

Making much of Jesus

present-day lessons from the letter to the Hebrews

Although written to Jews who had trusted in Jesus, and although drawing regularly on Old Testament references, the letter to the Hebrews has a very pressing contemporary significance.

This series of studies is intended to stir in our hearts both a deepening delight and a growing confidence in all that Jesus is and has done, imparting to us the fortitude and strength we need to serve Him faithfully in today's world.

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

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5. The 'rest' is history! (Heb.4.1-13)

[w/b Sunday 29th September 2019]

".. make every effort to enter that rest .."

In this part of the letter the writer is setting out what Jesus has come to do. In the last study (Heb.3.1-19) we saw that He has come to take us home.

The writer now moves on to explain that this 'home' to which we're being taken is experienced essentially as 'rest': starting with God at creation, through the entry into the promised land, and then the words of David later on, he impresses on his readers the need to ensure that we enter God's rest.

[Before attending a Community Group try on your own to consider all 7 questions - even though your Group may have time for just some of them. Key questions in this study are probably 2, 4 and 6. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. Read Hebrews 4.1-13. Familiarise yourself with the passage as a whole to get some sense of the writer's careful argument.

The '*therefore*' right at the start connects this passage with the previous one: what would you say is the connection?

To what extent is your life characterized by a 'restfulness'?

2. Read Hebrews 4.1. The promise of God has 'rest' at its heart: but the promise must be embraced by God's people through their persevering faith.

In a world so very restless, how would you describe and commend the 'rest' of which the passage speaks?

Why can it be so easy for us to miss out on that 'rest'?

3. Read Hebrews 4.2-3a. The failure of the people of Israel to enter the promised land and enjoy that 'rest' is the working picture which the writer continues to use.

What was the message which had been proclaimed to the people of Israel?

Read Rom.1.5 & 16.26: how is faith to be understood as obedience without the message becoming a gospel of *works*?

4. Read Hebrews 4.3b-5. The promise of 'rest' which the people of Israel received was prefigured in the 'rest' which the Bible declares God took from His works (Gen.2.2).

What is the point which the writer is making here? How is the 'rest' promised to His people, tied in to God's own 'resting' from His works?

Read **Isaiah 48.22 & 57.20**: the letters R.I.P. are often used in relation to a person who has died - how do these verses in Hebrews (4.3b-5) impress upon our hearts the truth that not all will rest in peace?

5. Read Hebrews 4.6-7. David's urging his people to enter God's rest (Ps.95.7f) made it clear that the promise of 'rest' was not by any means entirely fulfilled when Joshua led Israel into Canaan.

The word 'today' makes it always right up to date: what steps are *we* bidden to take to enter God's rest?

In what ways can we be found to be hardening our hearts?

6. Read Hebrews 4.8-11. Israel's enjoyment of the promised land under Joshua was only ever a picture, a partial fulfillment of the promise only fully realized in Joshua's namesake, Jesus.

What does the writer mean when he says that a person who enters God's rest '*rests from their works*'?

How does that square with what he goes straight on to say, stressing the need to 'make every effort' and pointing to the danger of 'disobedience'?

How might you be applying these verses to your life?

7. Read Hebrews 4.12-13. Through this whole extended passage from 3.1, the writer has been quoting (4 times over!) the Word of God: he now explains the nature of the word of God.

What's the connection of these two verses with what the writer has just been saying?

Why are 'the thoughts and attitudes of the heart' so critical to this whole issue?

How does the Word of God judge those thoughts and attitudes?