

# There Remaineth A Rest

Hebrews 4:1-2, 12



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**FOCAL Read Responsively** Hebrews 4:1-2, 12 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. (2) For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. ... (12) For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

One of the greatest illustrations of faith in action that Jesus has given His Church is God's Israel. Though the Church is not Israel, nor is Israel the Church (for they are God's creations of two different dispensations) – God has always treated His people the same. Our God is changeless, immutable, for

**Supporting James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**

The Bible tells us that **God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34)**. The Old Testament saint was saved by faith *in the Coming Messiah*, whereas the New Testament saint is saved by faith *in the Crucified and Risen Messiah*. The Bible tells us in the Old Text:

**Supporting** Habakkuk 2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but **the just shall live by his faith.**

and the turns around and tells us the *exact same thing in the New Text:*

**Supporting** Romans 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. **The just shall live by faith.**

and again,

**Supporting** Galatians 3:10-11 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. (11) But that **no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.**

The Gospel of the Old Testament is the same Gospel of the New Testament. The Law was given in the Old Testament *because man was so hardheaded that he needed a harsh schoolteacher to force him to Christ:*

**Supporting** Galatians 3:24-25 Wherefore **the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (25) But after that faith is come, we are**

**no longer under a schoolmaster.**

Two testaments, same Gospel. Why? Because it is the *same God*. He does not change, nor does His criteria for salvation change. This is why we are told in our focal text:

**FOCAL** Hebrews 4:2a For **unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them ...**

The same Gospel - "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (**Acts 16:31**) was preached in both Testaments. The love of God toward all mankind was preached. Though the preachers may have been in different clothing they still preached the Word of Faith:

**Supporting** Romans 10:8-11 ... which we preach; (9) **That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (11) For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**

Yet the Bible is very clear that Israel did not profit by this word. We are told:

**FOCAL** Hebrews 4:2b ... but **the word preached did not profit<sup>1</sup> them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.**

The Gospel preached to Israel – the Exodus generation of Israel – did not **profit** them. It was **not useful to them**. Think about that! The same Gospel was preached to Israel as is preached to you, and yet that Gospel was *literally useless to them*. It had no value because **it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it**.

Have you ever tried to make a cake without milk or water? Without the liquid the dry will not blend. If a cake recipe calls for vegetable oil and you have none, you cannot make the cake. I know – I've tried. A cake made with the wrong ingredients is disgusting. It is too heavy, or too dry, or cracked and crumbly – it is of no use. A cake without liquid is unprofitable. A Gospel not mixed with faith is useless, dry, heavy, crumbly – in short, it is unprofitable.

The Exodus Generation of Israel saw the mighty saving hand of God. Through ten plagues the Lord punished Egypt while striving to free His people. With each plague the Exodus Generation should have seen and understood the great love that God has for us. The height of His love was seen when Israel, trapped at the edge of the Red Sea, saw that vast water part and the ocean floor dry so they could go across on dry land. As Israel moved through this watery hallway she should have loved the

1 G5623, ὠφελέω, ὀphelēō, o-fel-eh'-o, From the same as G5622; to be useful, that is, to benefit: - advantage, better, prevail, profit.

Lord for what He was doing. Her faith should have looked at the paramount blessings that was given her. Oh, how God loves His people! Oh how He loves you and I who have believed on Jesus. Israel should have rested in the loving arms of God. She should have known – as the Egyptian army died under the crashing waves – that the Lord did not save her to abandon her. She should have known that

**Supporting** Hebrews 11:6 **But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**

Why did Israel fail? Why **did the Word preached not profit them**? Because Israel put her faith in *everything and everyone but God*. It was God Who saved her at the Red Sea. It was God Who led her through the wilderness of life. It was God Who saved her from Egypt. It was God Who would take these believers into the Promised Land – if they would only have faith in Him. Yet they would not.

Israel heard the Word preached, and absolutely *refused* to mix what she heard with faith. **Without faith it is impossible to please God**. Our focal text tells us:

**FOCAL** Hebrews 4:8 **For if Joshua<sup>2</sup> had given**

2 Adam Clarke's Commentary states, “**For if Jesus had given them rest** - It is truly surprising that our translators should have rendered the Ἰησοῦς of the text Jesus, and not Joshua, who is most clearly

**them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.**

The entire first Generation of Israel died in the wilderness *save for two individuals*. Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and several million Israelites died without crossing over into the Promised Rest of Canaan. Only **Joshua and Caleb** remained faithful to the Lord as Israel wandered for forty years. **Joshua** was chosen by God to lead *believing Israel* into the Promised Land. It is this Joshua that our text talks about in verse 8 (not Jesus, but YeHoshua or Joshua the Son of Nun). This same Joshua is mentioned in

**Supporting** Numbers 27:18-20 And the LORD said unto Moses, **Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom [is] the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; (19) And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. (20) And thou shalt put [some] of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be**

intended. They must have known that the יהושע Yehoshua of the Hebrew, which we write Joshua, is everywhere rendered Ἰησοῦς, Jesus, by the Septuagint; and it is their reading which the apostle follows. It is true the Septuagint generally write Ἰησοῦς Ναημ, or Ὑιὸς Ναημ, Jesus Nave, or Jesus, son of Nave, for it is thus they translate יהושע בן נון Yehoshua ben Nun, Joshua the son of Nun; and this is sufficient to distinguish it from Jesus, son of David. But as Joshua, the captain general of Israel, is above intended, the word should have been written Joshua, and not Jesus. ”

obedient.

Why is it that Joshua – a man saved by faith in the Lord – would be chosen by God to not only *enter the rest that is the Promised Land*, but would also lead others into that Promised Land? Why is it that Joshua and Caleb *alone* of the Exodus generation would cross the Jordan and seize victory over all unbelievers? Why would Joshua stand head and shoulders above his contemporaries – even *above Moses whom he replaced*? Because **Joshua mixed the Word of God that he heard with faith**. He was a man **in whom was the Spirit**. He was available to God. He trusted in God. He heeded God. He kept himself sanctified or separated unto God. Joshua knew that

**FOCAL** Hebrews 4:12 For **the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

What God has said, He will do. What God has promised, He will fulfill. The *promise* and the *fulfillment* is not based on our inabilities but on God's abilities.

### **1. Joshua Kept His Eyes On The Promise of God**

Read this with me:

**FOCAL** Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick<sup>3</sup>, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Word of God is Quick, *zao*, *always life giving*. God would not tell you to do a thing that would not be good for you. Listen Beloved, **God is Love (1 John 4:8) and Light (1 John 1:5)**. As Love He would not tell you to do a thing then back away, saying “Just kidding!” As **Light** He would not knowingly lead you into the darkness without going with you. He is there, and He is not silent. Joshua knew this.

The first time we see Joshua mentioned in the Scripture is in:

**Supporting** Exodus 17:9 And **Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.**

There's a great story that goes with this text. You see, God has just freed Israel from Egypt. As I mentioned before, the combined armies of Egypt drowned in the Red Sea while Israel moved through that same body of water as if it were dry land. Joshua was part of that great crowd of Israelites who gathered at the edge of the Red

Sea. He, along with several million others, heard the hooves of the horses and the clatter of armor as death came nearer. Joshua heard the screams of the terrified Israelites, heard Moses cry out:

**Supporting** Exodus 14:13 ... **Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever.**

Then he watched Moses do a strange thing. Moses took his **rod**, a walking stick, and **stretched it out over the Red Sea (Exodus 14:16)**. He saw Moses speaking to God, and as that rod was lifted over the water he saw – as if it were a great plow – the water separate and the seabed dry. Joshua watched – not Moses – but the *imminent power of Almighty God*. **El Shaddai**, the God of all provision, provided an escape. **El Elyon**, the Almighty God, parted the waters with His hand. Israel crossed over on dry land while Egypt was destroyed. God was in control.

Israel traveled to a place called Rephidim, a dry area – and here they stopped. **Rephidem, by the way, means “a place of rest”**, a rest stop – when the Exodus heard this they should have relaxed. But there was no water, and Israel began to complain. “Kill Moses, stone him for leading us out to this foolish place. We should have stayed in Egypt where at least we had water. Let's go back now, today, and leave Moses and his foolish family behind!” Joshua saw the mob, and again watched as

3 Present Active Participle of G2198, ζᾶω, *zao*, *dzah'-o*, A primary verb; to *live* (literally or figuratively): - life (-time), (a-) live (-ly), quick.

Moses spoke to God. Then Moses did a strange thing. He stood, gathered the elders of Israel together, and moved to a particularly dry rock. Moses took the **rod, the same rod he held over the Red Sea**, lifted it high above his head and then **struck the rock**.

Christ our Savior became a blessing to all who believe in Him as they look upon Him, struck and bleeding, beaten and chastised for us. The Rock that is Christ is struck. All who look upon Him receive rivers of living water.

**Water flowed from the Rock (Exodus 17:6).** Thirsty Israel was nourished by the stricken Rock, an Old Testament teaching of the Coming Christ. God provided. While all of Israel drank greedily of the water that flowed from the Rock, Joshua watched the **Rod of God**. That Rod parted the waters. That Rod gave water from a dry Rock. So when Moses told Joshua:

**Supporting Exodus 17:9 ... Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.**

Joshua didn't debate Moses. He didn't complain that the people were tired from their long journey. He didn't wonder if the Israelites had "the right stuff", or if they had the appropriate armor or weaponry. No! Joshua heard Moses say **tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with THE ROD OF GOD in mine hand**. The Rod of God! The Rod of God! I daresay if Moses had stayed off of the top of the hill and just propped the Rod of God

up there for Joshua to see, that would have been enough. God's Word was good at the Red Sea. God's Word was good at Rephidem. God's Word will be good enough now.

God made a promise to Israel when He brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Amalek would be destroyed, just as surely as the Red Sea had parted. So the Bible tells us:

**Supporting Exodus 17:10, 13 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek... And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.**

Listening to the Word of God Joshua **discomfited and his people with the edge of the sword**. God gave Joshua the victory. Those who trust in the Lord and focus on Him will be blessed.

An army in battle will *follow the colors*, march behind the flag of their country. Their eyes will be turned to that banner lifted high. Look at what occurs after Joshua defeats Amalek:

**Supporting Exodus 17:14-15 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this [for] a memorial in a book, and rehearse [it] in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. (15) And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it**

## Jehovahnessi:

Moses was to **rehearse the Word in the ears of Joshua**.  
The **Word of God keeps on being filled with life**.

Joshua would not be allowed to believe that it was *his* victory, or *his* prowess that brought the victory. It was **Jehovahnessi – God Who was the Banner that all followed**. God gave the victory, and will always give the victory, if we follow His command and His Word.

### 2. Joshua Remained Available To The Purpose of God

**FOCAL** Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, **piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerners<sup>4</sup> of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

**Supporting** Exodus 24:12-13 And the LORD said unto Moses, **Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them. (13) And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.**

<sup>4</sup> Strong's: G2924, 2924 kritikos krit-ee-kos', from 2923; decisive ("critical"), i.e. discriminative:--discerner. see GREEK for 2923, Morphology: A-NSM, Part of Speech: Adjective, Case: Nominative, Number: Singular, Gender: Masculine

I never realized this until I studied it, but Moses was not the only person to go up into the Mountain of God. Though Moses was the only person to go to the peak of the mountain and receive the Law, Joshua accompanied him part of the way (as far as God would allow him to go) up that mountain. We know this because later, as Moses descends the mountain with the Tablets of the Law, Joshua says to him:

**Supporting** Exodus 32:17-18 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, **There is a noise of war in the camp. (18) And {Moses} said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.**

Did you catch that dialog? Joshua and Moses **heard the sounds of sinning and rebellious Israel worshiping the golden calf in the camp**. Joshua says “It sounds like war in the camp”, to which Moses replies “It's not a war – there's a party going on!”

One word emphasizes the life of Joshua, and that is the word “available”. He made himself available to God at all times. Moses goes up the mountain, and Joshua goes with him as far as he can. Moses turns to find someone to lead the army of God against Amalek, and there's Joshua. Joshua was available to God!

Listen Beloved, if we remain available to God then we

will be *unavailable to sin*. Aaron (who should have known better) did not accompany Moses up the mountain as Joshua did, and as a result ended up giving in to the sin of idolatry. Joshua on the Mountain of God, available for God's service, does not sin. The Golden Calf is in the valley of sin, not on the mountain of God.

God's Word constantly cautions the believer to stay close to God. **The Word of God pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner (critic) of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** Joshua stayed as close to God and His Word as he was allowed to stay, and as a result avoided *much sin*. While Israel bowed to the Golden Calf Joshua bowed to the Great and only Wise God. While Aaron listened to the *word of the people*, Joshua listened to the Word of God.

**Supporting Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

Are you available to God, ready to do His will or are you more available to the people of this earth. Do you heed God's Word above all else, or do you treasure the nightly newscast and the sports report more than what He has said. The victorious Christian life is always found in the formula:

**What God has Said**

+

**Believing and Doing His Word**

Overcoming faith can only be enjoyed if your eye is

*single*, if you focus on *being available to God and His Word*. Joshua made himself available to God and God's man – and as a result avoided the terrible sin of idolatry. This was not the only time we see Joshua's focus. When the **Shekinah glory of God descended on the Tabernacle** we see that all of Israel stood in their tent doors and watched the spectacle. We read:

**Supporting Exodus 33:10-11 And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshiped, every man in his tent door. (11) And the LORD spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.**

Moses talked with God, while all of Israel – but Joshua – stayed at home and worshiped. Sounds like a lot of Baptists I know! When Moses left the Tabernacle Joshua stayed where he was, stayed where God was. He kept himself available to God no matter what might come.

The life focused on itself is a life that will always, sooner or later, spin down into failure. Focus on yourselves and you will find only golden calves, discontent, depression, terrible instability. The life available to and focused on God is the blessed life. The life that believes in and lives for Jesus is the life that overcomes all things. **This is the victory that overcomes the world – even our faith (1**

John 5:4). Not faith in our abilities, but faith and focus on God and His Word.

### 3. Joshua Focused Not On Peer Pressure, But On God's Power

**FOCAL** Hebrews 4:12 **For the word of God is quick, and powerful<sup>5</sup>, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

The best known instance of Joshua's faithfulness to God was seen in the time when he, along with Caleb and ten others, went into Canaan to spy out the land (**Numbers 13:16**). This moment would become a turning point in the life of Israel. God told Israel to cross the Jordan and to enter the Promised Land, but the Israelites wanted to reconnoiter the land before attempting to enter it. Joshua led a group of spies into the land. When they returned from their mission ten of the spies brought a message of gloom and doom, whereas Joshua and Caleb said:

**Supporting** Numbers 14:7-9 ... **The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. (8) If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into**

<sup>5</sup> Strong's: G1756, 1756 energeis en-er-gace', from 1722 and 2041; active, operative:--effectual, powerful. see GREEK for 1722 see GREEK for 2041 Morphology: A-NSM Part of Speech: Adjective Case: Nominative Number: Singular Gender: Masculine

**this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. (9) Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.**

Joshua said the same thing that is written in another Scripture:

**Supporting** Romans 8:31-32 **What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (32) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?**

**The Word of God is not only always living and life giving, but it is also always *powerful*.** What God promised Israel He would do. When Israel departed from the Word of God and began to debate with God and what He had said they started down the slippery slope that would eventually bring them death. Parents and grandparents would die in the desert while their children watched. **The wages of sin is death.** We must heed God if we are going to live.

You have all heard the childhood story of the *three little pigs*. Can I share another story with you, the story of the *three little Christians*?

The first little Christian built his house on sand. He knew the building code, knew what the Chief Inspector told him, but he built on it anyway (**Matthew 7:26-27**). Sand is cheap, easy to work and mold, and very plentiful.

**“Who cares what the Word of the Inspector is? I can save money on the foundation and build the house out of stronger and more expensive material”**. And that's what he did. So what happened next? Though all was well at first, in time the wind and rain began to work on the foundation of the house. Before long it fell down – and a passing Roaring Lion had a terribly unhappy meal. This little Christian should have built on the Rock of God's Word.

The second little Christian built his house of straw. He had heard the warning of God, heard the Word of God, but insisted on building his life using exactly the same resources as the unbeliever. **“If it's good enough for Mr. Tare down the street, it's good enough for me”**. His straw house was warm – though the occasional bug got through the wall – and most of the rain ran outside the house and not in. The second little Christian was happy. It's quick and easy to build a house of straw. He was happy – that is until one day a Roaring Lion came by (**1 Peter 5:8**). The Lion was hungry, and straw walls do little to keep a hungry Lion out. Sadly the second little Christian didn't have a happy ending – he should have made his house out of the Rock of God's Word. Not only is it hard, but it is sharper than a two-edged sword. Oh well. On to the third little Christian.

The third little Christian was very canny. First of all, he

listened to the Chief Inspector. The Inspector said:

**Supporting John 13:17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.**

So he didn't just hear the Word of the Inspector, He *did it*. He built his house on the Rock that is Christ (**1 Corinthians 10:4**). He himself, as a **lively stone (1 Peter 2:25)** worked *together with other Christians in the Church* to erect a house of Rock, **Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone:**

**Supporting 1 Peter 2:6-7 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. (7) Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,...**

This little Christian rested in the House that Christ built. Others said “Use your common sense – you know it can't be done. Leave the Promised Land alone, for everyone says our enemy is too great”. The third little Christian keeps his eyes on the Lord no matter what might come. Let the Lion roar, let the storms of life come. Neither Satan nor storm will blow away the life built on and in the Word of God. The Bible says

**Supporting 1 John 5:4-5 For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. (5) Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**

You are called to the overcoming life of faith. Be like the third little Christian. Keep your eyes on the **promise** of God, on the **power** of God's Word, on His **purpose and will for your life**. Focus on Him, believe on Him, study His Word, and stretch outward to where He calls with the eye of faith. May God touch your hearts with this Word.



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