

5. Jesus, the Giver of Rest (1Q 2022— In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews)

Biblical Material: Gen. 15:13–21; Heb. 3:12–19; Heb.4:6–11; Heb.4:1, 3, 5, 10; Deut. 5:12–15; Heb. 4:8–11.

Quotes

- Our rest lies in looking to the Lord, not to ourselves. *Watchman Nee*
- No soul can be really at rest until it has given up all dependence on everything else and has been forced to depend on the Lord alone. As long as our expectation is from other things, nothing but disappointment awaits us. *Hannah Whitall Smith*
- Most of the things we need to be most fully alive never come in busyness. They grow in rest. *Mark Buchanan*
- Sabbath is that one day. It is a reprieve from what you ought to do, even though the list of oughts is infinitely long and never done. Oughts are tyrants, noisy and surly, chronically dissatisfied. Sabbath is the day you trade places with them: they go in the salt mine, and you go out dancing. It's the one day when the only thing you must do is to not do the things you must. You are given permission— issued a command, to be blunt—to turn your back on all those oughts. You get to willfully ignore the many niggling things your existence genuinely depends on—and is often hobbled beneath—so that you can turn to whatever you've put off and pushed away for lack of time, lack of room, lack of breath. You get to shuck the have-tos and lay hold of the get-tos. *Mark Buchanan*

Questions

What kind of rest is meant here—how do we understand it? While Sabbath is a symbol of rest here, how is it that Sabbath does not seem like that in the way we observe it? How do we truly rest in God? How do we explain that to others? How does the concept of rest relate to a spirit that meditates on God? How can we be at rest when the great controversy war is going on?

Bible summary

Gen. 15:13–21 is God's promise to Abraham to bring his descendants back to the Promised Land. Heb. 3:12–19 refers to the Israelites who rebelled against God as not being able to enter into his rest. But God's rest is still there for those who wish. This includes the Sabbath day, but is a more expansive concept of being at one with God (Heb.4:6–11). We are told not to miss out on God's rest. By trusting him we *have* entered into his rest (Heb.4:1, 3, 5, 10). Deut. 5:12–15 is the restatement of the Sabbath commandment, emphasizing freedom from slavery. We are called to God's rest, with Sabbath as its sign (Heb. 4:8–11).

Comment

Speaking to his stressed-out disciples who were so busy they had no time to rest, or even to have a bite to eat, Jesus says, "Come with me, just yourselves. We'll go to a quiet place, and rest for a while." (Mark 6:31 FBV). It's not so much a question of eliminating stress from life—surely an impossibility—but developing ways of dealing with those things that cause us stress. Negative events impact us, but they do not have to control us. We can better ways of responding to our stress factors, which while they may cause an emotional response, can be better handled by the thinking brain!

So, for example, why am I “stressing out” trying to get these study sheets ready?! Yes, I know about the deadline. Yes, I know they’re important for what we are doing. Yes, I know they’re helpful for those who study at a distance. But against the backdrop of eternity, very little is truly life or death! So the better way is surely to take a deep breath, pray to the Lord for help, and do the best you can. For if I get over-stressed, I won’t be thinking clearly. I won’t do a good job, and I will be feeling bad—and maybe not treating those around me as I should.

Think again of the life of Jesus and all the stress he had. Yet he took time out to pray, sharing together with our Heavenly Father. He had huge demands placed on him. Yet he treated everyone well, and lived a life that demonstrate the truth of God in every situation. In the end, with the stress of the whole world on him, there in Gethsemane and on the cross, Jesus still found time to speak words of encouragement to his disciples and to those who were with him when he died.

We’re told to cast all our cares on God, for he cares for us (see 1 Pet. 5:7). God does not ask us to take on every responsibility and stress ourselves to death. He only asks us to follow him, to live for him every day, and to help as much as we can. He also wants us to enjoy our experience of life here, and will always be with us. What a gracious God!

I was out canoeing, enjoying the day on the coast, cruising up a bay. That’s until I got stuck on a mudbank. Grinning at my foolishness, I pushed with the paddle to ease myself off. But the paddle just slid easily into the dark grey mud. I pushed it harder, but the paddle only sank in deeper. Soft and yielding, this mud would not take my weight if I climbed out to push. I was going nowhere. For a moment there was panic. Then came a realization. This was low tide, and all I had to do was wait.

I watched and waited. In my enforced waiting, I looked again at all around me—the water moving, the shoreline and the fields, the village on the hill and the church with its pointing spire. A time to wait. A time to think and to pray. Not a prayer of panic, but a prayer for rescue in the fullness of time.

Before long, the water stirred around me. I felt the surge of the tide pushing and lifting me, until I was free from the mudbank that trapped me and I was floating homewards. Going home, with my God lifting me, rising me up from this old mudbank of earth into all the glories of his eternal kingdom on his flood tide.

My heart sang in the beauty of the moment, the recognition of God’s rising tide that flows now to lift us up and carry us home. His tide that runs in its fullness and will never stop through all eternity. His tide that welcomes all who will, saying “Come to me, and I will give you rest.”

Ellen White comments

To the weary and heavy laden Christ says, “Come unto me... and I will give you rest.” Restless, craving, exhausted heart, think of the Saviour’s words, “Whosoever drinketh of this water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” Drink from the wells of worldly pleasure, and you will thirst again. Drink of the water of life, and you will be satisfied and refreshed; for it will be in you “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Love and light and truth and life are found in the everlasting gospel. Come, ye who labor and are heavy laden, come to the living water. “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” {YI, September 11, 1902}

There remaineth a rest to the people of God. In heaven activity will not be wearing and burdensome; it will be rest. {ML 358.6}