Hebrews 4:1-10 Inductive Bible Study Notes and Discussion Questions

Hebrews 4:1-10

Outline:

I. A promise of rest remains (1)

II. We must believe if we want to enter (2-3)

III. This rest is a finished work God has completed (4-5)

IV. This invitation is still open (6-9)

I. Verses 1-10

Discussion Questions

What is the “therefore” there for?

Does the promise still remain of entering His rest?

What does His rest refer to?

In what circumstance should we fear? (1)

Cross-References

Evaluate your spiritual position

1 Corinthians 10:12

2 Corinthians 13:5

Philippians 2:12

Teaching Points

1. Therefore – In the last passage we saw the result for the rebellious people in the wilderness who did not obey God or believe in Him. They came short of God’s rest and instead hardened their hearts and provoked Him over and over again. God records history in the Bible for a reason. One reason is so that we can learn from the mistakes of others and not repeat the same sins that they did. We should pay attention to the example of the Israelites in the wilderness and do the opposite of what they did.

2. The first step is to fear God. In Proverbs it says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We should respect God. At the same time we should fear the results of willful rebellion against Him and a willful rejection of the gospel. The author is not saying that real Christians need to go through life with a constant fear of losing their salvation. He is not saying that we need to always be looking over our shoulder spiritually. He is not teaching a lifestyle of fear. Rather, he is saying that we should fear
we fall short of this rest. What does it mean to fall short of the rest? Does it refer to sin? We know that Romans 3:23 says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So if our own deeds were the basis of either reaching or falling short of this rest we would all fall short. Our own deeds are not the basis. What is?

Discussion Questions

What similarities are there between us and the Israelites in the wilderness?

Why was knowledge not helpful for them?

Under what condition is knowledge helpful?

Cross-References

Romans 10:17 – Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

Matthew 7:21 – Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord will enter the the kingdom of heaven.”

Teaching Points

1. The basis of entering this rest is faith. Notice it is not knowledge. The Israelites in the wilderness had a lot of knowledge. Moses taught them regularly about the things of God. God gave them the Law and many divine revelations through Moses. He did miracles for them to observe. At the beginning when God sent Moses to the people in Egypt he asked God what His name was. He wanted to know more about this God that commanded him to lead His people out of Egypt. The people too worshiped God, but didn’t know Him very well. That changed when God sent Moses. They knew EVERYTHING they needed to know. Did this knowledge help them? The writer says that this knowledge did not profit them because it was not acted on by faith. For example God told them He would give them the Promised Land. He promised victory. If they believed it they would have obeyed and gone in to take possession of the land. But they did not believe in God and were instead scared of the people. What can we learn from this?

a) Knowledge without faith (and from that faith action) is useless. The Hebrew readers of this letter knew a lot about Christ, but some were probably on the fence as to whether to believe it or not. That gospel message that was preached to them would not help them unless they chose to have faith in Christ. Why do you come to Bible study? I know I probably sound like a broken record by now, but if the only thing we are accomplishing is getting more Bible knowledge we may as well cancel the Bible study and have a weekly movie night. It is not doing us any good unless we BELIEVE IT, OBEY IT, APPLY it.

2. In this chapter the author keeps going back to the key passage he is examining which he quoted back in chapter three. The original passage is a promise that those who rebelled against God would NOT enter into His rest (ie: the Promised Land). The author here makes the inverse argument, that those who do believe do enter that rest. Since this rest is the key point of the rest of the chapter, we should consider what it refers to? What do you think this rest refers to? For the Israelites in the wilderness it was a physical, real, tangible rest in the Promised Land when they could have peace from their enemies. Since God has not promised that land to every believer (only to Jews), I do not believe that is the rest referred to which believers can enter here. That rest I believe is another word for eternal life.
Eternal life will be completely realized after this life. This life is filled with toil, temptations, persecutions, suffering, pain, difficulties, etc. One day “beyond the river” as some songs put it, we will have rest in God’s presence free from all of these earthly troubles. At the same time, eternal life is not only for after we die. In John 5:24 Jesus promises it to all who believe. He promises that those who believe have it and the verb used is present tense. Although this rest will not be fully realized until after this life, we can taste some parts of it now including the joy and peace that God supernaturally brings into our lives after trusting in Him.

3. Although His works were finished from the foundation of the world – On this point MacArthur says, “The spiritual rest which God gives is not something incomplete or unfinished. It ia a rest which is based upon a finished work which God purposed in eternity past, just like the rest which God took after He finished creation.”

II. Verses 2-3

Discussion Questions

What works were finished from the foundation of the world?

What did God do after He finished creating the world in 6 days?

Why did He rest? In this passage how is God’s rest after creation analogous to the rest believers can enter?

Cross-References

Isaiah 55:6 – Seek the Lord while He may be found.

2 Corinthians 6:2 – Today is the day of salvation.

Teaching Points

1. God has finished all His work of creation already. This is stated to support the statement in verse 3 that God has finished His works already. The rest that God took after creation was certainly not needed. He was not tired from His work. Rather it showed the fact that He had completed the job. By resting, He established a precedent for us that after the job is completed we can also have a rest like He did. To understand this rest we can understand a little more about the law back in Leviticus. For the Old Testament, people could only work six days. On the seventh day, they rested just like God did after creation (because of His model). At the same time, every seventh year was a year of jubilee, which meant that fields should lay fallow and slaves (really 6 year employees) would be released. The model was set that after work was done, there should be a rest.

2. Today many people still follow this model of working followed by rest on the weekend. Our final rest though is not just a weekly thing. If we believe in Him we can have a permanent rest after our death. Many tombstones in the States say R.I.P. This means Rest In Peace. Who can rest in peace? Only those who believed in God while still alive.

3. Application: Imagine that you need to prepare for an exam. You still have one book to read and your exam is the next day. Can you rest? I wouldn’t be able to. Imagine that you have an important project
due at work in just several days and you haven’t even started it yet. Can you have a good rest? I wouldn’t be able to. To really be able to rest well in this life we have to finish the urgent things so that our mind can rest easy. If we have still have stuff left to do, we won’t be able to rest. On the same note, we cannot enter our permanent rest with Christ until our work here on earth is done. Ephesians 2:10 says that God has prepared good works for us to do. In our life, He has a list of things He wants us to accomplish. Right now our focus should be on doing all of these things so that we finish all in the time we have. If we do, we can enter into this final rest with no worries and no regrets.

III. Verses 4-5

Discussion Questions

Why could the people this “rest” was originally offered to not enter? What is the warning for us?

What is the author’s point by quoting the Psalm (ascribed to David here) of another offer to enter into that rest?

What is his conclusion (for this section) in verse 9?

Teaching Points

1. There is still a chance. The doors have not been closed yet. Many people in the past have failed to enter this narrow gate because of disobedience. How about you?

2. The writer here ascribes Psalm 95 to David so we have our answer as to who wrote it. David re-quoted this passage as an invitation to the people at that time that “today” (the time when he wrote it), they could still accept the invitation. In verse 9, the writer makes it clear that this invitation is still open and there still remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. What is the author’s point?

3. We have looked at a number of the technical details of this passage, but it is always helpful to step back again and look at the big picture lest we get confused with all of the terminology and quotes and get bogged down in all of that. I believe the main point is seen in verse 9 and later in verse 11. Simply put:
   a) There is a rest
   b) Those who believe can enter the rest
   c) Believe NOW so that you don’t miss it. Throughout the whole Bible there are many invitations to repent and turn to God. Jesus told people “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17) Isaiah and Paul also both emphasized this (see cross-references). The message is simple. The message of salvation is urgent. It is not something that should be put off. People who hear should be encouraged to respond quickly while they still have a chance. One day there will be no more opportunity. I am reminded about Noah, who was a preacher of righteousness. He preached for over a hundred years and no one listened. When the rain started falling and the water started rising, do you think people had a change of heart? I think they did. But it was too late. The door was shut and their opportunity was gone. The ark was big enough for more people, but they scoffed at Noah and wouldn’t listen. How can we apply this message?
A. Make sure that we have believed the message. Evaluate your spiritual standing regularly.

B. Share the gospel urgently with the people around us. Do not put off sharing with your family and friends. Plead with them to turn to God while they have a chance.

**Application:** What specific action do you need to take this week to apply what we have learned today?