

STRIVE TO ENTER GOD'S REST

Hebrews 3:7-4:13

Jesus wants you to have the fullest, most amazing experience in His kingdom¹. He doesn't want you to simply be *in* the kingdom, He wants you to *own* it and *rule* over it with Him. He wants you to be part of building a world government that actually helps people; that brings peace and prosperity to its citizens.

Jesus wants you to *share* in His kingdom; He wants you to be a *partaker*, not a spectator. He wants you to be on the field experiencing the thrill of His victory.

But the truth of the matter is that not all of us will *share* in the kingdom.

All believers will be *in* the Kingdom, but not all believers will *share* in the kingdom.

To *share* in the kingdom means to *reign with Christ* in the kingdom.

The word *share* in Hebrews 3:14 is from a Greek word that means to be a partner, a companion, a co-worker.²

What we discover in our passage is that we become *partners, companions, co-workers* of Christ in His kingdom if in this life we faithfully keep His Word. Reigning with Christ is our inheritance, but we must strive for it.

Receiving our inheritance and receiving justification salvation are two different things. We do not, can not, strive for justification salvation. We are declared righteous on the basis of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection upon which we rely as the payment of our sins. Once received, we cannot lose our justification salvation because Jesus has paid it all.

We become *brothers of Christ* by faith in His completed work on the cross (Heb. 2:11).

We become *sharers in Christ* by faithfully completing the works He has given us to do in this life (Heb. 10:35-36).

Whereas justification salvation is a gift to be received by faith, our inheritance is a reward to be earned by faithful service in this life (Matt. 25:14-30; Colossians 3:23-24; Heb. 10:35-36; Rev. 2:26). We cannot lose our justification salvation; we can lose our inheritance.

God wants you to not only receive justification salvation but He wants you to receive your inheritance. This is what the Preacher was fighting for on behalf of his beleaguered brothers and sisters. Because of persecution they were drifting away from Jesus, losing their confidence in Him and at risk of losing their inheritance.

In Hebrews 3:6 the Preacher challenged them to hold on to their confidence in Jesus.

Hebrews 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

¹ The Messianic/Millennial Kingdom, cf. Heb. 2:5, 9:28; Rev. 20:1-6.

² **μέτοχος μέτοχος**; to partake. Partaking, participating. As a noun, a partaker (Heb. 3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8), partner, companion, fellow worker (Luke 5:7; Heb. 1:9 quoted from Sept.: Ps. 45:7). Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000.

Then in 3:7-11 he gave them an example from their own history of those who lost their confidence in God and ended up losing not only their inheritance, but their lives. The challenge of the Preacher is this, "Will you fall like your forefathers?"

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' ¹¹ As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.' "

Those who left Egypt led by Moses came to Kadesh Barnea on Canaan's border. Canaan was the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants (Gen. 15:17-21). The land of Canaan was their inheritance .

But to take possession of their inheritance required them to trust in God and to do the work of conquering their enemies.

12 men spied out the land and brought back a mixed report.

Numbers 13:27-28 (ESV)

²⁷ And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large.

10 of the spies insisted Israel could not take the land. Caleb and Joshua, on the other hand, encouraged the people to trust God and go up and take the land.

What did they do? They hardened their hearts. They did not believe the message that came to them through Joshua and Caleb. After all they had seen God do in delivering them from Egypt they lost their confidence in God; they did not believe He could bring them into the land.

Had it not been for Moses' intervention, God would have destroyed the entire nation on that occasion; it became known as *the rebellion* or *the provocation*. In response to Moses' intercession, God forgave their sin, but He punished them. All those twenty years of age and older died in the wilderness never possessing their inheritance. They never entered God's *rest*.³

Rest is a very important term in this passage.

Rest is possessing the promises of God by completing the works of God.

What was promised the Exodus generation? The land of Canaan.

What was the work of God? To go in and conquer the Canaanites.

Because they lost their confidence in God, they did not do the works of God.

Because they did not do the works of God they did not possess the promises of God.

They were a redeemed people; most of them went to heaven when they died. They will be resurrected after the Tribulation and will be in the Millennial Kingdom.

³ The entire incident is recorded in Numbers 13-14.

They did not lose their salvation; they lost their inheritance. They failed to enter God's rest.

The question the Preacher places before his Hebrew brothers is this: will you fail like your forefathers?

Hebrews 3:12-19 (ESV)

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵ As it is said,

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

¹⁶ For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

About what are the Hebrews to exhort each other every day?

About what are we to exhort one another every day?

To hear/obey God's voice!

And through Whom has God spoken to us in these last days (1:1-2, 2:3)?

Through His Son!

They/we need to hear and obey the voice of our Lord Jesus. And if we will do this to the end of our lives we will come to *share in Christ*; we will reign with Him in His kingdom. And we will *enter God's rest*.

To *share in Christ* is the same thing as to *enter God's rest*.

Remember the definition of *rest*:

Rest is possessing the promises of God by completing the works of God.

The Exodus generation hardened their hearts in unbelief and did not obey. They did not enter God's rest; they did not possess the land God promised because they did not complete the work God required.

The same is true for us; we will not enter God's rest if we do not complete God's work. God's rest is *not* "going to heaven when you die". God's rest is possessing the rewards and authority in the future kingdom which He promises to those who complete His work in this present life. If we will not believe and obey the voice of our Lord in this life we will not enter God's rest in the next.

Consider the warning in 4:1-10.

Hebrews 4:1-10 (ESV)

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. ² 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. 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. ⁴ For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” ⁵ And again in this passage he said,

“They shall not enter my rest.”

⁶ Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷ 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.”

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

In this section the Preacher is developing the concept of *rest*.

He is interpreting Psalm 95 to mean that God’s rest was not limited to the Exodus generation nor to possession of Canaan. People in David’s day could enter God’s rest. People in the Preacher’s day could enter God’s rest. People in our day can still enter God’s rest.

Integral to the idea of *rest* is the “completion of work required”. God *rested* on the seventh day precisely because He had completed the work required for creation. It isn’t that He has been inactive since; that is not the idea of His *rest*. He completed the work required for creation therefore He rested from His creation work. This is Sabbath rest.

Every generation of believers can enter God’s rest in the Millennial Kingdom if they complete the works God desires for them to do in this life. How can believers know what God wants them to do in this life? By hearing His voice and doing what He says.

That is why the Preacher’s final application centers on the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:11–13 (ESV)

¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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.

We don’t automatically enter God’s rest by virtue of our justification salvation. Entering God’s rest is something for which we must strive. We strive to enter God’s rest by continuing to respond to God’s word in faith and obedience. If we are faithful to the end of our earthly lives, we will enter God’s rest in the Millennial Kingdom and receive our inheritance: we will *share in Christ* – we will reign and rule with Him in His glorious kingdom. We will be those sons whom God through Christ is bringing to glory – the restored glory and honor of exercising dominion over creation (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 8; Heb. 2:10).

Hebrews 10:36 serves as a fitting summary of our passage:

Hebrews 10:36 (ESV)

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.