

God's rest

• *In existence in the heart of God after his works of creation finished*

• *The 'rest' into which the rewarded Christian enters is God's rest*

• *God's resting is God's own 'reward' for what he had done. It is still continuing*

Man's rest – sharing God's rest

• *God's plan was that man, having been made at the end of the six days, should come along to enjoy what God was enjoying*

• *We experience the very same joy that God had when he had accomplished creation.*

• *God has achieved something in and through us*

In the days of Moses God was offering to the people of Israel the possibility of 'entering rest'. Yet this did not mean that this was the first time that 'God's rest' was in operation. ³*And yet his works have been finished since the foundation of the world.* God's rest has been in existence in the heart of God ever since the time when his works of creation finished. God's creation finished within a definite period of time, and God has been enjoying rest ever since. Now Hebrews explains: ⁴*For someone has spoken somewhere in this way concerning the seventh day: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.'* ⁵*And with this same topic in view it says: 'They shall never enter my rest.'* The 'rest' into which the rewarded Christian enters is **God's** rest. 'Entering rest' is the Christian's coming to share in God's own enjoyment of what he has been doing.

After seven 'days' of creation, God 'rested'. It was a time when God was enjoying looking at what he had done. God's resting is God's own 'reward' for what he had done. It is still continuing. Although we are told of the end of each of the six days ¹ we are not told about the end of the seventh day. It has not ended! God's rest is not idleness. His sabbath is his joy in what he has done. It is his reaping the benefit of his previous activity. It is his entering into the blessing of the six days' work.

When God made the world and was enjoying what he had done, his plan was that man, having been made at the end of the six days, should 'enter into' his joy. God had done all the creating. Man was now to come along and enter into it all. The human race was designed to reap the benefit of everything that God had done in making his perfect world, and to come along to enjoy what God was enjoying. If the human race had continued in obedience, the reward for his obedience would have been perfect enjoyment of everything that God had created for him. But man lost the privilege of entering into this joyful 'rest' of God. He rebelled and the possibility of enjoying with God everything that God had done was lost for the human race. It can be restored only by persistent and obedient faith in Jesus.

Genesis 2 and Psalm 95 speak of the same spiritual blessing. What is said about God himself in Genesis 2 is the very same rest that was being mentioned in Psalm 95. The spiritual experience of 'entering rest' is a matter of entering into **God's** rest, that is, we experience the very same joy that God had when he had accomplished creation. God has achieved something in and through us. He is fulfilling his plan to crown us with glory and honour. When he brings us to a high level of obedience, it is part of his enjoyment to do so. It is his continuing joy in his creation. When we reach a level of obedience such that God swears, 'I will indeed bless you', God is fulfilling the purpose of his original creation. He is joyfully resting in what he has done. And he shares some of that joy with us.

¹ Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31

• 'Rest' before and after the conquest

• Any Christian who has experienced times when he has known with utter certainty that God has heard him will know that at that point his experience of God is incredibly restful

• It is still open for the entire church of the Lord Jesus Christ to discover the joy of entering into God's rest.

Next the writer argues that just as there was the possibility of 'rest' before the time of the conquest, so there is the possibility of 'entering rest' after the time of the conquest also ¹. It was not finished and done with in the time of Joshua. The writer appeals to us: 'Let us give diligence then to enter into that rest...' ². This 'rest' is the occasion in the life of a Christian when (i) God reveals to the believer that his or her persistent faith has been rewarded, (ii) when God's promises concerning our calling in life are made irresistibly secure by God's oath, and (iii) when we share in God's joy in his purpose in creation. Entering into rest is what happens when God tells us he has sworn an oath about us, confirming his promises. This aspect of the matter is developed in Hebrews 6:13–20. It is having the covenant ratified. Oath is the central ingredient of covenant. A covenant is only 'on offer' until the covenant-oath is given. It is the same as 'entering into the holiest'. It is not heaven but it is a foretaste of heaven. It is receiving assurance that God has heard us. Any Christian who has experienced times when he has known with utter certainty that God has heard him will know that at that point his experience of God is incredibly restful.

¹ 4:6–7

² 4:11

⁶Therefore, since it is left open for some to enter into it and those who formerly were told good news did not enter on account of their disobedience, ⁷he again marks out a certain day, 'Today', saying through David after such a long time, as it was said before, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.' When the Israelites entered the physical land of Canaan (forty years after the original offer of the land) it was not then at that late stage a case of 'entering into rest'. They had missed that chance that was theirs at the beginning of the forty years. So even after the Israelites were in the land of Canaan it was **still** true that no major community of believing people had 'entered into God's rest'. It is still open for the entire church of the Lord Jesus Christ to discover the joy of entering into God's rest.



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