

HEBREWS 4 – WHAT IS CANAAN

We'll begin reading in Hebrews Chapter 3, and vs. 16, and read through Chapter 4, vs. 11:

"For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all of those who came out of Egypt lead by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? And so we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief."

Chapter 4, "Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also, but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, 'AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,' although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, 'AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS,' and again in this passage, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'"

vs. 6, "Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, 'Today,' saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, 'TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.' For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that."

vs. 9, "There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience."

In the beginning of Heb 3, vs. 7, after he had said that we are God's house, he says "Therefore," . . . or, because we are God's house, "Therefore listen to what the Holy Spirit says" . . . listen to the word of the Holy Spirit because we His people are God's house . . . and what the Holy Spirit is saying in this instance is the 95th Psalm . . . and it concerns Israel not entering the land of Canaan . . . and he is cautioning us to not harden our hearts as they did . . . and he talks about Israel being in the wilderness, and their tempting God and disobeying God for the entire 40 years in the wilderness . . . and for that reason, a whole generation died and did not enter into the land of Canaan.

Of course, we have the history of that in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy . . . and it is summarized for us in Psalm 95--and that's what the Hebrew writer is quoting. Now, if we go back, there is a passage in Deuteronomy that I think is interesting . . . just a verse here, In Deut chapter 6, and vs. 23 tells us something about God bringing them out Egypt, vs. 22 says, "Moreover, the Lord showed great and

distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household," vs. 23, "and He brought us out from there in order to bring us in (we need to get that . . . He brought us out in order to bring us in), to give us the land which He had sworn unto our Fathers." His purpose was not to just get them out of Egypt and get them out from slavery, but His purpose was to bring them into the land . . . and the land was the land of Canan.

But notice, when the Psalmists talks about that land in the 95th Psalm, and whenever the Hebrew writer quotes it and speaks of what God did in bringing them into the land of Canan, he does not mention Canan . . . in neither passage do they mention the land of Canan. They call it "His Rest." Neither Psalm 95 nor Hebrews chapters 3 or 4 mention the land of Canan. They say "they were able to enter into His Rest." **So God meant to give them more than the land.**

It wasn't just bringing them into a land . . . read on in chapter 6 of Deuteronomy, "So the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today. And it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us."

I'm not just bringing you into the land, but when I get you in there, if you keep My commandments and obey My voice, and listen to My covenant, **"It will be righteousness for us." So it is more than just the land!**

In the Eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, vs. 3, "And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

I'm not bringing you into the land to give you the land and to prosper you, **I'm bringing you into the land in order that you might learn to live by the word of God.**

He talks about that land throughout this 8th chapter, and notice beginning in verse 17, when he has cautioned them about feeding them the manna, he said, "Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth. But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you the power to make wealth (or to get wealth . . . that is an interesting statement . . . it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to get wealth), that He might confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is unto this day."

vs. 19, "And it shall come about if you ever get the Lord your God, and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the Lord your God."

All that the land gave them, which was described as being a land flowing with

milk and honey, was to serve as a means to bring them into a relationship that God desired with them . . . that He might confirm His covenant with them and that they might be a people who were different from all other people on the earth because they could see God's presence in them. He has stated that as we remember, back in the 19th chapter of Exodus , vs. 5-6, "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." That was His purpose then for Israel.

Now, why does the Holy Spirit bring up this wilderness experience when He is writing the book of Hebrews? Why quote so extensively from the 95th Psalm, which is a summary of the peoples' wandering in the wilderness before they went into the land of Canaan? **He does that because their position at the time he was writing this was the same as their fathers in the wilderness. Their fathers had failed to enter into all that God had made available to them and they failed to get to the place where God wanted them be.** They missed it!! They completely missed out!!

And so, in Hebrews chapter 3, vs. 19, we see **they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.** And so we go down to vs. 6, in Heb 4, "Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had the good news preached to them failed to enter in because of disobedience, He again says, or again fixes a certain day saying, 'Today,' saying through David a long time after He said, 'TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS' -- He still fixed another day in the future .

Vs. 8 says, " For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that." When Joshua took them into the promised land or the land of Canaan, the Hebrew writer said Joshua did not give them the rest that God meant for them to have. Had he given it to them and had that been God's plan and purpose -- if that had been all of it, He would not have many years later, spoken through David, there remains a rest for the people of God . . . so Heb 3:9, "There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God rested from His."

And so His exhortation to the church this, vs. 11, "Let us therefore be diligent **to enter that rest**, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience."

Now, he is speaking to the church there . . . and he is saying Israel is an example. They did not enter into His rest . . . there remains a rest for the people of God . . . and we read this and we talk about going to heaven and entering into God's rest someday . . . but he says in vs. 11, "Therefore be diligent to enter that rest . . ." **It seems to me, our diligence while we are here now in this life brings us into the rest of God.**

Many times . . . we do not realize that there is anything else besides the wilderness . . . and we, like Israel, become content with a wilderness experience . . . and this is Sad.

If you go back to the book of Numbers, let's look at Numbers chapter 20, we'll not read all of this but it is a sad story . . . Israel is coming through the wilderness, vs. 14, "From Kadish Moses sent messengers to the King of Edom (now Edom is a pagan nation) and Moses says: Thus your brother Israel has said, 'You know all the hardship that has befallen us; that our fathers went down into Egypt, and we stayed in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians treated us and our father badly. But when we cried out to the Lord, He heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt; now behold, we are at kadish, a town at the edge of your territory.'" **Now notice what he says, vs. 17, "Please let us pass through your land."**

Edom says, vs. 18, "You shall not pass through us, lest I come out with the sword against you." Vs. 19, "Again, the sons of Israel said to him, 'We shall go up by the highway, and if I and my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay its price. Let me only pass through on my feet, nothing else.'"

Vs. 20, and Edom said, "You shall not pass through. And Edom came out against him with a heavy force, and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through his territory, so Israel turned away from him."

Israel had become so accustomed to living in the wilderness that they began to live by the ways and the means of the people who lived there.

This is the people who came out of Egypt by a mighty hand and they are begging a heathen nation to let them through, and when they will not do it, they simply turned back and go another way. **It's a terrible thing to get used to the wilderness and not enter into God rest . . . you become like the people you associate with!**

That reminds me of the church today with its relationship with the world.

There are two questions we want to answer . . . one today and one next week . . . today, we want to answer the question what is Canaan . . . what is the land into which we enter . . . what is rest that he is talking about . . . so today we'll look at what is Canaan . . . and next week we'll look at what is the wilderness.

Both of them are very real experiences and that is what the Hebrew writer is talking about.

What is Canaan . . . notice vs. 14 of Hebrews chapter 3 . . . "For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm unto the end." We have become partakers of Christ . . . the promised land for the Christian . . . the promised rest that is available to us according to these two chapters is that we become a partaker of Christ. Notice the word "for"-- he connects it with what he has said in these previous verses . . . why did he quote Psalm 95 and why did he elate the wilderness experience to us . . . and why did he talk about entering into his rest . . . and why did he encourage us not to fall by the wayside as Israel had done . . . **it is because we become a partaker Christ** . . . that's what he's talking about . . . that's the

promise land, that's the promised rest . . . that we become a partaker of Christ-- **not an imitator of Christ . . . not even a servant of Christ . . . his message is you become a partaker of Christ. That is as something you eat . . . it becomes a part of you.**

In John chapter 6, you remember, Jesus said, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no part of me . . . that offended the Jews . . . we apply it to the Lord's Supper . . . it doesn't have anything to do with the Lord's Supper except the fact the Lord's Supper represents what Jesus was talking about. **He was talking about our partaking of Him and Him becoming our very life. He lives His life in me and I am joined to Him.**

There is a great passage of scripture in I Cor 6, in vs. 16-17, surprisingly he relates it to a Christian's relationship to a harlot . . . he says vs. 16, "Or do you not know that one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, 'THE TWO WILL BECOME ONE FLESH.'" That's true of course of the marriage relationship--the two become one flesh. **But the astonishing thing about this is vs. 17, "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him."**

We are one spirit with the Lord . . . joined together . . . closer than husband and wife . . . it is a spiritual thing . . . we are one spirit with the Lord . . . and that's why Paul says in Gal 2 . . . a very familiar passage to all of us . . . in vs.20, he says, "I have been crucified with Christ, (but he said it is no longer I that lives . . . I don't live any longer . . . I died) and now Christ lives in me." He lives His life in Me . . . That's what it means for the church to be the body of Christ . . . not just so we can have our name written over the church door and say the church is the body of Christ and we all wear His name . . . The Church is His Body and we ought to live His life out there in the world . . . because . . . we are the only body He has.

Continue vs. 20, "and the life which I now live in the flesh (it's not over yonder) I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself up for me."

And this shows us the reality of the 8th chapter of Romans . . . Romans 8:10, "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness." As far as you are concerned, you are dead and Christ has come alive in your life. **SO, IT IS NOT MY LIFE BEING IMPROVED . . . IT IS HIS LIFE BEING IMPARTED.**

People join the church, people become christians, people go through various ceremonies and rituals, they go into the waters of the baptism, they can become a part of the congregation so that their lives may be improved and their lives are improved . . . but that is not the point, **IT IS A LIFE THAT HAS BEEN IMPARTED . . . THERE IS ONLY ONE VICTORIOUS LIFE THAT HAS BEEN LIVED UPON THE EARTH AND THAT IS THE LIFE THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN ME IN CHRIST.**

CHRIST HIMSELF THEN IS OUR CANAAN . . . CHRIST HIMSELF IS OUR REST.

Hebrews chapter 4, vs. 10, "For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His." When we enter into our rest, that is when we enter Christ, we rest from our works. We have entered into rest. We don't fight it any longer. Our problems become His problems. Our cares become His cares. Our life becomes His life. His life becomes ours.

There is an old hymn that says "That old land of rest for thee I sigh, when will the moment come when I shall lay this armour by and dwell in peace with Thee" something like that. That's about as big of a lie as we are marching to Zion . . . it's not something in the future, it's something that is right here now and he says take heed lest you don't enter into that rest because of your unbelief -- because of your disobedience.

When will the moment come? It already came when Christ ascended, it's the Spirit, it's here and the question isn't when am I going to lay my armour by . . . when am I going to take my armour and become what God wants me to become.

Take heed lest you fail in the same manner that they failed to enter Canaan--to enter rest.

Now, the conditions in which we may enter and participate in this are laid out for us in Heb 3, vs. 14, "For we have become partakers of Christ **(it doesn't say we will become partakers, it says we have become partakers of Christ)** if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance (or our confidence) firm unto the end" -- **He says "if" -- it is not a once and for all experience. It could be fulfilled one day and not the next. He's not talking about salvation . . . he's talking about entering into the fullness of life that God has given us in Christ.** It is not a matter of losing our salvation in this passage.

It's a matter of our losing out on the good life that God wants us to live. It's a matter of losing out on what God wants to do in His People.

The important thing is how is it right now . . . Not what has happened in the past . . . Not what is going to happen in the future . . . How is it right now? "If we hold fast" that is in the present tense. **The experience in Canaan is continuous and it is contemporary. His rest is something that is ongoing.**

So he says, "but if . . . if you hold fast" -- if we hold fast to what -- If you hold fast to the beginning of your assurance or your confidence, **not the beginning of your determination.** It is not how determined you are to live a Christian life, it's not the beginning of your consecration or your dedication (that may be true . . . you may be determined, you may be consecrated, you may be dedicated -- all of that is important) but that is not what he is talking about . . . **he is not talking about our determination or our dedication, and our trying and our willingness . . . he's talking about our assurance . . . our confidence.**

We noticed that in vs. 6, "we are God's house if we hold fast our confidence and the

boast of our hope firm until the end." **Its a matter of having confidence in what God has said concerning us.**

And you want to know what he is talking about, go over to the 10th chapter of Hebrews. When he talks about our sins being forgiven, vs. 18, he says, "Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin." **Do you know what most christians busy themselves doing . . . most of them go through life continually offering some kind of offering or some kind of sacrifice for sin. Their main purpose is trying to be faithful to please God.**

We have nothing against being faithful . . . the bible teaches that. **But there is nothing else we can offer that will add to the forgiveness that God has given us in Christ. We don't have to go on proving ourselves . . . we don't have to go on offering sacrifices for sin . . . where there is forgiveness, there is no longer any use to offer any kind of sacrifice . . . and so he says vs. 19, "Since therefore, brethern, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus" that's our confidence! We have confidence to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus.**

What's the holy place? Heb 9:24, "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." The holy place is heaven, where Christ is.

And we say well I'm trying to enter in . . . I'm trying to get there . . . someday I am going to make it, if I am faithful enough. He says let's have confidence to enter it right now. We're sitting with Christ in heavenly places . . . heaven has been opened . . . the throne of God is open . . . that's what the Hebrew writer is talking about throughout the whole book of Hebrews . . . the way has been open and now we have access to God . . . and God has come and we are in His presence . . . **That's our confidence . . . let's have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus Heb 10, vs. 20, "by a new and living way us which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith (there is that word assurance again), having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let's hold fast to the confession of our hope (he mentioned this back in the 4th chapter, vs. 16, "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace"**

People talk about standing before the throne of God someday . . . we had better start standing before the throne of God right now. Its the throne of grace, we have access to the throne of grace, Let us therefore draw near with confidence . . . there is that word confidence again . . . our confidence is that we can come before the throne of grace . . . we have access to heaven and all of heaven's assets are ours . . . we can find grace to help in the time of need.

The church doesn't have the answers to the world's problems . . . the church is the answer to the world's problems. There is a great deal of difference. And

that is what God wants us to be.

There is another passage that deals with confidence, **I John 5, vs. 14-15**, "And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."

You see, our confidence concerns our coming before the throne of God. And that is the confidence that we have. That's our rest.

Now the opposit of our holding fast to our confidence is found in Heb 10, vs. 35-36, where he warns them with these words, "Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward." **The contrast is between holding fast and casting it away.** You see, in the hour of failure, that is the very time when we are tempted most to throw away our confidence. That is precisely what Satan wants us to do. **You see, that's why Satan engineered failure . . . it's not just to get us to something wrong, but that he might accuse us and make us lose our hope and to get our mind, and our eyes, and our hearts off of the throne and put them upon ourselves.**

Satan is never as delighted as when we try to settle our own problems . . . and live our own lives . . . and alienate ourselves from the throne of God. It tickles him to death to hear Christians sing about getting their problems solved someday when they get over on the other shore . . . that's exactly what Satan wants . . . as long as you are looking for someday, and as long as you are planning for your problems being settled and everything is being taken care of when you get over yonder . . . as long as you are doing that . . . you are not going to realize anything in the here and now and that is where it is . . . we have access to heaven, and heaven has come to us, and the Holy Spirit is in us . . . God wants His people to do something in this world . . . He wants us to be priests and kings . . . and He wants His will done on earth, as it is in heaven!

That's His Rest . . . to bring the Kingdom of God into the Earth . . . that's what He wanted Israel to do--that's what they failed to do.

And that's what He wants His Church to do and that's what we are failing to do and that is why the world is in the mess that it is in.

There is a heavy emphasis by the way in this passage on today . . . you see, he mentions His rest about 11 times in these two chapters . . . notice how many times he says, Today, if you hear His voice, don't harden your hearts . . . Today, if you hear His voice . . . We like to take that to revival meetings, we sing about 6 verses of "Just As I am" and we quote that to the sinner and we Today if you hear His voice do not harden your heart -- well that's alright, there is no problem with that -- today is the day of salvation . . . **but it is not applied to the sinner when he gives it to us.** He's talking to the Christian and he is saying to the Christian Today if you hear His voice don't harden your heart as they did in the wilderness. He's speaking to the Christian and he is

saying Today if you hear His voice, enter into His Rest--don't harden your heart and fail to enter into His Rest.

You are in the position where if you harden your heart today you are going to fail to become a Partaker of Christ . . . You are going to miss it!!

Canaan . . . or Rest, is simply living with Jesus in the now. That is called His Rest.

Vs. 10 "God rested . . . He who has entered His Rest has himself also rested as God rested from His works." In Heb 10, vs 12, it says, "After Jesus offered one sacrifice for sin for all times, He sat down on the right hand of God" -- He rested from His works.

We are invited to enter into that rest and to rest from our striving and to rest from our work and from doing it our way and depending on ourselves. He is telling us to enter into the Throne of Grace . . . to enter into His Presence . . . to partake of all that heaven offers.

Don't sit around waiting for it to come, It's already here . . . Don't miss it! Don't miss it . . . if you wait until you die, you will have missed it. He wants you to have it right here! That is what the church is all about. That's His Rest . . . that's Canaan . . . that is the Promised Land, that's where God wants us to live in the fullness of blessing partaking of all that He has offered and depending upon Him to overcome our enemies (that was part of it). God will enable you, He told Israel, when you enter the land there are giants in the land, but when you enter if you trust Me and My word and follow My way, I will drive them out before you every single one of them. I'll overcome them for you.

God says the very same thing to us. He says if you take on the full armour of God, you come before My Throne of Grace for help and mercy, if you realize that I am in you and you are in Me, then We'll overcome every enemy that comes against you . . . every giant you encounter.

Why does the christian have so many problems . . . why do we have so much trouble . . . we are no different from the world . . . it's because we have not entered into His Rest. We are still out there in Canaan . . . we come up against the world and we say "please let us go through" and the world laughs at us . . . like they laughed at Israel. And so we turn around and go another way.

That's not what God wants for His church. He wants us to be Salt and the Light. He wants the Kingdom of God in the work place . . . He wants to make a difference in the world. That's His Rest.