

God's Rest and the Millennium

The Millennium Pictures a Cessation and a Beginning

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I hope you are all doing well. It has been a good Feast has it not? I do not know about you, but the weeks before the Feast were really quite frenetic—just full of activity. All kinds of things happened—deadlines, plans, and just all kinds of things that just came up right before the Feast. And this year, of course, we had the major distraction of the World Trade Center, and the Pentagon being attacked. And so, that took at least a day out of one's life. We did not get much done that day. My dad did. He stayed in his office and he worked. The rest of us were glued to the television in the office wondering what was going to happen next.

But, you know that took time. It was a distraction, in one way—not to minimize it at all. But, in the church we just expect that before the Feasts, both spring and fall, trials are going to happen. Distractions are going to come up, and there are going to be activities galore. Things just speed up or intensify during those periods right before the feasts and holy days. We accept this as a fact of life anymore. It is just life. We expect it.

But when the holy days finally come, ahhh! We can finally relax a bit. All of the preparations are finished. Hopefully all the problems have been solved. The wrinkles have been ironed out. And we can enjoy the feasts properly. We can enjoy the fellowship, the food, the messages, and whatever activities that are planned.

More than any other time of the year, I think we get this feeling of relaxation at *this* feast—the fall feast. Many of us just rush, rush, rush right up until the Day of Atonement. We keep the Day of Atonement, and then we hop in our car, or hop on the plane, and we rush to the Feast. And, when we finally get here, and we get our room, we go ahhh! We made it! We are at the feast!

That is proper! Because, the Feast of Tabernacles is a foretaste of God's rest—the Millennium, the Kingdom of God, the one thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ as King of kings. There is a great deal of rest that is supposed to be involved in this feast. We are coming out of the world in a great measure for seven days—eight adding on the Last Great Day—and we get a chance to picture, in a small way, what it is going to be like in the Millennium.

There is, however, a general misconception of God's rest, because it is called the rest of God. Today, what I would like to look at is what God's rest means in terms of the Millennium—the 1000-year reign of Christ.

It may seem like we will be starting off way out, but we will slowly circle back into the subject. I hope to go through this first part very quickly so that we can spend more time on the latter principles.

Let us start in II Peter 3:1. Here in the last chapter of Peter's writings, he gives us a little idea of what the prophetic sequence of events is as we come toward the end. And he does this, as he says in the first chapter, as a reminder to us—it is a bit of a summary of the way things

are—and to stir us up to do the right thing.

II Peter 3:1-3 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts. . . .

So, here he gives us the time element of it. He is talking about the time of the end, the last days.

II Peter 3:4 . . .and saying, [these are the scoffers] "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

I think that if I had given this sermon before September 11th, this would be a little bit more understandable. Now there are a lot more people beginning to say, "Hey, things are nOt like they have been in the past." Some people are beginning to wake up a little bit. The scoffers, they are still out there. Do not get me wrong. But, there are some that have taken the September 1th attack as a warning, and that is good.

II Peter 3:5-6 For this they [the scoffers] willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.

What he is doing is giving us a contrast, or comparison, between the same type of feeling that occurred before the flood happened. And God had prophesied of that as well through Noah, at least 120 years in advance, that he would bring a great flood upon the earth. And of course, Noah was supposed to then make an ark for the salvation of those 8 souls, and also the animals that God gathered to him.

So just as happened then, is going to happen in the last days. There would be scoffers. They would go on doing exactly what they had always been doing. Sin would be rampant. Things would go on. People would live, and work, and marry, and give in marriage, and it seems like things were going gangbusters and then, suddenly things start happening at a very rapid pace.

II Peter 3:7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

There! He said in one verse what it took me three minutes to say. By God's Word, which he has prophesied by, that this would happen at the end just as it did in the days of Noah.

II Peter 3:8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing. . .

It is interesting that he introduces it that way. It is like this is very important. If you forget all these other things, do not forget this one thing. . .

II Peter 3:8-9 . . .that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

I think that Peter was giving something specific for our understanding of how prophetic time works. But, more generally, what he was trying to say was that God looks at time far differently than we do—one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day. We look at time because we are so finite; we only live 70 years, and if by strength, 80. And a thousand years seems like such a long time!

But, God does not look at time that way. A thousand years to Him is almost a blink of an eye. One day here. How quickly do we go through one day? Yeah, I know, a stupid question—24 hours. It all moves at the same speed. But it seems to us to go by in a flash. And with God, that is how one thousand years goes by.

So, our understanding of things—we want to speed everything up. But, God takes such a more leisurely pace in a way because of what He says there in verse 9. He wants to give us a chance to repent and give as many other people a chance to repent before He finally brings on all this wreck and destruction that will have to come because of sin.

Verse 10 is the wreck and destruction that is coming.

II Peter 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

I went that far in the chapter because I wanted to pick this up in verse 12, "the day of God." We usually think of this in terms of the "Day of the Lord." But, the Lord and God are the same entity. It is God's day. And Peter has said already, in verse 8, that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years.

So, this gives us a very good reason to think that the day of God—God's day—would be one thousand years long. Let us go to Psalm 90:4. This is a psalm that Moses wrote. He was evidently a very good lyricist. I do not know how musically inclined he was, but he has several songs in the Bible.

Psalm 90:4 For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

Guess where Peter got the idea that a thousand years is like a day to God? Moses, the prophet upon whom The Prophet was modeled. Or maybe, because God was the one who raised up Moses, Moses was the one that God fashioned to be as much like the Prophet that would come. And, through him, we have the idea of a thousand years as one day.

It is very interesting that Peter plucks this out of Psalm 90 because this psalm also talks about judgment just as II Peter 3 does. Verses 5 through 12 are all about judgment, and how we have only a short time. Moses implores God to teach us to number our days so we may gain a heart

of wisdom. That is exactly what Peter said there in II Peter 3. What kind of persons ought you to be because this judgment is coming very quickly, and we are in the very midst of it?

Of course, Christ's return is foreshadowed in verse 13 of Psalm 90, "Return, O Lord! How long? And have compassion on your servants." These are the same ideas that Peter talked about there in II Peter 3. That is what he was talking about, the Day of the Lord—the return of Christ—how long it could be. A day is as a thousand years.

Are you getting the idea, here, that there is an underlying current of timing that is slowly coming to the surface so that we can pick out a little more clearly when these events are going to occur? Obviously, we are not going to know the day or the hour. But, we can get a general idea of when this is going to begin.

Let us go now to Revelation 20 and just hammer this down.

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. [let us skip down to the last sentence of this verse]. . . And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

There we have very conclusive, detailed to the point, emphasis that the day of God is indeed a thousand years. The day—time or period—the Millennium when Christ reigns is a thousand years long.

Let us go to Genesis 2. Just keep in the back of your mind that we are talking about God's rest here. Remember, chapter one, of course, is the six days of creation. It goes through all the way to the creation of Adam.

Genesis 2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Here we have the first allusion of the Bible of the day of God, or the rest of God. And it is put in terms of the seventh-day Sabbath. This also helps us to get another clue into place about this timing of things. Because what the creation week prefigures is man's day. This time of the physical creation took six days. And if a day is as a thousand years to God, this gives man, under Satan's influence, six thousand years. Then the ~~th~~ day, when God rested from the work that He had created and made, that is God day—the thousand years that He has given himself to be the major influence upon man.

So, we see here these things coming together: The day of the Lord; the day of God; the rest of God; the thousand years as a day; the six days of the physical creation; and the seventh day being God's rest—upon which the spiritual creation is done.

Let us fit the Feast of Tabernacles in here. Please turn to Leviticus 23. I just want to pick up a few points here. Like I said, we are slowly going to be circling toward the main topic here. But, I want to give this background because I do not want to be accused of assuming certain things. And, I hope that I am not.

Leviticus 23:34 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ` The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD.

Here is another time period of one week.

Leviticus 23:41-43 You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the BRD your God.

As we mentioned on the first day of the Feast, we have seven days as a time of judgment—a period of judgment. A process is occurring. And the people dwell in booths symbolizing an unsettled existence—being on a journey, being on a pilgrimage, being ready to move whenever God acts. Now, back to Exodus 23. I want to pick this point up as well. Remember this is the three times in a year material.

Exodus 23:16 . . .and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field.

As we mentioned on Tuesday, this is another part of the Feast symbolism—a time of harvest. So, we have the harvest symbolism, the booth symbolism, seven days being symbolic of a process of time of judgment, and also it is a picture of the Millennium. That is what it all comes down to.

So everything points forward to the Feast of Tabernacles being a type of the rest of God—the thousand-year reign of Christ. And, remember, we also went through Revelation 19 and 20 where we showed the sequence of the holy days fits the events found there: Trumpets, the return of Christ; Atonement, the binding of Satan; Tabernacles, being Christ's reign; and the Last Great Day, being the Great White Throne Judgment. All these things come together under the major heading of God's rest.

We have finished all that circling, now we are going to go directly to Psalm 95 where God's rest is addressed very directly. Believe it or not, God's rest is only mentioned once. It is the last word of the last verse. But, it is very important that we get this background.

This is a psalm of praise. It is really a song of the Sabbath day. But remember, we have already shown that the seventh-day Sabbath is a type of God's rest, because that is when at creation God rested from the work that he had created and made. So this psalm of the Sabbath gives us some clues about the Sabbath day rest and also about the Millennium, God's rest, and one other thing, which I will mention here shortly.

Psalm 95:1-5 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also. The sea is His, for He made it; [an allusion to creation] and His hands formed the dry land.

All these things are beginning to come together in type and symbolism.

Psalm 95:6-7 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.

Now it starts to get pretty personal. This Great God who created all things is our God. And, we are his. The last part of verse 7, all the way to verse 11:

Psalm 95:7-11 Today, if you will hear His voice: "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when our fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

It is a very direct and uncompromising statement from God, because they had continued to rebel against him. That was it. They would not enter. They would be kept out of the land.

There are three different settings here combined into one psalm. The first I mentioned already, it is a Sabbath psalm. The word "Sabbath" is not really even present there. But it is obvious with the allusions to God's rest, which occurred on the 7th day back during creation, and to the actual fact here in verse 5, that God made the sea and dry land. We are looking back at creation; we are looking to the rest of God, which is on the Sabbath.

The second setting, which is here, which I have not mentioned before, is your own personal day of salvation. Notice in verse 7 it said "Today." Now that could be an allusion to the Sabbath, but if you look at that which comes after it, it is talking about the wilderness wanderings, and the period of judgment that God gave the children of Israel. Our period of judgment is an anti-type of that. So, the second setting is one's own day of salvation, and the last several verses here of Psalm 95 are a warning not to follow the very poor example of the Israelites, because the same thing will happen to us that has happened to them if we follow their example.

So He says, "Don't do that! Don't harden your hearts as in the rebellion." That is talking about a specific incident, but it could be any rebellion in its more general sense. Do not harden your hearts to God. That is the worst thing that could happen. Our hearts need to be soft. Remember that God always told Israel that they had a heart of stone, and, that finally when he changed them, he would give them a heart of flesh. They also had a stiff neck and an iron forehead.

(That would be a good thing for somebody to draw. It would make an interesting picture—the typical Israelite.)

The third setting, which I have already mentioned, is the time of God's reign in the Millennium. And that is seen in a prophetic sense. We will see a little bit more of that later when we finally get to Hebrews the 3rd and 4th chapters.

But, verse 11 adds this new concept. I say it is new, being God's rest. I say new because nowhere else up to this point in the scriptures is "My rest" contemplated. God's rest.

It is obviously alluded to in symbolic form in Genesis 2:2-3 because God rested on the 7th day, but a period of future time that is called God's rest is here for the first time contemplated, and given for us to understand.

First the Jews, I think, and anybody who is not aware of the one thousand-year reign of Christ, would think that this specifically means the Promised Land. Because, that is what he is talking about—the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites through the desert and their rest: Their settling down after that wandering, would have occurred in the land of Palestine, the Promised Land. So now we have another figure that comes into the mix of things. The Promised Land is a type of God's rest.

We need to feed that into our own wilderness journeys. I know that this is all basic stuff. We are going toward our own Promised Land. This is why I brought in the idea of booths earlier in the symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles. Because we are going through the same type of journey as the Israelites did, and we symbolically picture that each year at the Feast.

Now we are going to get into some technical matters about the actual word "rest" used here, in Psalm 95: 11.

This word in Hebrew is [phonetically] *menuchah*, and it means, "a resting place"—it is very simple and straight forward. It can also mean, "a time of rest." as in a period of rest. Let us say you go on vacation and it is going to be your rest from your labors. So, it does not have to deal with a place, it can also be a period of time.

It derives from a root word that is in Hebrew [phonetically] *nuwach*. You can see where it goes into that word *menuchah*. *Nuwach* means, "rest, repose, settle down, quiet, remain." They all have the idea of, "lying down, taking it easy, putting your feet up, and leaning back;" all those things we do when we rest ourselves.

It evidently refers to the peace and quiet, and the settling down one would expect after a long journey, or a hard day's work, just like God, it seems, rested. "It seems" is very important *It seems* that God rested after He created the heavens and the earth. But, it is much more than that.

Let us go to Genesis 2 again, because I did not go into the words before.

Genesis 2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

You would think that in Psalm 95 God inspired the psalmist there to use "*nuwach*," or "*menuchah*," that He would have used the same word to inspire Moses in writing Genesis 2: 2-3. But, you know, He does not? "*Nuwach*" is not found in Genesis 2. The "rest" here is the word "*sha'bat*", not Sabbath, but *sha'bat*. It is a verb. It is the root word from which the noun for Sabbath—*sab'bat*—comes from.

This is the verb form of that root—*sha'bat*. A root means that it is a word from which other words come from.

Most of us coming up in the church, growing, and doing the studying we do, think that *sha'bat* means rest. Well, you have got another *think* coming. It does not mean rest; well, not entirely.

Sha'bat means, "to stop," "to cease," "to desist." Is that not interesting?

Let us think about this for a minute. Does God need rest? No. He is never weary. He does not need rest at all. He could go, go, go, go, go constantly for millions of years, and never need a rest. He is not a man like us. He does not get tired. He does not need refreshment, necessarily. He has life in Him. He can just do anything He wants. The energy flows from Him. So, why does God stop? That is what He did. He stopped.

Now, rest is an idea, which comes up in this word, because when you stop, you are at rest. But, it is not the first meaning here. The first meaning is to stop; the rest is a result of the stopping.

Obviously, a Sabbath rest, then, if you want to put this into an application, has to do with stopping something, and we get the rest as a side benefit. Very interesting! So, rest is a part of the Sabbath day. We should rest on the Sabbath. Usually, we are able to sleep just a little bit longer that day, because we do not have to get up and go to work. But, our major part of the Sabbath is stopping something, at least in this context.

What do we cease from on the Sabbath day? That is an easy question to answer, but, we will still go to a scripture.

Exodus 20:8-11 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

So, what do we stop doing on the Sabbath day? Our work. Our labors. Very simple. What do we do though? Do we just rest on the Sabbath day? Do we just take that side benefit and spend our whole day resting? Not in God's scheme of things.

What do you start on the Sabbath day once you stop your own labors? You do God's things! God calls it "The day you stop," with the implication that you should start doing something else, not just rest—that is the lazy man's way to keep the Sabbath, and it will get him nowhere. God wants us to stop doing other things, and start doing His things.

In Isaiah 58:13, (where in the previous verses it has gone through the fast that God desires), begins probably the most detailed section where God tells us what we stop doing, and we can then understand what we start doing.

Isaiah 58:13a "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him. . .

How do we honor Him? It says here by stopping—stop doing your own ways, stop finding your own pleasure, stop speaking your own words.

Isaiah 58:13b . . .not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words.

Now, if we go up earlier in the chapter, we can see some of the things He wants us to do, because the fast that He is talking about there is also a Sabbath day. And, He gives us a good outline of things we can do that are acceptable on the Sabbath day—loose the bonds of wickedness, let the oppressed go free, break every yoke, give our bread to the hungry, and bring to your house the poor who are cast out. It is okay to do good works, as long as they are done in a godly manner, and not for personal ambition to be seen. Of course, the attitude is always important.

What I am trying to get at, here, is that verse 13 shows us the things that we stop doing because it is the day of stopping, with the implication that we start doing God's things because it is His holy day.

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

It obviously refers us back to the creation, "for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth," and then it says, God "rested the seventh day." Would you not think that God would have put "shab'bat" there? Because, this is indeed the Sabbath commandment, but no, it is "nuwach," the one that means, "rest, repose, lie down, take it easy, and lean back." This could make your head spin.

What it shows us is that "nuwach" is something we also do on "shab'bat," that when we stop, we rest. Yes, God wanted that idea to be in there, because He does want us to rest, because our lives in the world are so frantic, and frenetic, especially as the time of the end draws near, He wants us to be able to rest on His holy day. But, the main idea is to stop, and when we stop, we rest.

So, I do not want you to get the impression that resting is not part of the Sabbath day, because the fourth commandment obviously puts that in there, that we are to rest on the Sabbath day. But, the main idea (I know this to be certain) is stopping. We are going to go there to prove this. The two words are not synonymous. Just because they are used somewhat interchangeably, they are not synonymous. "Nuwach," and "Shab'bat" mean two different things. "Nuwach" means "to rest." "Shab'bat" means "to cease or stop."

The reason I know these two words are not the same is because I consulted a Greek and Hebrew scholar by the name of Paul of Tarsus. Do you know what he does? He translates into Greek Genesis 2: 2 which uses the word, "Shab'bat," meaning to stop.

What does he translate it into?

Hebrews 4: 4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works."

This is where we get a Greek lesson. Keep two words straight.

Except for Hebrews 4: 9, every occurrence of the word "rest" between Hebrews 3: 7 and Hebrews 4: 10 (most of chapters 3 and 4) is the word katapausis, and its variants. It does not mean, "rest," as they have translated it here, but it means "to cease," or "to end."

You might ask why, if they knew Paul translated it from the Hebrew into the Greek as "katapausis," why did they not put "cease" there? Because they were referencing Genesis 2 where the translators have always translated it as "rested." But, Paul chose the correct Greek word which translates the Hebrew word, "Shab'bat," as to cease.

Who in the world knew Hebrew and Greek better than the apostle Paul? I do not know. He was quite a scholar.

The other word that would mean rest, that Paul could have chosen to put in here, is a similar word to katapausis. There is a change in the preposition in the form of the prefix. This word is "anapausis." So we have "katapausis," and "anapausis." All the difference is "kata" verses "ana." This is because the root, "pauo" means "to cease," or "to stop," or, "to leave off doing something."

The root meaning of the Greek word, then, means, "to stop," and you change the definition of your word by prefixing a preposition to it.

The differences then, are "kata" and "ana." They are opposites as far as prepositions go in Greek. "Kata" means "down." "Ana" means "up." So, what you have here is that "katapausis" is a "down-cessation," or a "down-stoppage." And, "anapausis" means "an up-cessation," or "an up-stoppage."

Now, we do not think like this. Greeks have a different way of looking at the world than we do, and it is reflected in their language. What would you think an "up-cessation" means, verses a "down-cessation?" It is a matter of products or results.

The first one, katapausis, because it is given the prefix "kata," meaning down, is negative, or neutral in its outlook. Anapausis because it is given the prefix "ana," meaning up, is positive, or uplifting.

When you stop something everything slows down and stops and nothing positive is happening. It is just stopped. That is katapausis. It is a stoppage—a cessation. Activity ceases.

Anapausis means, rest, because, when you rest, you are uplifted. You have stopped your work, let us say, and you rest, and it brings benefit to you. So, that is an "up-stoppage." Funny way those Greeks think. I would have never put it together like that, but that is the difference between these two words.

Let us go to Matthew 11 and we will see Jesus himself using the word "anapausis," and, we will see exactly what He meant. The context shows perfectly what He meant. Verse 29, a memory scripture for some of us:

Matthew 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Now, it would be dumb to put the word "katapausis" in there, "You will find *stoppage* for your souls?" Or, "*ceasing* for your souls?" No, He used "anapausis," meaning rest, or repose. It is very clear, here, that it means rest; the relaxation one gets from stopping.

One more example, Revelation 4:8 where it is also very clear what anapausis means.

Revelation 4:8 And the four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

It is very clear what they do too. The apostle John is describing beings who are always praising God. They never rest.

Now, you could say that "stoppage" would work there too, and it would. But John chose the word *anapausis* to mean that these beings never rest. They never repose; they never do anything else. They are always praising God, eternally.

Back to Hebrews 3. The apostle Paul quotes Psalm 95 in verses 7-11.

Hebrews 3:7-11 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, `They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, `They shall not enter My rest.'"

What he is doing is giving us a New Testament application of these five verses.

Hebrews 3:12-13 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

This is where that one setting comes in very clearly, your personal day of salvation. That is your "today." This is a warning, and an exhortation to take full advantage of the time and not follow the example of the children of Israel. Verse 14 gives the reason:

Hebrews 3:14 For we have become partakers of Christ. . .

We have become his body, as we have just heard, if...[notice the conditional statement]...IF!...

It is not that we are forevermore partakers of Christ, because we are right now in a time where we could go either way, *if* we are not careful.

Hebrews 3:14. . .we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, . . .

If we maintain our first love, let us say, all the way to the time that God chooses to let us die, or changes us into spirit.

Hebrews 3:15 While it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

Hebrews 4:1-3 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed [This is a very important verse] do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, `They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

What he is saying is that from the time of creation, this plan has been going apace. This is how God set it up to work. The people of Israel did not enter that rest. But, we have taken their place, as it were, and are in the process of entering that rest. That is why it uses the phrase, "do enter," because it is talking about a process that is ongoing. We are a part of it now, and it will continue on if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence to the end.

Hebrews 4:4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest."

What he's doing is showing that the Sabbath day, the time of creation, the wilderness wanderings of Israel, and this future time of rest are all linked together. He is giving proofs here. And, the most important fact, let us say, is "You are in the thick of it."

Hebrews 4:6-7 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."

How many times does he have to tell us that?! I should have counted it up, but it is at least four times that it says, "they shall not enter my rest," or "do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion," or he uses the word, "Today." He is really giving us a pep talk here, not to let this slip.

Hebrews 4:8 For if Joshua had given them rest, [And, obviously, from the way he puts it here, it did not happen], then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.

Because the plan would have been fulfilled. The rest of God would have occurred, and that would have been it. We would have been several thousand years after the Millennium, if that were what was supposed to have occurred. If that had occurred in Joshua's day, then the thousand years of Christ's rule would have started, and we would be, what two or three thousand years after that, if we had existed at all. But, it did not happen then!

So, there is still a future rest. And, we are a part of it. Verse 9, there conclusion here:

Hebrews 4:9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

And, who are the people of God? You are—you and me.

Hebrews 4:10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also [and they get it right here!] *ceased* from his works as God did from His.

Finally, at the end, they used the right word. That is very important!

"For he who has entered His rest"—God's rest is what he is saying here. You who have entered God's rest have also ceased from your works.

God's rest is the future time of the thousand-year reign of Christ. And when we enter that rest, we will have ceased from our works, as God ceased from his works.

Now we are getting into the Millennium. But, before we do that, I want to say this as an addition:

When God stopped His creative efforts in making the physical earth, and all that is in it, He rested. He stopped. He ceased working. And what that did was it set us an example, as it said in Exodus 20:11, that we are to cease working, just as God ceased from working. He was telling us in His own actions how we are to keep the Sabbath day.

Paul is saying that the future rest of God is a lot like the Sabbath. There is a link here between God's rest, and the Sabbath day and the example God set at creation.

Hebrews 4:9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

I said that this was the one place where *katapausis* is not used. This is the word, *sabbatismos*. What Paul did was he Grecianized a Hebrew word. He took the word from Genesis 2:2, *shab'bat*, and he made it into a Greek word, and changed it from a verb to a noun, and it went from *shab'bat* to *sabbatismos*.

What he is saying here is that there remains a *stoppage*—a cessation—for the people of God. So, as I said, this does a couple of things: It links the weekly Sabbath with the future rest of God, and it also characterizes the future rest of God.

It gives us some clues about what the rest of God is. And what it means is it is a time of the cessation of certain activities, as we do every week, we stop doing certain activities, but it also implies the beginning godly activities. Because, we all know that God did not stop creating there at the end of the sixth day of creation. All He stopped was His physical work. The spiritual work has gone on ever since, and is still going on, and will continue to go on, as long as there are human beings to convert.

And that is what Paul does here. He clues us in on what the goal of the millennial period is. The goal of the millennial period is a goal of the Sabbath day: To change the focus of the entire world from doing its own ungodly, carnal activities—sometimes done in rebellion against God, as the Israelites did—to doing godly things forever and ever in love toward God and fellow man.

That was a mouthful. In a nutshell though, God's rest is the conversion of humanity. Is that not simple? It is to take all of mankind who have been going like the Israelites have in rebellion against God, and bring them into His rest where they stop being rebellious, and they start being godly. And, they will have rest for their souls, just like we read in Matthew 11:29. They will take His yoke upon themselves, and do His work. And, that is the rest of God, in its future sense.

So, certain verses begin to take on new meaning. John Plunkett reminded me of a saying, "A change is as good as a rest," because the Millennium is not going to be a time of no activity. It is going to be a time of great activity. People who are going to be alive as human beings in that time are going to be busy. There is going to be a lot to do. But, the busyness is going to be directed properly. It is going to have a goal to it that is far beyond the very selfish goals that we have today.

Isaiah 4:2-3 In that day the Branch of the LORD [an obvious reference to Christ] shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped. And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—

Now, this could refer to the saints who will be changed, and I think that it certainly means that, because those who are changed will remain with Jesus Christ and be with him as kings and priests for a thousand years. But, it could also mean those humans that are living there, too. Let Us go on.

Isaiah 4:3b—everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem.

That seems to encapsulate, or include both humans, and divine.

Isaiah 4:4a When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning.

He has just talked about the return of Israel. And he throws Zion in here, which is usually, a reference to the church, or can be. But, he is talking about both here.

Isaiah 4:5 Then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night.

What is that an allusion to? The wilderness wandering, the period of judgment, living in booths—it mentions dwellings here—and saying that during this time, everybody in Jerusalem will be on this track—being converted. And they will be called holy.

Everybody that knows how difficult it is to become converted, and all the work that it takes to change, knows that this will be a time not of relaxation, but a time of stopping one thing and doing another, and working hard to make sure that that happens.

Let us go to Isaiah 56, because I want to bring in the Gentiles here:

Isaiah 56:6-8 "Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants—Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, "Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him."

So, it is not only Israel who is going to be coming into this time period where they will be converted, and changed from their ways of rebellion to God's godly ways, but also Gentiles, foreigners, and anyone whom God chooses to call. Not just Israel.

Isaiah 32:16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

These are two opposites. A wilderness is a place not inhabited. A fruitful field is in a place that is inhabited. A wilderness is a place where nothing beneficial, necessarily, grows. The fruitful field is a place that produces a harvest.

So, what Isaiah is showing here is that justice and righteousness will be everywhere. This is something that is going to, as we have seen in other places, cover the whole earth as the

waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 32:17 The work of righteousness will be peace, [rest, relaxation, repose, and a lack of stress]; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever.

Is that not nice? Can you not wait for that? I cannot for God's rest.

Isaiah 32:18-19 My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places, though hail comes down on the forest, and the city is brought low in humiliation.

We are entering now. But they, at that time, will enter God's rest. And, it will not only be a time when they will relax—there will be some of that—it will be also very busy—but the main point is that it will be a time when they will be converted.