

Our Sabbath Rest

Hebrews 4:9-10

‘So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.’

Are we an Old Covenant church, or a New Covenant church? Is our relationship with God based on the Old Agreement, or on the New? Are our lives regulated by the laws of the Old Covenant, or laws of the New? What promises does God make to us in this age? And what does He command? The premise of this series is that there are two major Covenants between God and man – the Old Covenant and the New Covenant – and the Old Covenant is gone (fulfilled in Christ) and now every person relates to God through the New Covenant which promises perfect righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. There were glimpses of the New Covenant throughout the Old Testament. “Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). This is a landmark statement of justification by faith (see Romans 4 and Galatians 3).

The Covenant at Mt. Sinai and the Sabbath

God brought the 12 Tribes of Israel to Mt. Sinai, and there He made with them a Covenant. As their leader and ruler (e.g. “Theocracy”), God gave Israel laws, and Israel agreed to keep those laws (Exodus 19:5-8). We have seen that the Law was a “shadow of the good things that were to come” (Jesus Christ).

In **Exodus 31:13-17** the Sabbath was made a sign of the Sinai covenant. The Sabbath was a perpetual reminder of the Covenant that Israel made at Mt. Sinai. Just before the Israelites went into the promised land, they renewed the Covenant on the plains of Moab. The Ten Commandments remained the central part of the Covenant, but more laws and more detailed blessings and curses were given. Throughout the rest of Israel’s history, God blessed and punished the Israelites according to this Covenant of Law. God was faithful, but the people were not. Israel never found rest in their land and were sent into captivity.

The New Covenant and True Rest

Hebrews 8:5-6 compares the Two Covenants and concludes:

1. Jesus has a better ministry than the Levites had. Jesus is a more effective High Priest — He is actually in the heavenly throne room, not an earthly copy.
2. The New Covenant that Jesus brought is superior to the Old Covenant. It is better, and it has better promises. It gives us a better inheritance.

“For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault *with the people*” (Hebrews 8:7-8). What fault did they have? Paul tells us throughout Romans 1-5 that the problem with God’s Old Covenant people was “unrighteousness.”

Because the Old Covenant Jews were disobedient to the Law (Romans 2:17-24), they were never able to enter into “rest.” They were constantly in fear of whether or not the judgment of God was coming.

Perfect righteousness is the only thing that guarantees God's blessings. "Therefore we maintain that a person is justified by faith, apart from one's attempt to obey the Law" (Romans 3:28).

Paul writes that God "has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (II Corinthians 3: 6).

We are a New Covenant church. Our relationship with God is based on faith in Christ, not on the Old Covenant. We lead people to rest in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Below is the entire chapter of Hebrews 4. The theme of this chapter is "**God's People Now Enter Rest.**"

"Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. 2 For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed (e.g. "the obedience of faith"). **3 Now we who have believed enter that rest**, just as God has said,

"So I declared on oath in My anger, (anger over what?)
'They shall never enter My rest.'"

And yet His works have been finished since the creation of the world. 4 For He has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "On the seventh day God rested from all His works." 5 And again in the passage above He says, "They shall never enter My rest." (See Psalm 95:11.)

6 Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, 7 God again set a certain day, calling it "Today." This He did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted:

"Today, if you hear His voice,
do not harden your hearts." (See Psalm 95:7.)

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. 9 *There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from **their works**, (lit. "labor") just as God did from His.* 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword.

The only way a person can enter into spiritual and emotional rest is "faith" in the Word of God (e.g. *what God says about the Living Word in His written Word*). You will never be able to enter into the rest promised those who believe in Jesus Christ until you understand who Christ is and what He has done. New Covenant "faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).