

## **“BELIEF” AND “REST”**

**“For we also have had the gospel preached unto us, just as they did; but the message they heard did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said: ‘So I declared an oath in my anger, they shall never enter my rest’” (Heb. 4:2,3).**

Notice “we” and “they” in the text. “We” who believed have entered into rest, but “they” who did not believe did not enter into rest. Please also note the association between “belief” and “rest”. Those who “believed” entered into God’s rest, and the “unbelievers” did not.

The first specific reference to keeping the Sabbath is in Exodus 16:23. In this passage the Lord commanded Israel to gather manna six days but to rest on the seventh. Manna, as you know, fell from heaven for only six days in the week. On five days of the week no manna could be saved over night without stinking and being filled with maggots. On the sixth day, however, enough manna could be gathered for both the sixth and seventh days and it was miraculously preserved. As we mentioned, no manna fell on the seventh day! Some of the people didn’t believe God, however, and went out to gather manna on the Sabbath anyhow. God was not pleased with their disobedience and said to Moses: **“How long will you refuse to keep my commands and instructions?” (Ex. 16:28)** It is important to remember that the day of rest involved believing God. (Ex. 16:21-30)

It seems that the Sabbath was a special sign between God and the Israelites. Note: **“The Israelites are to observe the sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested” (Ex. 31:16,17).**

## **THE SABBATICAL YEAR**

Not only were the Israelites to rest on the Sabbath Day, they were also commanded to observe a Sabbath Year. Every seven years they were to let the land rest for an entire year and enjoy a Sabbath.

**“The Lord said to Moses at Mount Sinai, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.” (Lev. 25:1-7)**

As we have already mentioned, it takes a measure of faith to not plant crops for an entire year. If you believed God you could rest for that year. If you did not believe God you would not rest but would continue to work like you always did. Unfortunately, the Israelites did not believe God and did not let the land enjoy her Sabbaths.

God warned Israel that if they refused to observe the Sabbatical Year he would scatter them among the nations and the land would be laid waste: **“Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all**

**the time it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.” (Lev. 26:34,35).**

This unbelief and disobedience apparently lasted for 490 years. Consequently, 70 Sabbath Years were neglected. That’s why God allowed His people to be taken as captives into Babylon for seventy years. Thus we are told: **“The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah” (2 Chron 36:21).**

We repeat, there is a direct association between “belief” and “rest”. The fact that the Israelites didn’t rest as God commanded is proof that they didn’t believe that God would take care of them.

### THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

Every 50<sup>th</sup> year was to be a year of Jubilee (See Lev. 25:1-55). This was also a Sabbath Year. The many things that God commanded to take place during that year included no sowing or reaping. Remember! The 49<sup>th</sup> year was a regular Sabbatical Year in which the land was to rest. The 50<sup>th</sup> year, or Jubilee, was also a Sabbath Year in which the land was to rest. On the third year they could plant their crops but would have to wait for a harvest. This meant that on the 48<sup>th</sup> year they had to raise enough food to last for three years. God, of course, knew this and said: **“I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in” (Lev. 25:21).**

If you “believed” God you would rest for two Sabbath Years in a row. If you “didn’t believe” God you wouldn’t rest.

It is generally believed that the first stage of the Babylonian Captivity began around 606 B.C. If we are correct that Sabbatical Years had been neglected for 490 years, then this unbelief and disobedience dates back half a millennium to the reign of King Saul (490 + 606 = 1096 B.C.)

Is this possible? Yes! We have evidence that other specific commands of God were also neglected for long periods of time. Take, for example, God’s instructions regarding the Feast of Tabernacles. The Scriptures are clear that during this feast **“All native born Israelites are to live in booths”**. Yet for 1,000 years they did not do so. This is clear from Neh. 8:17: **“The whole company that had returned from exile built booths and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great”**. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem around 444 B.C. Joshua the son of Nun died around 1444 B.C. at the age of 110. Thus Israel did not live in booths during the Feast of Tabernacles for 1,000 years. They apparently observed the feast in their own way, but neglected the inconvenience of living in booths.

Observing the Jubilee for an entire year, of course, was far more demanding than living in booths for only a week. This raises the possibility that the Year of Jubilee might never have been completely and correctly observed by the Israelites.

If Israel did correctly observe the Year of Jubilee it would take a lot of faith. It involved letting the land rest for two complete years in a row, releasing all slaves, and returning all land to its original owners. Again, those who “believed” would do it, and those who “didn’t believe” wouldn’t.

## REST FOR YOUR SOULS

Jesus said: **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).**

The “rest” that Jesus promised is preceded by three commandments: “come”, “take my yoke”, and “learn from me”. Those who believe Jesus will obey these commands and thus find rest for their souls. Those who don’t believe and don’t obey will not find that rest.

In 1957 Fortune Magazine named J. Paul Getty as the richest living American. In 1966 the Guinness Book of Records named him the world’s richest private citizen. Getty, however, had trouble resting. In 1973 his 16 year old grandson was kidnapped and a demand was made for a \$17 million ransom. When a prompt response was not received the kidnappers cut off the boy’s ear and mailed it to his grandfather. They promised further mutilation if the ransom was not paid. Ultimately the ransom demand was reduced to \$3 million, it was paid, and the boy was released. This, however, heightened Getty’s fear for his own safety. The increased security at his mansion included vicious guard dogs and watchmen outside, and also a special guard and dog standing watch outside his bedroom door. Steel bars were fitted on all 500 windows of his mansion, and his bedroom door was embedded with steel. An array of weapons was on the table by his bed. Perhaps his inability to rest resulted from a lack of faith. Isaiah warned: **“But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. There is no peace, says my God to the wicked” (Is. 57:20,21).**

Note the contrast! Isaiah promised to those who trust in the Lord: **“You will be kept in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you” (Is. 26:3).** This “perfect peace” is beautifully illustrated in the life of the Apostle Peter. The story is found in Acts 12. Herod had just killed James the brother of John with the sword and arrested Peter intending to put him on trial after the Passover. On the night before the trial Peter was bound with two chains and was sleeping between two soldiers. He was sleeping so soundly that the angel of the Lord had to strike him on the side to wake him up (Acts 12:7). Such peace would not have been possible without faith. As you know, Peter was miraculously delivered from death on that occasion. Jesus promised to give Peter a peace that the world could not give, and Peter believed it (Jn. 14:27). Jesus also promised: **“I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33).** The fact that Peter believed Jesus is why he could lie down and rest even though he was chained between two soldiers.

One Bible word for “guard” is “phroureo”. It is a military term used to describe how important people were protected by “guards” in time of war. Interestingly enough this is the very word Paul used to describe the peace that is available to all believers. He said: **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6,7).** The prelude to this peace begins with trusting God so completely that you don’t worry about anything. It further requires that when you pray and make petitions to God you

always find something to be thankful for. When you do these things something miraculous takes place. You don't even have to hire a body guard or embed your bedroom door with steel. When you believe God suddenly, the "peace of God that transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus".

## DO YOU BELIEVE GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU?

There is a sense in which faith and works go together. James wrote: **"show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do" (Ja. 2:18).**

There also comes a time, however, when you have done everything you know to do and must "be still" and trust in God. When Israel was trapped between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea, for example, human effort was of no value. That's when Israel trusted in God and not in horses and chariots (Ps. 20:7). Moses said unto the people: **"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (Ex. 14:13 KJV).** Their trust in God made the difference! The Red Sea parted for them, but drowned the Egyptian army. They trusted in God and He took care of them!

Famous businessman J.C. Penny went bankrupt after the stock market crash of 1929. He was \$7,000,000 in debt and had no way to pay his creditors. At that time Dr. Elmer Eggleston admitted him to a sanitarium and ordered nurses to watch him day and night. With no money to pay for his treatment Mr. Penny resigned himself to death and wrote farewell letters to his wife and children. He awoke early the next morning surprised to be alive.

Here is his testimony in his own words: *"But in the morning I was alive. To awake again was a strange kind of surprise. In some vague way I knew there must be a reason. What that reason could be I had no idea, nor there seem any value in straining to puzzle it out. "I felt restless and apprehensive. It was still too early for the day nurse to come on duty. In order to do something, anything, I got up, put on my clothes and wandered downstairs...I felt as though an immense aloneness closed me in. I stood there, uncertain, in an emptiness that seemed to me to have no horizon. "Stealing softly along a corridor I heard the thread of an old, familiar hymn: Be not dismayed whate'er betide. God will take care of you ... "It seemed to be coming from a part of the building which contained the chapel. Seemingly without volition I moved slowly toward the sound. "The music grew clearer, the words distinct- All you may need, He will provide God will take care of you ... Lonely and sad, from friends apart ... No matter what may be the test ... God will take care of you. "I entered the chapel, sank down into a seat at the back. Lean, weary one, upon His breast, God will take care of you. "Quietly someone read a passage from the Scripture. 'Come unto me, all ye that ore heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ...Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest in your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light ...' "Prayer followed. "Within myself, spontaneously, I groaned, 'Lord, I can do nothing. Will you take care of me?' "In the next few moments something happened to me. I have never been able to explain it clearly in words and cannot now. I believe it was a miracle. "I had a feeling of being lifted out of an immensity of dark space into spaciousness of warm and brilliant sunlight. The thought flashed through my wearied mind that if I had held myself responsible for such success as I had achieved, so too was I, and I alone responsible for all the trouble that had descended upon me. But the great thing was that now I knew; God with His boundless and matchlessly patient love was there to help me. God had answered me when I cried out,'Lord I can do nothing. Will you take care of me?' This was His answer. "A weight lifted from my spirit. I came out of that room a different man, renewed. I had gone in bowed with a paralysis of spirit,*

*utterly adrift. I came forth with a soaring sense of release, from a bondage of gathering death to a pulse of hopeful living. I had I glimpsed God."*

This all happened in the 1930's. Mr. Penny made a complete recovery, spiritually, physically, emotionally, and financially. He lived another forty years and died a very rich man on Feb. 12, 1971 at the age of 96.

Nobody can survive without rest. The average person requires approximately 8 hours of sleep every day. This means that we rest 1/3 of our life. What you believe affects your ability to rest. If you truly believe God will take care of you, then you rest differently from an unbeliever.

Remember! It is those who "believe" who enter into "rest"!

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