

The lifting up of Christ

The apostle Paul was clear on the gospel he was preaching in every place. He wrote to the Corinthians, 'I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified'. Paul proclaimed the word of the cross so that Christ was lifted up before the eyes of all. For this reason, he could say to the Galatians that Jesus had been publicly portrayed as crucified before their eyes. We know the region of Galatia is quite a distance from Jerusalem. It is unlikely that any of these believers would have witnessed the crucifixion, and yet through the preaching of Paul, they had evidently beheld the 'lifting up' of Jesus.

Jesus declared, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up'. And more than this, 'If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself'. The question before us is: have we beheld Jesus lifted up? And more than this, is this our gospel or have we embraced another gospel? The word of the cross is foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews. However, the cross is the full revelation of the wisdom and power of God. It is only as we behold Christ lifted up that we see the kingdom. This illumination is an essential part of being born from the first. We are illuminated to look upon Him whom we have pierced. We see, we mourn, we repent, and we believe. The evidence of this belief and faith is that we run and join ourselves to the fellowship of the cross so that we can be saved. We lay hold of the cross as the instrument of circumcision that deals with carnality and sin in our lives.

References:

1Co 2:2 Gal 3:1
Joh 3:3, 14 Joh 12:32
Zec 12:10 Joh 19:37
Rev 1:7 Jer 4:4

Further Study

1Co 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 3

The cross and offering

We have been considering the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus for some time. Jesus explained that we must be born from the first to see the kingdom, and born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus replied, 'How can these things be?' In response to this question, Jesus proceeded to draw his attention to the journey of the nation of Israel through the wilderness. He declared, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life'. In drawing this comparison, Jesus was making a significant point about the work of the cross in dealing with sin. Jesus declared that He would be lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness immediately before the most well-known passage in the Scripture. 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life'.

In both verses, we are compelled to believe 'into' Christ to apprehend eternal life. However, one verse describes the cross of Christ and the other describes the offering of Christ. It is important to understand the distinction between these two things. Yes, Jesus Christ is the Father's offering. He is the Passover Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. However, the process that He has established for dealing with our carnality and sin is the cross. And the cross is different from the altar in the tabernacle. In the first case, the cross is an instrument of judgement outside the camp, in a cursed place. We are reminded of the words of Paul, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'. We cannot lay hold of the provision of Christ's offering without likewise embracing the fellowship of the cross.

References:

Isa 53:10 Joh 1:29, 36
Heb 13:11-13 Gal 3:13
Deu 21:23 1Pe 2:24

Further Study

Joh 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 4

The serpent in the wilderness

Jesus said, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up'. Let us briefly recall the account. The people were travelling around the land of Edom and they became impatient because of the journey. Some translations say, 'The soul of the people became very discouraged on *the way*'. There was a journey through the wilderness for the people, which was 'the way of righteousness' for them. Nevertheless, it was immediately apparent that their hearts were incompatible and opposed to this way. They grumbled, complained, and spoke against God and His messenger, Moses. They accused Moses of bringing them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. Their carnality was obvious in their cry, 'There is no food, and no water, and we loathe this miserable food'. They certainly did not understand that 'man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God'.

The people were already dying in the wilderness, but they did not know it. They were dying because of carnality, sin, and the curse of the law upon them. Their grumbling and complaining was the evidence of the sin in their hearts that was killing them. However, the venom of the serpent had deceived them into thinking they would not die. Implicit within the venom of the serpent is the lie of Satan, 'You surely will not die'. The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people so that many died, to illustrate one big point – if you believe the lie, you will die! The intercession of Moses was not enough to save them. The Lord instructed Moses to lift up the serpent in the wilderness as the symbol of the cross of Christ. When the people looked up at the serpent in the wilderness, they saw, by illumination, that Christ would be lifted up as the full embodiment of sin for their sake.

References:

Deu 8:3, 15-16

Mar 4:4

1Co 10:6-11

Psa 78:19

Gen 3:4

Further Study

Num 21

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 5

What did they see?

When Moses lifted up the serpent on the pole, the people were not looking at a mystical symbol. They were looking, by the illumination of the sevenfold Spirit of God upon them, at Christ Himself. Christ was lifted up as the serpent because the Father 'made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf'. When the Israelites looked at the serpent on the pole, it was 'their sin' and 'their death' that was lifted up before their eyes. They understood that their sin was killing them; but much more than this, they understood that their sin, their grumbling, their murmuring, and their disobedience would pierce Christ. The prophet Isaiah declares, 'He was pierced through for our transgressions'. As this mighty and powerful illumination came upon them, the focus shifted from 'their suffering and death' to 'His suffering and death'. They were witnessing His death!

The death of the cross reveals the perfect love of God. And the love of Christ controls and constrains us to make one conclusion. If Christ died for all, then all died! If Christ fully identified with our sin and death, then we died with Christ, whether we want to or not. This is the reality for every person. The question is: on which side of the cross will we choose to die? In the first case, the cross is an instrument of judgement. It judges to a complete endpoint. However, because Christ willingly laid down His life, death could not hold Him. He came back from the death of sin. And He brought every believer who lays hold of Him to join the fellowship of the cross, back from the death of sin with Him. This illumination is the birthplace of faith for salvation. It is the faith that compels us to plant ourselves in the likeness of His death, so that by His wounds, our sin is cut off and we are healed.

References:

2Co 5:14, 21
Rev 1:18
Rom 6:5
Hos 6:1

Further Study

1Pe 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 6

What happened to the great multitude?

Let's consider the question: how many Israelites were delivered from captivity in Egypt? The Scripture accounts that it was about 600,000 men. When we include women and children, there was probably between one to two million Israelites, plus the mixed multitude that came with them from Egypt. It was a huge crowd of people that laid hold of the blood of the Passover Lamb and were delivered from Egypt. Now let's ask the next question: how many of these people went into the Promised Land? It is both staggering and sobering to consider that it was only two! It was only Joshua and Caleb. We know that Moses was saved, even though he didn't enter the Promised Land; but what about the rest of the people? The apostle Paul accounts that with 'most of them' God was not well-pleased and He scattered their bodies in the wilderness. The wilderness was the place of their eternal judgement.

Paul reminds us that these things happened to the Israelites as an example for us. It has been recorded in the Scripture for our admonition and instruction. Jude, the Lord's brother, reminds us that Jesus, our only Master and Lord, saved a people out of the land of Egypt and, subsequently, destroyed those who did not believe. It is Jesus Christ who is the Lord of hosts. He is the One who commanded the destroying angel in Egypt and the wilderness. And He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He judges righteously, and the work of the cross is destroying those who do not believe. This is a fearful consideration! What does it mean: 'those who do not believe'? It is clear that believing to come out of Egypt is not enough. There is a further dimension of faith that is absolutely essential in the life of every believer. We must believe to join the fellowship of the cross and cease from sin; otherwise, we will be destroyed in the wilderness.

References:

Jud 1:5 Num 14:30
Num 26:65 1Co 10:11
Lev 10:3
Exo 12:23, 37-38
Num 20:11-12

Further Study

2Pe 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 7

The circumcision of the cross

In the love and mercy of God, He has established the cross as the instrument of circumcision. The cross is the instrument of judgement, but it becomes the instrument of circumcision for us if we allow it to make a breach upon our hearts and lives. Paul proclaimed, 'We have been circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ'. It is the circumcision of the cross that deals with carnality. By this means, it saves our life and releases us from our bondage to the law of sin. We read in Paul's letter to the Romans that 'if you are living according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live'.

How is the cross, the knife of circumcision, applied to our lives? It is the 'word' of the cross. The book of Hebrews declares, 'The word is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart'. It is the heart of man that must be circumcised. This is a circumcision without hands. On the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter stood up and proclaimed, 'Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified'. All those who received this word began to look upon Him whom they had pierced. They were illuminated and convicted by the Spirit. The Scripture accounts that they were 'pierced to the heart'. They began to mourn and asked the brethren, 'What shall we do?' This was the evidence that the word of the cross had begun its work.

References:

Col 2:11
Heb 4:12
Zec 12:10
Rom 2:28-29

Further Study

Act 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 10

Grumbling and murmuring

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul identified a number of specific transgressions which caused the Israelites to die in the wilderness. We know these things have been written as an example for us so that we don't fall into the same judgement. He spoke of their idolatry at Mount Sinai and their immorality when they played the harlot with the Moabites. He also identified their continual 'testing' of the Lord through their carnality, unbelief, and disobedience, specifically referring to the account when they were destroyed by the serpents. And finally, Paul spoke of their grumbling and said that they were destroyed by the destroyer. This means that those who grumbled were subject to the same judgement as the Egyptians when the destroying angel killed the firstborn in every house.

Why was grumbling such a serious issue? The Lord considers grumbling to be such a serious issue because it becomes a leaven that potentially affects the entire body of Christ. His righteous anger burns on this matter for the sake of His body. Purging leaven from our houses is fundamental in the continuance of the Passover. If the leaven of grumbling and murmuring is not purged from our houses, then the blood of the Passover is no longer effective for us and we become subject again to the destroyer.

One of the major areas of grumbling for the Israelites was in response to the Lord's provision, the manna from heaven. From their perspective, it did not appear to be meeting their needs. They went so far as to say, 'We loathe this miserable food'. Likewise, grumbling about the 'true bread from heaven' was a major issue for the Jews throughout the ministry of Jesus. They demanded that He be a miracle worker for them, but they grumbled as soon as He began to say they needed to receive His word in the fellowship of His body.

References:

1Co 10:10-11 Exo 12:12-13
Heb 11:28 1Co 5:6-7
Num 21:5 Joh 6:32

Further Study

Joh 6

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 11

I brought you to Myself

What was the real purpose of the wilderness? The Lord sent Moses to say to Pharaoh, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness'. Right from the beginning, the Lord had a particular purpose in view. He was always going to take them through the wilderness. When the people came to Mount Sinai, the Lord instructed Moses to say, 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

The nation needed to obey the Lord's voice, through the word of Moses, and keep the covenant of sonship delivered to them. If they obeyed the word, it would have three major outcomes for them as a group of people. Firstly, they would be the Lord's 'own possession among all the peoples' as sons by adoption. Secondly, the Lord would establish His administration among them so that they could serve Him as a kingdom of priests and be a light to all nations. And thirdly, He brought them out of Egypt and into the wilderness to make them a 'holy nation'. It is this third outcome that is the primary reason for their wilderness journey. The Lord brought them into the wilderness so that they could behold Him lifted up, and He could enter into judgement with them there. When the nation stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses declared to them, 'Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin'.

References:

Exo 7:16 Exo 19:4-6
Exo 20:20 Deu 8:2
Isa 8:13
Eze 20:35-36

Further Study

Exo 19

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 12

The howling wilderness

When we consider the nature of the wilderness for the children of Israel, we may think of all the miraculous provision and protection. However, in the first case, the wilderness was the place of cursing. The Scripture calls it the 'great and terrible wilderness'. It is likewise called the 'howling waste of a wilderness'. It is the place of fiery serpents, scorpions, and thirsty ground where there is no water. These words paint a fairly vivid picture. The wilderness is the cursed place, outside the camp, but this is the place where the Lord firmly plants His cross.

To understand the meaning and purpose of the wilderness, it is helpful to consider the way Adam was sent from the garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord made an offering for them inside the garden. He clothed them with garments of skin from this offering and covered the shame of their nakedness. But He still needed to send them out of the garden. He said to Adam, 'Cursed is the ground because of you'. This is equally translated, 'Cursed is the ground for your sake'. The Lord cursed the ground and then sent Adam out to cultivate this ground for his sake, for his good. He established the cursed place as the context for dealing with Adam's sin.

This is the principle of the wilderness. It is the 'howling waste of a wilderness'; but because the Lord has planted His cross in this cursed place, it has become the context for the Lord to lay ahold of us by the heart and deal with our carnality and sin. The Lord humbles us in the wilderness, to deal with sin and do us 'good in the end'. We are reminded of the words of Paul, 'All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose'.

References:

Deu 8:16 Rom 8:28
Deu 32:10 Heb 13:12-13
Gen 3:17, 21-23

Further Study

Deu 8

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 13

Cursed for our sake

When Jesus was lifted up on the cross, the full extent of the curse was upon Him. 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.' This curse has two facets. And both of these facets of the curse are in the venom of the serpent. Firstly, it is the death that reigned from Adam to Moses on account of sin itself. This is the curse of corruption and death. Corruption and death was the result when Adam and Eve chose to receive the word of the serpent, instead of being obedient to the word of God. Satan, the serpent of old, is the father of lies from the very beginning. He promised life, but it only produced death. Secondly, it is the death that is imputed by penalty of the law. We recall that Satan is our adversary at law. He stands before the throne of God day and night, as 'the accuser of the brethren'. Accordingly, when Jesus was lifted up, fulfilling the type of the serpent in the wilderness, He became the full extent of the curse. He was truly cursed for our sake.

Having become sin, when the servants of the high priest laid hands upon Him in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus became accursed for our sake as He travelled outside the camp. He took upon Himself both elements of the curse. The high priest and the Jewish Sanhedrin imputed the full curse of the law upon Him and condemned Him to death. The whole council declared, 'He deserves death!' And further to this, He stood before Pilate and suffered at the hands of the Gentiles. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head. We recall that 'thorns and thistles' are the product of the curse from the beginning. When Jesus was lifted up on that lonely hill outside Jerusalem, called 'The Place of the Skull' and 'Golgotha', He was indeed cursed for our sake.

References:

Gal 3:13, 17-18

Joh 19:2, 17 Rom 5:14

Joh 8:44 Rev 12:10

2Co 5:21

Further Study

Gal 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 14

The cross brings a separation

The Scripture tells us that 'He who knew no sin became sin' and He became a curse for us. The judgement of God fell upon Him through the accusation of the law in the hands of Satan and the hands of evil men. Nevertheless, we know that Jesus did not open His mouth. He absorbed the serpent's venom, deception and lies. Being reviled, Jesus did not revile in return. He sought no justification. Thus, the testimony of the Lord prevailed. The truth was declared. We recall the words of Jesus: 'when you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I Am'. He was proven to be the spotless Lamb of God, bearing our sins in His mortal body. Thus, a separation was made between the serpent and the Lamb, between the lie and the truth.

As the spotless Lamb of God, Jesus fulfilled the law and nailed it back into its proper place. He abolished the enmity of the law and, accordingly, destroyed him who had the power of death. The serpent was lifted up to be cast out and destroyed. This fulfilled the words of Jesus concerning His lifting up, 'The ruler of this world will be cast out'. More than this, as the spotless Lamb of God and the serpent on the pole, Jesus condemned sin in His flesh. Having become sin, He carried it out in Himself to be judged. A separation was made! With every drop of His precious blood, sin was dying and He was coming back from the death of sin. As He died, sin also died. It was taken away to judgement. A separation was made between the body of sin and His mortal body which was doing the will of the Father.

References:

2Co 5:21 Gal 3:13
Joh 8:28 Joh 12:31
Isa 53:7 1Pe 2:23
Mat 5:17

Further Study

Heb 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 17

Mourning and godly sorrow

The prophet Zechariah spoke of the outcome of looking upon Him whom we have pierced. It is mourning. It is godly sorrow that leads to repentance. The Lord declared, 'I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn'. This kind of mourning is very different from the great cry that was heard in Egypt on the night that every firstborn was killed. The great cry in Egypt was the sorrow of the world which only produces death.

In the same way, the children of Israel cried greatly in the wilderness on a number of occasions, but it was not godly sorrow leading to repentance. When the spies brought back the negative report of the Promised Land, the entire congregation lifted up their voices and cried. They wept that night; but this was merely the expression of their sorrow because all their carnal aspirations were not going to be realised. Likewise, when Moses told the people that they would wander in the wilderness for forty years until they all died, they 'mourned greatly'. This was great sorrow because of the severity of their judgement; but again, this was not godly sorrow leading to repentance. Godly sorrow and genuine mourning are only possible when the Lord pours out a Spirit of grace and supplication upon us so that we look upon Him whom we have pierced. We read in Zechariah that every family, and every individual, must mourn alone. Every husband will mourn alone. Every wife will mourn alone. Genuine mourning is the beginning of restoration and healing. It is the beginning of attaining a true testimony.

References:

Zec 12:10

Exo 12:30

Num 14:1, 39

Act 2:37

Further Study

2Co 7

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 18

The law of sin

When Adam disobeyed God, sin entered the world, and death through sin. Sin took dominion and began to reign in their mortal bodies. Adam and Eve were separated from the life of God and dying. They became captives and prisoners to the law of sin and death. Sin now reigned in death. Gripped by the fear of death, they had been plunged into a desperate struggle for survival. They had no capacity to find life because every self-centred action brought forth death. This is the law of sin. The preoccupation of mankind, with his mind set on the flesh, became the need for satisfaction and the need for survival. Death reigned over all things as everyone began struggling for survival. Satan is able to hold all men captive to the law of sin by promoting the fear of death.

The carnal person believes they can pursue an image they have created for themselves and somehow escape the judgement of God. The carnal mind, preoccupied by worldly fulfilment and survival, begins to believe that such things are genuinely possible. They are living in denial. They are driven by fear and anxiety, and yet profess to be in control of their lives. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Instead of humbling themselves in repentance before God, they seek refuge in the ways of the world for comfort, peace, and security. Paul wrote about such men saying, 'They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator'. King David described mankind in this state by saying, 'Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes'. The purpose of the wilderness is to humble us so that we can know what is in our heart and begin to fear God.

References:

Rom 5:12 Rom 6:12
Heb 2:15 Rom 3:18
Psa 36:1 Luk 23:40

Further Study

Rom 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 19

Taking hold of the heart

What is the greatest dilemma for mankind? It is the condition of our hearts. The prophet Jeremiah declared, 'The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?' Jesus said, 'Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders'. No man has integrity before God in his heart. Until we look upon Him whom we have pierced and genuinely mourn, we are like those who have 'set up their idols in their hearts and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity'. This describes the condition of the carnal believer. The idol in their heart is the name they have created for themselves. They are full of speculations and every lofty thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God. The psalmist declared, 'The imaginations of their heart run riot'.

What is the greatest expression of the grace of God? It is to lay hold of us by the heart! This was the sovereign work of God toward the second generation of the Israelites in the wilderness. He led them in the wilderness for forty years to humble them, and test them, so that they would know what was in their hearts. This is the answer to Jeremiah's question concerning the heart; that is, 'who can understand it?' It is only as we look upon Him whom we have pierced that we understand the desperately wicked condition of our own heart. The Lord lays ahold of us by the heart as He begins to apply the word of the cross, the knife of circumcision, to us. The word of God is living and powerful. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. It discerns the deepest thoughts and intentions of the heart so that all fleshly motivations are identified and removed from our life.

References:

Jer 17:9
Eze 14:3
Psa 73:7

Mat 15:19
2Co 10:5
Heb 4:12

Further Study

Jer 44

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 20

If one died for all, then all died

The apostle Paul, and indeed all of the apostles, preached a 'gospel of participation'. Yes, while we were without strength and dead in trespasses and sins, Christ died for us. The just died for the unjust; the godly for the ungodly. However, Jesus did not merely die as the punishment for our sin. He bore our sin *in His body*. He, who knew no sin, *became sin* for our sake. This is an astonishing reality. He laid a hold of 'our death' in His mortality, for the express purpose of establishing a process for us to deal with sin in our mortal bodies, as we join 'His death'. The love of Christ compels us to plant ourselves in the likeness of His death. 'If one died for all, then all died.'

We need to be careful that we don't develop a gospel that is merely the extrapolation of the law of sin. We could think of it this way. The law of sin says, 'It is a great evil for me to die, but it is less of an evil for you to die. So if I need to kill you to preserve my own life, then that is the lesser of two evils.' Of course, in our fallen condition, with our knowledge of good and evil, we recognise that it is not good for anyone to die. Surely the best outcome would be for all of us to survive! A gospel that 'kills Christ so that we all can live' is the extrapolation of the law of sin. If it is sinful to kill another person to save ourselves, then surely it is 'exceedingly sinful' to kill Christ in this manner. We are reminded of the prophecy of Caiaphas the high priest: 'it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish'. The Scripture accounts that from 'that day on', they plotted to put Jesus to death.

References:

Joh 11:50, 53 2Co 5:14
Heb 2:14 Rom 7:13
2Co 5:21 1Pe 2:22-24

Further Study

2Co 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 21

The rest of sonship

We have been considering the journey of the nation of Israel from Egypt through the wilderness, and to the Promised Land. However, entering the Promised Land was not the ultimate goal. The final purpose or goal for the pilgrimage of the nation of Israel was to enter the Lord's rest. The Lord said to Moses concerning their journey, 'My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest'. The book of Hebrews accounts that when the people refused to enter the Promised Land, the Lord swore in His wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest'. However, further to this, it says that those who did enter the Promised Land did not necessarily find rest either. In the latter days of Joshua, the nation enjoyed rest from all their enemies, but 'if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that'.

What is 'the rest' that God promised the nation of Israel, and has promised to us? It is 'the rest' of sonship. It is 'the rest' of entering into the finished works of the Father from before the foundation of the world. We enter this rest as we do the works prepared for us, the works that belong to our name written in the Lamb's book of life. The Israelites feared the inhabitants of the land; but our greatest fear must be not apprehending 'the rest' of sonship. Paul declared, 'Let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it'. There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. We are compelled to be diligent to enter this rest, so that we do not fall because of the same disobedience that caused the Israelites to be slain in the wilderness.

References:

Exo 33:14
Jos 11:23
Psa 95:11

Heb 4:1, 8-9
Jos 23:1

Further Study

Heb 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 24

How do we enter His rest?

How do we enter 'the rest' of our sonship? We know the Israelites of old failed to enter the Promised Land and the Lord's rest because of their unbelief and disobedience. The Lord swore in His wrath that they would not enter His rest and condemned them to die in the wilderness. When the people realised the consequence of their disobedience, they mourned greatly and the next day they resolved to go in. However, it was too late! They did not succeed because the Lord was no longer with them. The point here is that the Lord expects obedience 'today' not 'tomorrow'!

For the people of God, there is a time allotted where this promise of entering His rest 'remains' for us. The Scriptures call it 'today'. The Scripture is clear. 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.' The Lord fixes a certain day which is called 'today'. This may or may not be twenty-four hours. It is the season that is granted to us to make a response to the word of present truth on a particular matter. The promise of entering His rest 'remains' as long as it is still called 'today'. But as soon as the season for making a response finishes, so too does the opportunity for us to enter into His rest.

A person whose heart has been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin will be constantly appraising the word that comes and deciding whether or not they will obey. Such a person will never apprehend the rest of their sonship. Entering the Lord's rest is not a complex matter. There is a word of present truth in every age and generation of the church. The Lord is speaking to us through His administration. We simply need to believe and obey the word of present truth as it comes. 'For we who have believed enter that rest.'

References:

Deu 4:4, 8, 20, 26, 39-40
Num 14:39-45
Heb 3:7, 15
Heb 4:3, 7

Further Study

Heb 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 25

Not hardening our heart

According to the prophet Isaiah, the word of present truth comes as 'precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little'. For those who humble themselves to receive the word, they immediately find rest and refreshing. And yet, for those who do not receive it, this very same word causes them to fall backward, to be broken, snared and caught. It is only those who receive, believe and obey the word of present truth who enter into rest.

The apostle Peter declared that the 'precious value' of the rest of sonship is 'for you who believe'. Those who do not believe, stumble because they are disobedient to the word. The chosen and precious cornerstone becomes for them a 'stone of stumbling and a rock of offence'. Stephen declared to the Jews in his day, 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.' We need to heed the admonition of Paul and learn from the example of the Israelites in the wilderness and throughout their history.

How is our heart hardened? When the word of present truth comes, the Holy Spirit brings conviction in our heart. If we do not want to receive the word because of its implications, then we will have to justify our lack of response by some means. By justifying our resistance to the Holy Spirit on the matter, our heart has been hardened and will be less sensitive to the provocation of the Holy Spirit when the word comes again. Each time we justify ourselves and resist the Holy Spirit, our heart becomes harder and harder until we can no longer hear the word at all. This is why Paul says, 'Exhort one another daily, while it is called "today", lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin'.

References:

Isa 28:9, 12-13
Heb 4:3
1Pe 2:7-8
Joh 12:40

Further Study

Isa 28

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 26

Finding rest in His work

Jesus said, 'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest'. It is impossible to find rest as we toil the ground in futility. Unless our labour is an expression of the works of our sonship, then all we are doing is bringing forth thorns and thistles that are worthless and ready to be burned. We read in the book of Hebrews that 'the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His'. We are reminded that the work of God was finished from before the foundation of the world. He has already prepared the works of our sonship. We enter 'the rest' of our sonship as soon as we cease doing our own self-righteous works and begin doing His works. These are the works of our sonship and the evident fruit that we are a son of God.

When we are doing the works of our sonship, our burden is easy and light because we are yoked to Christ. The grace and capacity that we need to do our work now comes from Him. Even our capacity to obey the word comes from Him. We are empowered to obey and fulfil the will of the Father in our lives by the very same capacity that He had when He set His face toward the cross. This is the capacity of the sevenfold Spirit of God, which belongs to Christ, given to us through the Holy Spirit. We are weary and heavy-laden when we are striving to beat the futility of life, or fulfil the will of God, in our own strength. Can we learn from the example of the Israelites? If we live a carnal life then we will die in the wilderness. The answer for us is so simple – it is simple obedience. When the word comes, there is grace to obey; and the moment we obey, we enter rest.

References:

Heb 4:10 Mat 11:28
Eph 2:10 2Co 11:3
Heb 6:8 Heb 9:14
Gal 5:25

Further Study

Rom 8

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 27

The message of the remnant church

Are we part of His remnant church? A remnant church will be preaching the word of the cross as the wisdom and power of God. In every age and generation of the church, the Lord has sent messengers to proclaim the word of the cross so that every person has the opportunity to deal with their sin and enter the rest of their sonship. All the way through the Scripture, we observe the principle that it is the remnant that is saved. The apostle Paul quoted from Isaiah when he declared, 'Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved'. It has been a sobering thought to consider that out of the great multitude that came up out of Egypt, only a very small minority of them were saved. What is the situation in our age and generation? We know the Lord is still speaking from heaven and building His church. Hopefully, we are all part of His remnant church.

In the coming years, God's remnant church in every place will be clearly manifest as lampstands among the nations. The word of the cross will be lifted up as a standard among all the nations as we approach the end of the age. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'It will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people ... and He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the corners of the earth'. The cross of Christ is the standard that is lifted up. It is the lifting up of Christ that gathers all men. The word of the cross is the wisdom and power of God so that every eye will see Him and look upon Him whom they have pierced. All the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.

References:

Rom 9:27 Isa 11:11-12
Zec 12:10 Rev 1:7
2Ki 19:30-31 Neh 1:3
Zec 8:11-13

Further Study

Rom 11

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 28