

The Promised Rest

Matthew 11:28-30

Introduction: The promise of an eternal rest gives us all hope (Heb. 6:13-20). What are we going to rest from? Is Heaven the realm of the eternal couch potato? Are all the trials and difficulties in life meant to make me appreciate doing absolutely nothing? Or is it more likely that the promised rest means something other than inactivity?

I. The promised land of Canaan.

A. Canaan was described as a rest (Deut. 3:13, 20; 12:9-10; Jos. 1:13, 15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1; Judg. 3:11, 30; 5:31; 1 Kings 5:4; 8:56; 2 Chron. 14:6).

B. So when the Israelites were at rest, did God mean that they didn't have to work or deal with life's difficulties?

C. All of these references indicate a rest from enemies. Notice they were still expected to serve God (Jos. 22:4-5).

II. In Heaven we will have more than just rest from our enemies:

A. Rest from our labors (Rev. 14:13). We remember that working to provide for our sustenance was a curse given since the time of Adam for disobedience (Gen. 3:17-19). It follows that such labor will not exist because sin does not exist in Heaven (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 22:14-15).

1. This rest from labor is not freedom from activity. In heaven we will also serve God (Rev. 7:15).

2. We will have rest from providing for our food (Rev. 7:16).

B. Rest from sorrows (Rev. 7:17; 21:4).

1. It seems we will rest from all those things associated with an earthly or physical existence including suffering.

2. There will be no pain, death, crying or any of the things that have passed away with the earth (2 Pet. 3:10).

C. Rest from trials.

1. From early on God has used trials to humble His people while proving their dedication and commitment to Him (Deut. 8:1-3).

2. Trials make us better and they give us hope of a better place (Rom. 5:3-5; Matt. 5:10-12).

3. Trials purified us as gold (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

a. As I understand the refining process of old, precious metals were shaped into long rods. As the master refiner passed it through the fire at a proper pace, the metal would soften as the impurities would follow the heat. When the rod came out of the fire, the impurities would collect at the end of the rod where it would be cut off. To purify that metal rod even more, the temperature of the fire had to be increased with each successive pass because the metal gets harder each time it is passed through the fire. The master refiner had to know just how much heat the metal could bear each time through the fire. If the metal passed through the fire too quickly the impurities would not separate and if too slow the metal would fall off into the fire.

b. We are the precious metal, the fire is our trials and God is the master refiner (Jer. 9:7; Dan. 11:35; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2-3).

c. God knows how much heat we are able to bear. He can't lead us through the trial too quickly or the impurities in us will not separate. At the same time, He won't let us stay in the fire longer than we can bear. With each successive pass through the trials of life we, like the precious metal, becomes harder and in order to refine us more the fire must be increased. Our trials get harder. Only after the Lord refines us is the genuineness of our faith revealed. The Lord purifies us for our service in Heaven.

4. Trials prepare us for heaven (2 Cor. 4:16-5:10).

Conclusion: We can all look forward to the promised rest but only if we live by faith. Most people will not find that rest because of disobedience (Heb. 4:1-11). Are you among His people who are promised that rest in Heaven? Or have you been disobedient like the children of Israel who did not enter the promised rest?