rest.

[ 20 : 19 ] Made me think of the wilderness generation. Perhaps they could see the promised land, knowing that they would never enter. As despots so near, but yet so far. That can be true of us in churches. We can be around religion and around the Bible and around God's people and be so close, but be so far, because we don't have our faith in Christ.

Let us fear that that's not the case. The end of our section, verses 12 and 13, a really powerful image reminding us to let God's Word do God's work. The image there of the sword that cuts deep, that sword that penetrates, that exposes our hearts, shows a sin and unbelief. It reveals where our heart truly lies.

Our author is saying, let God's Word do God's work to expose where we stand before God so we would act, so we wouldn't miss out on the rest. So let us fear. Let us also have faith.

Read again verses 6 and 7. Therefore, since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, God again set a certain day calling it today. Why did that generation miss out? They missed out because of disobedience.

So our author takes us back to Psalm 95 and the today of Psalm 95, the day of opportunity for faith, that invitation to listen, to believe, to hold on to God's promise and God's Savior.

[ 22 : 12 ] In verse 2, there's the invitation to share the faith of those who obeyed. Not everybody in Moses' generation missed out on the promised land. So we're invited to share the faith of those who obeyed.

And again, that reminds us that you and I, we are responsible for answering the invitation. God has done everything necessary for our salvation, but we still need to respond with faith.

We're told in verse 2 that the generation under Moses, they had the good news proclaimed to them. What was their good news? Their good news was God has said He will save you, and He will bring you to the promised land, and He will make you His own people so you can enjoy life and the land and you can have peace and you can have rest, but they didn't have faith in that good news.

Well, how much more good news have we heard in Jesus? There we see how God's salvation comes to be in His own Son dying for us. There we see in the resurrection of Jesus that eternal life is guaranteed for all those who have faith in Jesus. There's so much good news, but we need to be careful to believe it. There's a promise in verse 3, now we who have believed enter that rest.

Believing leads to entering the rest. To have faith means that we know God's presence in our lives by His Spirit.

We know God's love in our lives as our Father. We know God's salvation through His Son. So our author says to us, let us have faith in Jesus. And our last let us is, let us fight.

[ 24 : 07 ] This is in verse 11. Let us therefore make every effort. Let us strive. Back to the world's toughest race.

There was one point during, I think it was during the three-hour swim through this freezing cold water, where one of the team captains, trying to encourage the other three members who were like practically hypothermic, he said to them, keep moving or we die. What's the message of the author? Book of Hebrews, let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest so that no one will perish by following the example of disobedience. We need to keep up the fight of faith. We need that urgent effort that clings to Christ. Faith is active, active to fight our sin, active to believe God's promise, active to seek that fellowship that will encourage us to persevere. Jesus promises eternal rest. Jesus promises salvation from sin. Jesus promises the deep joy of knowing God for now and

