

David and the entire community

- God gave David rest

- No large community of people had ever entered into God's rest

- The possibility of the entire people of God entering into rest is still open

- God's ambition is to see an entire generation enter into rest

Sabbath - keeping

- Is not about keeping Sunday as a holy day

- Entering into rest' is the occasion when we reap the benefits of what God has done in us and through us

David had an understanding of 'entering into rest', for it is what he experienced himself when after years of trials and tribulations he finally came to the point where God took an oath. Without the possibility of any reversal God said to David, 'Your seed will continue for ever. I swear it!' (if I may summarize 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89 in this way). 'The Lord had given him rest on every side' (2 Samuel 7:1). God also gave him rest within by giving him an unshakable oath that his seed would last for ever. David knew what he was talking about when he called the people of his day to 'enter rest' as the total people of God. No large community of people had ever 'entered God's rest', but it was on offer. The Israelites could have diligently believed and obeyed God. God was still making the same offer. ⁸*For if Joshua gave them rest, he [David] would not be speaking about another day, after those days.* One might think that although at first the Israelites failed to enter Canaan and 'experience God's rest', they did so forty years later. But no, this is not what happened. Forty years later God allowed them to enter into Canaan **without** testing them any further. It was not a case of spiritually entering into rest. It was not at that later time a case of faith and patience inheriting the promises. God gave it to them without any further requirement of faith and patience. If the entire community had **spiritually** entered into rest, that would have been the achievement that God had been wanting for so many centuries. But it did not happen and, a few hundred years later, God spoke to the Israelites again about this matter. Yet even under David the Israelites did not as a community enter into the rich spiritual experience God was wanting to give them. The conclusion is: ⁹*So then there remains a sabbath-keeping for the people of God.* The possibility of the entire people of God entering into the plan that he has had for them since the beginning of creation is still open. It is open to us. If we – assisted by Jesus as our great high priest – persist in faith and patience, we shall enter into rest. This is God's ambition: to see an entire generation enter into rest. When the entire people of God experience God's oath in one generation, God will be satisfied.

This 'sabbath-keeping' is not the Sabbath of the law of Moses or Sunday as a holy day. It is rather a pattern which God wants us to follow. Life must be led and governed by God's plan. We co-operate with God until he achieves his purpose. 'Entering into rest' is the occasion when we reap the benefits of what God has done in us and through us. ¹⁰*For the one who enters into God's rest, also rests from his works* just as God did from his. This is a description of what it feels like for the believer who has been rewarded by God's oath. We enter God's rest. We experience in lesser measure what God experienced when he was pleased with his work of creation. When the promise is received in a way that cannot be lost it is supremely restful. We experience what God experienced when he was enjoying his creation. After the

¹ 2 Samuel 7:1

• *Abraham*

• *A confident and calm activity that – although not lazy or passive – is without panic or concern because we know that our case and our cause is in the hands of God*

• *Conclusion – make every effort to enter that rest*

The final word of warning

• *We must be serious about entering into rest*

• *We shall gain something eternally or lose something eternally*

event of Genesis 22, Abraham’s life-work has been achieved. He was still alive. ‘Entering into rest’ is not dying or entering into retirement! Abraham’s works were often very laborious, but when God gave the oath of Genesis 22:16–18 he ‘entered rest’. It was a time for reaping. The laboriousness, the struggle, of the life of faith has ended. One’s self-will is gone after one has entered into rest. After the oath has been experienced there is a confident and calm activity that – although not lazy or passive – is without panic or concern because we know that our case and our cause is in the hands of God. We are cut off from our own works to give God room to act. It is a life that is more-than-ever yielded to God. We go forward with an intense conviction of the sovereignty of God.

In Hebrews 4:11 we are come into the final conclusion of the section that has been occupying us ever since Hebrews 3:7. ¹¹*Let us make the effort then to enter into that rest, in order that no one may fall by the same type of disobedience.*

Verses 12–13 will be the final word of warning, explaining why one must give diligence to enter into rest. ¹²*For the word of God is living and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* ¹³*And before God no created thing is hidden, but all things are open and exposed to the eyes of him who shall give the decision about us.* We must be serious about entering into rest. God’s word will soon make a decision about us. It discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Not only is God taking notice of what we are thinking, he is taking notice of what we are intending, the direction our lives are moving in. Before God no created thing is hidden, but all things are open and exposed to his view. Sooner or later God will act in the light of his word. He will bless or he will severely chastise. We shall gain something eternally or lose something eternally. He will give the decision about us. We shall experience an oath of anger or an oath of blessing.



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