

"The Rest Available in Jesus Christ"

Part 2

Hebrews 3:7-4:16

Introduction: Tonight as we come back to our study in the book of Hebrews we are in chapter 3 where we find the second warning given by the writer to the Hebrew believers which he was writing to. The first warning had to do with the **"So Great Salvation"** of God.

Hebrews 2:1-4

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

² *For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;*

³ *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;*

⁴ *God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

The word "salvation" here refers to ALL that is connected with our salvation. The writer is not talking about being saved he is talking about living the Christian life after we are saved. It is a reference to the New Testament teachings that were delivered to the body of Christ which were given by the Apostles to guide the entire body of Christ. He explained that those in the Old Testament who were disobedient received a "just recompence" for their disobedience.

The second warning has to deal with the **"So Great Proficiency"** of God. This second warning is seen in Hebrews 3 and 4. In Hebrews 3:7-11 the writer points back to Israel in the wilderness wanderings and he reminds his readers about how God was faithful for the entire forty years to the people of Israel. But the warning is seen in the response of the Hebrews when they were made aware of the faithfulness of God for those 40 years.

Notice Hebrews 3:7-11

The Israelites crossed the line in Number 14 when they had come to the land of Canaan. Moses had sent out the 12 spies and after 40 days they returned with the report. There were many obstacles in the land of Canaan and 10 of the spies were fearful of the challenges in the land. Joshua and Caleb however believed God would give Israel the victory over the people in Canaan and they encouraged the people to go. But the people

believed the 10 negative reports and they refused to go into the land of Canaan. That was when God swore in His wrath that they would not enter into the land of Canaan. All the numbered men of Israel would die over the next 38 years. That would be 605,550 men from 20 years old and upward.

Now the cause of all of this was a lack of faith. They had doubted God's faithfulness for the first 2 years in the wilderness and then in Numbers 14 their lack of faith was manifest in their choice not to enter the land. This pattern continued for the next 38 years. The wilderness was a test of their faith and they failed the test.

The Hebrew Christians who received this letter we are studying were also in a time of testing. They were being persecuted for their faith and they were expected to trust God for the provisions they needed. They knew of the faithfulness of God for it was seen in the sacrifice and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Many of the Hebrew Christians however were looking to turn back to the practice of Judaism.

Therefore the writer of Hebrews had 2 concerns for these people.

1. **He was concerned that some of them were not truly saved.**

Notice Hebrews 3:12, 14

2. **He was concerned their lack of faith would keep them from entering God's rest.**

Now before we go any further let me explain the spiritual picture that can be seen in the Nation of Israel. I want to show you this because the writer of Hebrews knew the importance of Old Testament shadows and types. There is a picture of the Christian life found in the Nation of Israel and that is what the writer is focused on.

He was not questioning if the people of Israel were saved or lost. He was pointing to the wilderness wanderings because they were a type of the Christian life and if we miss that we will miss the entire point that he is making. It was not about whether or not all who came out of Egypt were saved. That was not the thought in the mind of the writer. He was simply thinking about the picture that could be seen in the entire experience of Israel coming out of Egypt and traveling through the wilderness.

Now as we already looked at he had a concern for the salvation of his readers but that is not the main thought in all of this. Remember he has addressed them as believers and he knows that they are struggling with trusting God in the midst of the persecution. The

entire letter is for the purpose of encouraging them to move on in their Christian walk. So with all of that said let us consider the picture that can be seen in the Nation of Israel.

Now keep in mind that all that the writer pointed to was an Old Testament picture of the believer's life in Christ. Let me show you the picture:

1. The Salvation of the Believer

The believer's salvation is seen in the Passover Lamb that was killed in Exodus 12.

Exodus 12:1-7, 12-13

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying,

² *This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.*

³ *Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:*

⁴ *And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.*

⁵ *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:*

⁶ *And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.*

⁷ *And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.*

¹² *For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.*

¹³ *And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.*

The blood of the Passover Lamb would protect them from the judgment of God that would come upon the land of Egypt. After the application of the blood they would then be set free from the bondage and the slavery which had come upon them in Egypt.

Application:

This is a picture of our salvation. We also are protected from the judgment of God because of the blood of the Lamb that was shed for us on the cross 2000 years ago. When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior we were washed in the blood and we were then set free from the bondage and slavery of sin.

2. The baptism of the believer.

It was when Israel passed through the Red sea that they were baptized into Moses.

1 Corinthians 10:1-2

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

² And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

Now let us remember that baptism refers to IDENTIFICATION. So when Israel passed through the Red Sea and they followed the pillar of cloud they were "identifying" with Moses. He was their leader and they were identifying with him and publicly stating that they were his disciples.

Application:

This is exactly what water baptism is. Water baptism does not save us but instead it is a public demonstration of our faith in Jesus Christ. It is a public statement that tells all who see that we are identifying with Jesus Christ and we are His disciples. Let me show you what Peter said in Acts.

Acts 2:38

³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Now many people read this and believe that Peter is teaching that baptism is a REQUIREMENT for salvation. But that is not what he is saying. He was calling them to first REPENT and then to be baptized. Now we need to understand that when you identified (were baptized) with Jesus Christ in those days it was very costly. So the baptism back then would have been solid evidence that they had truly been saved. No one who was just "playing" with religion would step up and identify with Jesus because it would cost them greatly. So baptism is identification. The Israelites identified with Moses and that was a picture of our identification with Jesus Christ.

3. The learning ground of the believer.

After Israel came through the Red Sea they started into the wilderness. It would be in the wilderness that they would learn of God and His faithfulness. When Israel came into the wilderness the first thing that happened was that God gave to them the Law. The Law was given to show them the Holiness of God. They knew very little about God before the Law was given. It was through the Law that they would come to know how righteous and holy God was. They would learn how to approach Him and how to worship Him. It would be

in the wilderness that they would see His faithfulness as they experienced 3 different events.

- a. **They were short on food and God provided the manna.**

Exodus 16:2-4

- b. **They ran out of water and God brought water from the Rock.**

Exodus 17:3-6

- c. **They were attacked by the enemy and God gave them victory.**

Exodus 17:8-14

Application:

The wilderness is a picture of the early stages of the Christian's life in Christ. It is in the early stages that we learn of God and it is in the early stages that we learn of His faithfulness. It is in this stage where we are to work out our doubts and fears. This is the stage where we drink in the milk of the Word. But it is not God's will that we stay in this "wilderness" stage. Just like it was not God's that Israel continue to wander in the wilderness. He desired for them to be in Canaan.

4. The rest for the believer.

God brought Israel out of Egypt with the desire of them entering into Canaan. Canaan is not a picture of heaven because in Canaan there were battles to be fought. There will be no battles in heaven. Canaan was a land that God had promised to His people. There were battles there but God had promised to deliver the enemy into their hands. It was God's will that Israel enter into Canaan and walk in obedience to Him. If they were willing to enter into the land and walk in faith and obedience God would give them victory over the inhabitants of the land. If Israel would walk in faith and obedience they would be able to REST in God. God would fight their battles and He would provide all they needed. Let me just say that if Israel did as God had instructed there would never have been the loss of one life for Israel. We can see a picture of how God intended their life to be in Canaan in the very first battle they encountered under the leadership of Joshua. The city was Jericho and God gave them complete victory over the city. Here were the instructions given by God:

Joshua 6:1-5

Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

² *And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.*

³ *And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.*

⁴ *And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.*

⁵ *And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.*

This was not conventional warfare. Israel had no weapons of war. But at this battle they had faith and because of their faith God gave them the victory. This is a picture of the way God intended them to live. But the people who came out of Canaan would not walk by faith and therefore they never entered into the land. Instead they struggled for 40 years in the wilderness until they died.

Application:

Canaan is the picture of the victorious life of the believer. It is the place God desires for us to be as we pass through this world. It is the life of victory and it is attained by FAITH.

This is the very place where the writer of Hebrews desired for his readers to enter. But the problem was they were not walking by faith. They were wandering in the wilderness and in the wilderness they were allowing the circumstances around them to influence them and control their lives. The circumstances around them were the persecutions they were facing. They were just like the Nation of Israel in the sense that they desired to go back to "Egypt" or "the old life".

Conclusion:

This is the picture which the writer has based this entire section on. We must remember as we work our way through this section that when the writer refers to the REST he is referring to the victorious life of the believer which can only be entered into by faith.

Before we end this tonight let me just explain that in the weeks to come we will see how to enter into the REST which God has for us. This does not mean there will not be battles because there will be battles. But in this study we will see that as we walk by faith and in obedience that God will give us the victory over every sin and we can rest in Him.