

Rest: Life in the Easy Yoke of Jesus!
Part 3 of an 8-part Teaching on Matthew 11:28-30
Message #3: “The Rest of God!” on January 20, 2019

Supplemental Information

The OT Prophet Jeremiah states, “For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes.”¹ The people of God are in grave danger at this time in history (6th Century BC) because they are not trusting in God or living their end of the covenant with God. Jesus quotes Jeremiah 6:16 in Matthew 11:29c, “And you will find rest for your souls,”² creating a clear connection between not only the Old Covenant prophet Jeremiah and Jesus’ promise of rest, but also the state of God’s people.³

This is not a one-time connection because Jesus is promising the rest to God’s people that God intended from the beginning and upholds in the bookends of the Bible: Jesus is inviting us to know the rest of God through a growing daily relationship of how we live our lives. Jesus’ rest is not just for Heaven one day, it is for today, the here and now!

There is something profound about Jesus’ invitation to find rest. In our recreation-driven, retirement-focused culture, we miss the depths of Jesus’ promise for rest. In fact, the closest OT promise to Matthew 11:28 is found in Exodus 33:14 when God says to Moses right before God shows Moses His glory, “My presence shall go *with you*, and I will give you rest.”⁴ This is a fascinating connection that teaches us the importance of God’s presence in our lives as the source of our rest, our peace, our joy. The promise of rest is the promise of shalom—the promise of God’s fullness dwelling in us, the promise of a peace that is not of this world.

In John 14:27, Jesus teaches us the source of our rest in the context of His promise to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”⁵ God’s presence is our peace! As we walk on this earth and yoke with Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit, the assurance

1 Ibid., Je 31:25.

2 *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*, Je 6:16.

3 “Jesus’ overture of grace (Matt. 11:28–30) is sounded in the presence of persons already threatened with condemnation (cf. 11:6, 16–24). If they refuse *this* invitation, what hope can remain for them?” (J. Knox Chamblin, *Matthew: A Mentor Commentary*, Mentor Commentaries [Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2010], 638).

4 *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*, Ex 33:14. The ICC says, “The closest OT parallel is Exod 33:14, where God says to Moses: ‘and I will give you rest’ (*wahāniḥōtī lāk*; *LXX*: καὶ καταπαύσω σε). This is being alluded to by our text, as the clear dependence of Mt 11:27 upon Exod 33:12f. shows. Note that whereas in the OT text it is God, not Moses, who gives rest, in the NT Jesus gives it. Once more, then, Jesus is greater than Moses” (W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary [London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004], 287).

5 *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*, Jn 14:27.

of what can only be fulfilled in Heaven: immersion in the Trinitarian Fellowship. In fact, this is what our baptism symbolizes.

What does the rest of God include? Briefly and from Genesis to Revelation, here are some ideas⁶ to help us see the scope of the rest motif in God's Word:

1. **Sabbath rest is a gift from God!** It is modeled in Creation, commanded in worship, and designed to protect us, our communities, and His creation:
 - **Modeled in Creation.** God gave us an example of and a command to rest. Genesis 2:3 commemorates, "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."⁷)
 - **Commanded in Worship.** Rest is important for worship because it focuses us on the character and activity of God. God commands us in the Ten Commandments in 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 a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy."⁸
 - **Designed to Protect us, our communities, and God's creation.** God tells us to rest as means of not only personal refreshment, but also that of creation itself and our community. Exodus 23:12 explains this in the context of the importance of letting the land have rest from constant toil, "Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves."⁹

As I said in last week's sermon: "If you are simply tired, weary from the journey of the last 6 days, then today is the day to find rest for your whole being because our soul is the center of our personality and all that we are.¹⁰ It is God's gift of rest to His people and it's called the Sabbath. It's not a burden, it's a gift! It is a day of rest after 6 days of work. It is a day of intentional non-productivity after 6 days of productivity. It is a day of celebrating the infinite God whose life you are dependent on and to remember that you are finite and in need of God's power and provision in your life. It is a day of humility to be reminded that the world doesn't need your hard work as much as you think. It's a day of freedom from self-imposed slavery."

⁶ Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013). I launched the below list of ideas from a short explanation of rest in this Bible.

⁷ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*, Ge 2:3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Ex 20:8–11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Ex 23:12.

¹⁰ There is currently a lot of research on the effects of sleep deprivation on personality and productivity. Surprise, but science is finding that having sufficient sleep is critical to living an abundant life. Are you getting enough sleep to be at your very best? Are you disciplined about getting to bed on time? Are you relaxing before bed in order to actually get good sleep? Research is also proving that anxious people don't rest well (in sleep or during the day in how they handle their circumstances and everyday demands and expectations).

2. **Jesus is our rest!** From Hebrews 4:9–11, “So there remains 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. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.”¹¹

The entire passage of Hebrews 4:1-16 is a fascinating study on the rest of God. I highly encourage you to dive deeply into this teaching. Don't come short of God's grace by seeking any other way to find rest for your soul. Hebrews 4:1 opens with this argument, “Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.”¹² Sabbath is ultimately about faith in God, resting in His promises for provision and peace. Sabbath was never to be about a reductionist view of legal observances of the Law. It was always about trust.¹³ God has always desired relationship with His people. This is why Jesus restores Sabbath to relationship with Himself, “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”¹⁴

In Matthew 11:28, the Greek word *ἀναπαύω* is a verb, 1st person causative active voice meaning people will only be able to find the rest Jesus promises by coming to Jesus, the One who promises is the only one who can provide.¹⁵ It is future tense and indicative mood meaning the results will be in the future (near and/or distant) and the rest will be real and substantive.

To fully understand the implications of this, allow me to use another example of this verb construct from Matthew 16:18-19 where this construct is used twice, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock **I will build** My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. **I will give you** the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”¹⁶ (emphasis of bold and underline added). There is substance to these promises of Jesus Christ. He

11 Ibid., Heb 4:9–11.

12 Ibid., Heb 4:1.

13 The OT is very clear that God's inheritance for His people was the “land of rest” (Dt 12:9-10). When they failed to obey and put their trust in Him, God declared, “Therefore I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter into My rest” (Ps 95:11). The inheritance of the land, the promise of rest, are synonymous with Jesus' ultimate promises in John 10:10 for an abundant life, John 14:27 for peace, or John 17:13 for fullness of joy. This is why the quote of Jeremiah 6:16 is so very important. God was inviting His people to the crossroads of faith and trust before the destruction of Jerusalem and their removal from the land of rest. Jesus is matching that covenantal promise with all of the weight of the blessings and curses of OT covenant. This is also why the context is so important as this prayer (Mt 11:25-30) is immediately after Jesus righteously denounces cities for their lack of faith (Mt. 11:20-24).

14 Ibid., Mt 12:8. It is not be accident that Matthew places this story right after Jesus' invitation to find rest in Him. Its literary proximity has theological implications.

15 “‘I will refresh you’ (κ’αγο ἀναπαύσω ὑμας [*k’ago anapausō hūmas*]). Far more than mere rest, rejuvenation. The English slang expression ‘rest up’ is close to the idea of the Greek compound ἀνα-παύω [*ana-pauō*]. It is causative active voice” (A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* [Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933], Mt 11:28).

16 *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*, Mt 16:18–19.

has promised it and it is being done by Him and through His Spirit in His people. The same is true for us experiencing the rest of God. Jesus is the fulfiller of that which He promises!

3. **Heaven will be a place of rest.** Revelation 14:12-13 triumphantly declares the culmination of Jesus' promise, "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, 'Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' ' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.'"¹⁷

Do you hear the similarity with Hebrews 4:10? "For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His."¹⁸ You are being invited by Jesus to find rest.

Don't hesitate and if you must hurry to do anything in this life, then may you only hurry to Jesus. Hebrews 4:16 invites you, "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."¹⁹

Jesus Christ is waiting for you. He is the rest you have been waiting for and that you so desperately have been looking for in this world. Only He can satisfy your restlessness.

¹⁷ Ibid., Re 14:12–13.

¹⁸ Ibid., Heb 4:10.

¹⁹ Ibid., Heb 4:16.