

7th Day Rest E14 Final

Hebrews_The Quest for Final Rest

Podcast Date: December 30, 2019

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Jon: Hey, this is Jon at The Bible Project. Today, Tim and I are going to finish up a series that we've been calling 7th Day Rest. This has been a really long series. If you're just jumping in, I recommend you start from the beginning. But if you're not going to, here's a quick recap. On page one of the Bible, God brings order to the universe in a series of six days. And on the seventh day, He stops and He enters His creation like a king

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entering a temple to rest and rule. God creates humans, calls the humans His image, and tells them to rest and rule with Him in His creation.

His vision of rest on the seventh day is a hope that ancient Israel took seriously. In fact, one of the Ten Commandments is to stop working on the seventh day, or in Hebrew, Shabbat, and practice rest. And it wasn't just this one day. There are actually Seven sacred festivals that all help ancient Israel remember who they are, and where the story is heading. Each festival, a way to practice now what we hope for in the future, a time of unending restful reign with God in His good creation. And there's more. Every seventh year, there's a whole year devoted to rest, and every seventh seven years, there's a culminating event called the Year of Jubilee where all debts are forgiven, slaves are freed. It's the ultimate rest.

In the last two episodes, we looked at how Jesus saw himself as the one bringing this ultimate rest. He claimed that the real Year of Jubilee, the one that all of these festivals and practices are anticipating that that reality is coming with him. That he is the Lord of the Sabbath. This claim amongst others got Jesus killed. But the Gospels claim that Jesus laid in the tomb resting on the Sabbath, and on the first day of a new week, he rose from the dead. And that power that brought Jesus back from the dead is available to us. God's Spirit can live in us. And God's Spirit is a sign that we too are destined for ultimate rest.

Now we come to our last stop in the series. While Jesus brought ultimate rest, it has yet to come fully. We still find ourselves in a world of strife and struggle. In this episode, we want to look at a passage in the book of Hebrews that brings these ideas full circle. We're going to look at Hebrews Chpt. 3 and 4, but here's a key verse in 4 vs. 9. "There remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For anyone who enters God's rest, also rest from their work just as God did from his. And let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest."

Tim: Seventh day is yet to come. It's something you enter in the present which will come to its ultimate fulfillment in the future. In Hebrews 4:6, he says, "Listen, everybody, it still remains for some to enter that rest." There's still a rest that is yet to be entered into. A future rest.

Jon: The author of Hebrews looks back at the wilderness generation in ancient Israel and sees it as a warning for us today.

Tim: The design of the wilderness narratives in the Torah itself is trying to tell us that the arrival in the promised land is an image of the future seventh-day rest that is beyond.

Jon: Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

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We're going to do the final episode in a long conversation around the seventh day. And we're having this conversation...how much later than the original?

Tim: Much later than we have the actual conversations that will culminate in the video. Real-time we're talking in early December 2019. We had the majority of the seventh-day rest conversations in the spring. I think early mid-spring of 2019. So like nine months ago.

Jon: Nine months ago. I remember that conversation feeling a little not unsettled but wanting. I remember feeling specifically, man, we spent so much time getting so excited about this theme of seventh-day rest, and all of these practices that ancient Israel had to remember it and to anticipate it, and I was woven into all these stories, and it's just so rich, and Jesus sees himself fulfilling it. Then we get to the Apostle Paul, and it's like, "Yeah, don't worry about it." That's how it felt to me.

Tim: Oh, I get. I get.

Jon: Like, "Oh, yeah, that's cool. Jesus did that, he's Lord of the Sabbath..." I mean, Paul doesn't even talk about that. But he's just like, "If you do the Sabbath or not, that's okay."

Tim: Well, yeah, true. I think they're closely related things. But our whole discussion about the Gospels was that Jesus was presenting the arrival of the kingdom of God as the arrival of the ultimate seventh day. The Jubilee that he was announcing is synonymous, identical with his arrival—the arrival of the kingdom of God. And Paul was all about the arrival of the kingdom of God.

Jon: But while it's been inaugurated and it's here, it's still hasn't come in full. And so practicing some sort of ritual which reminds you that this seventh-day rest is yet to come seems like it could be something that the apostles would be stumped on. And instead, you kind of get this sense of their mind was somewhere else. It's like Paul wasn't going around getting the early Christians to do any sort of Sabbath ritual. It just wasn't on his radar.

Tim: Well, what we have in his letters is responses to issues, usually, problems, not always things arising in the churches...

Jon: It got in the way in a way. That some early Christians who weren't Jewish, they didn't have a history of the Sabbath, and Paul's like, "Yeah, don't worry about that. You don't need that." It does have a history of Sabbath, and it is doing it. That's great.

Tim: I think I want to refocus that a little more. It's not that he said it's not a big deal. It's the weekly practice of the Sabbath along with all the laws of

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the covenant, but especially the poignant ones in their cultural context, kosher food laws, circumcision for males, and Sabbath, those were the most visible boundary line recreating that set off the people of Israel from their neighbors. And so when Sabbath comes up in letters of Paul, it's because there are Messianic Jews, not all of them, but certainly, some who are making a requirement to be a part of the family of Jesus. That's the circumstance that compels them not to...

[crosstalk 00:07:13]

His point is, listen, the Torah of Moses played a crucially important role for the time that it was the thing that God was doing in and through Israel. But now through the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the family of Abraham, as always was intended to be, now consists of many nations, not just one. Those markers don't define the identity of God's people anymore. But that's why then Paul says, "If you want to honor Jesus through observance of the Sabbath, do that. Do that." He's, like, stoked on, people being stoked on that.

Jon: But he gets really down on people who say that you need to do it.

Tim: Correct. That's right.

Jon: I mean, really down on them.

Tim: Oh, yeah. What he really, really gets worked up about is circumcision in the letter to Galatians. For Paul, erecting any kind of entry barrier into the family of Jesus beyond trust in what he's done for me that I can't do for myself, what he says is we are nullifying the grace of God. That's what he says in Galatians.

Jon: But what I got from you after that conversation was the thing Paul was most interested in were these love feasts. That they get together families, and extended families, and neighbors, and people of any ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status eating at the same table in the name of Jesus.

Tim: That's exactly right.

Jon: And so I guess...

Tim: And all the historical evidence we have is that this was happening on Sunday, which was the first day of the week by everybody else's calendar.

Jon: And after our conversation about the seventh-day rest, I was so jazzed. You could have been like, "So Jon, change your week. Do a really strict Sabbath ritual." And I'd have been like, "Heck yeah. Let's do this. It's so beautiful." Instead, we kind of ended with actually love feasts.

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Tim: No, I think what you end with is "the kingdom of God has come." So say the Lord's Prayer, live by the Sermon on the Mount, love your neighbor. And if adhering to the ancient wisdom of the Sabbath ritual is going to help you do that in your life, then honor Jesus through observance of the traditional Sabbath. Paul seems fairly clear that that's not required. And if you don't do that, you're not any less of a follower of Jesus.

What I'm hearing you say is just that point. That it's good and it's wise, but it's not required. For you then, am I hearing you say it undercuts the power that it could have.

Jon: Yeah, that's interesting.

Tim: My question would be, why can't it still be powerful but not be required for entry into the family of Jesus? I don't know.

Jon: That's a great point.

Tim: I think if I remember correctly, again, I'm remembering months back, didn't we...I use a metaphor, that somebody who's very passionate about the observance of a weekly Shabbat from Friday to Saturday, I think might be offended by it. And so I'm really not trying to be offensive. But I'm trying to understand Jesus' logic of saying something like "he's the Lord of the Sabbath in his bringing the kingdom of God that brings healing and blessing on them." Jesus really seems to communicate that he is bringing about the ultimate reality to which all of these seventh-day rest symbols and institutions appointed not just Date weekly one but the annual ones and the seventh year ones. Because they were all about one main ideal.

Jon: I guess all the laws like that, in a way Paul talks about it is like a tutor, or it's helping you anticipate something. And when that thing comes, then why focus on the thing which was just anticipating the thing?

Tim: Which doesn't mean don't do it. So the word "focus" is the keyword in that sentence. It's not the main. The main thing is the arrival of the kingdom of God and the advent of rest through Jesus. I think, at least I'm still learning this in my middle age: for the long game to sustain that view and life posture over the course of a lifetime requires rhythms and habits to sustain that worldview. I think a weekly rhythm where you celebrate the dawn of the seventh-day rest is really important. But the question is the cultural form in which you express it.

Jon: I'm a big believer in how rituals shape us. And so it's really beautiful to see that in the seventh-day rituals was this forming that was supposed to happen. And what you're just saying is we need those kind of things for the long run. Maybe there's this balance between there's freedom in

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Christ and the point is Jesus. So if you turn it into then adherence to rituals, you're missing the point. But at the same time, creating rituals in your life that help you follow Jesus is really important.

Tim: Totally. If the family of Abraham was truly fulfilled through the Messiah, and it was always meant to be a multi-ethnic, multicultural family of the new humanity, it seems to me the apostles are drawing out that logic in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 and then in the apostolic letters, and in Peter's vision with Cornelius.

Jon: And the food?

Tim: Yeah. That the cultural forms and practices that this movement is going to take will always be developing and changing in their shape and form because by nature, encompassing all of humanity and all of its diversity. And so to trap, how you practice, the celebration of the new creation into one cultural form, and maybe not even making it the boundary marker to entry into the family of Jesus like some people were doing in Paul's day.

Jon: Which is saying, "This is why you have to do it."

Tim: Yeah. I'm just saying I think there can be many ways that a community of Jesus and a family and a person could create rhythms to accomplish the same end. It seems to me that's what Paul wants to safeguard is that space for the Spirit to shake the community that is practicing these in new ways that haven't been even imagined before. In his mind, it doesn't discount or dishonor the traditions that have come before. You're foolish to ignore them, but it doesn't mean you have to repeat them. I'm just talking here about the rhythms, cultural forms of how you practice certain things in the Christian tradition.

Here's what's tricky is that it's precisely the way that people practice these kinds of traditions and take out Sabbath, you know, and insert baptism or the Lord's Supper or whatever. And because they're so shaping on us, we are very personally attached to them, communities get super invested in our particular way...

Jon: Yeah, because they define your community

Tim: Exactly. Totally. I think that's the challenge is, at what point are we allowing what the Spirit has led me or our community to do, but we're making it like the bar by which now every other group is measured? It seems like That's what Paul wants to push us to get a bigger perspective. Another thing related to this, and I don't remember if we talked about it, about the relationship between the Friday night to Saturday night Shabbat and the Sunday celebration of Jesus followers. Have we talked about it?

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Jon: How they did it?

Tim: Yeah. Well, or just how they relate to each other.

Jon: Oh, I don't know if we did.

Tim: I don't know. Because remember you read the cowboy Ten Commandments.

Jon: Getting yourself to a Sunday gathering.

Tim: In the American tradition, Sabbath has been completely shifted on to Sunday as if it's just like a Christian Sabbath.

Jon: Yeah, go to church.

Tim: Yeah, go to church on Sunday. Totally. This is an area of vigorous historical debate. I've done as much reading as I have imagined for over the years. But if anyone is interested in this question, there's an edited volume by a number of different high-level scholars. It's an edited collection by D. A. Carson called "From Sabbath to Lord's Day." It's maybe like 20 essays and they're all like 40 pages long. It's a massive book. But they're from everything from ancient Israel to Hebrew Bible to Jewish Second Temple to New Testament, to the early centuries of the church.

They make the case that all the evidence points in that the Lord's Day of the Sunday celebration was never a replacement for or viewed as a Christian Sabbath. Rather, it was viewed as the new thing. The new creation day that celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, and that many messianic communities continued in those first centuries to practice Shabbat and then they would also celebrate Jesus on the next day.

Jon: On Sabbath, you mark the end of the week in anticipation for the final day. And then on the next day, you get to celebrate resurrection that new creation has begun.

Tim: Correct. That's right. Resurrection Sunday is about the first day of the new week. But the point is, is that they're not the same and there isn't really any evidence that they were viewed as the same in the first generation of Jesus' followers. What this conclusion then would mean is that it is historically incorrect to call Sunday a Christian Sabbath. It's the Lord's day. What it is, if you think of the Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath as distilling all of the themes of the seventh-day rest theme in the Hebrew Bible, then in a way, the Resurrection Sunday, every single week, you're celebrating what you really celebrate on Resurrection Sunday in the spring, like with Easter, for example. But every Sunday is meant to be that resurrection celebration, not just one time a year.

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- Jon: But a new week has begun leading us to the final creation.
- Tim: Yeah, inaugurating the new creation and leading us through the course of a new week until...
- Jon: It shifted from celebrating the last day of the week to the first day of the week.
- Tim: That's a good point. Yeah, that's right.
- Jon: And there's a place for both?
- Tim: Yeah. They're not mutually exclusive. Anyhow. On that note, there is actually one topic that we didn't discuss in our earlier conversations in the series that we kept alluding to. I think we just got to the end and were tired. I don't know what happened. We don't know what happened. But we never talked about two chapters in the letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament...
- Jon: That talks about rest.
- Tim: ...that are such an important culmination of this whole theme. We thought we would go back even though it's month later and talk about these important two chapters because that they're awesome.
- Jon: I'm excited to do that.
- Tim: Big picture, Letter to the Hebrews, nobody knows who wrote it. People who have strong opinions...
- Jon: Share them.
- Tim: Share them. And maybe they're right. But there are so many of those different strong opinions that it's hard to know. The basic flow of the letter is it's a pastor writing to a congregation of Greek-speaking diaspora. Most likely Messianic Jews. Because the way that he concedes the scriptures of Israel, and the amount of competency that he assumes on the part of the listener...
- Jon: High bar.
- Tim: ...it's high bar. Next level. But essentially he's trying to compel them not to abandon their allegiance to Jesus. He says this by the end of the letter, that there's some of them losing confidence or losing courage because some people have been thrown in prison, some people have some form of persecution against these Messianic Jews. Basically this letter as one huge like rhetorical hammer....

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Jon: Don't give up.

Tim: ...elevating Jesus. He elevates Jesus in every possible way a Jew would know how as he's talking to other Messianic Jews. In chpt. 1 and 2, he elevates Jesus above the divine council. He is God become human as the chief of the Divine Council. He's not your average spiritual being in Chpt. 1 and 2. Chapters that we're going to look at, he elevates Jesus above Moses and Joshua. In the chapters following, in Chpt. 5, he's going to elevate him above Aaron and the whole priesthood. Then he's going to elevate him above the tabernacle of all of the feasts. It's exactly how one Jew would persuade another Jew.

What's cool about Chpts. 3 and 4 were these little movements in Hebrews. They almost seem like distillations of sermons that the pastor once gave. Because they're just rhetorically beautiful. How do you want to do this? Do you want to just kind of work our way through?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Great.

Jon: Let's do that.

Tim: All right, Hebrews.

[00:21:30]

Tim: So, Chpt. 3 vs. 1 begins kind of almost like a new beginning. "Therefore, my holy brothers and sisters who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the one that we acknowledge as our apostle and as our high priest." He begins to contrast him with Moses. "He was faithful to the one who appointed him just like Moses was. Moses was faithful. Jesus was faithful." But then he says, "But Jesus is more awesome. Jesus is found worthy of greater honor than Moses like a builder of a house is of greater honor than the house itself. Who assembled the first house for God in the Torah? Moses. But who was the builder of everything? God. So Moses was faithful as a servant in God's house, but Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house." Notice that little move there. So Moses built a building. What's funny is I think in our context, this sounds like denigrating to Moses. Does it to you?

Jon: No.

Tim: Okay. Some people take it that way.

Jon: I could see that.

Tim: He's trying to say Moses was awesome.

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Jon: Yeah, Moses was awesome. He built the tabernacle and he was faithful. And he bore witness. That's rad. You think that's rad, how much cooler? Is it that God built, well, all of creation and that also He is building you all into a temple where He dwells? And who is the builder of God's world? It's Jesus.

Tim: It's the Son.

Jon: The Son.

Tim: That's it. Thank you. It's a good summary. So follow Jesus.

Jon: And like you said, it's a high bar. If you just jumped into Hebrews because you found a Bible, you'd be like, "What?" Completely lost.

Tim: Oh, yeah. And that's just the first step. He really goes next level starting in vs. 7. He just brings a new idea in the mix here. He just gives a long block quote from Psalm 95. He actually only quotes the last half of Psalm 95. Those we're going to see he assumes that you've uploaded the whole thing because he assumes some things in the first half.

In the poem, God starts speaking to you the reader in the Psalm. He starts this block quote of Psalm 95, second half, "Today, if y'all hear his voice, don't harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion and in the time of testing in the wilderness." The word "rebellion," it's alluding to this narrative where the people begin contending with Moses and with God in the wilderness. The noun is Meribah (contention). And "testing" is a noun Massah. Massah and Meribah. These are the two of the stories in the Torah where Israel rebels against God in the manner of manna and water in the wilderness.

He goes on. "Your ancestors tested and tried me for forty years. I kept providing for them. They saw what I did." So God says, "I was angry. I was angry with that generation, 'their hearts going astray. They haven't known my way.' So I swore on oath 'Because I was mad, they will never enter my rest.'" That's the line.

Jon: "They will never enter my rest."

Jon: In context, this is referring to the promised land, right?

Tim: Yeah, the rest is the promised land. Now, get this. Let's pause real quick here. He's bringing up Psalm 95. Why is he bringing up Psalm 95 out of nowhere here?

Jon: Because he wants to talk about rest.

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- Tim: That's right. Correct. But he's been talking about Moses, then he's going to bring up the stuff about rest. But instead of just talking about the wilderness narrative, he uses Psalm 95.
- Jon: He could have just referred to that.
- Tim: Yeah. Why didn't he just to start talking about the wilderness narratives? He's going to in a minute. Why Psalm 95? This is really fascinating. Psalm 95 begins with a call saying, "Everybody sings for joy to Yahweh. Everybody shout out loud to the rock of our salvation." The rock.
- Jon: The rock.
- Tim: The rock of our salvation. So God is being called "the rock of rescue." This is a new development, but I've been really trying it on lately using the word "rescue" as a synonym for safe.
- Jon: He says salvation?
- Tim: Yeah, I think the word "salvation" is so loaded for people, a kind of a new word that means the same thing, but gets you thinking in a new way is the word "rescue." So I'm going for it.
- Jon: I like that.
- Tim: And it makes a nice iteration right here. The rock of rescue, right?
- Jon: Yeah.
- Tim: "Let's praise the rock of rescue." What's that? How is God the rock of rescue? What does that even mean? A rock of salvation. The poem goes on to say "Yahweh is a Great King above all the other Elohim." Vs. 3 And then he goes through the three-tiered Cosmos.
- Jon: In His hands are the depths of the earth. That's the below. The abyss.
- Tim: Yeah, the deep abyss below the land.
- Jon: And the mountain peaks belonged to Him. The land?
- Tim: High place. High places of the land.
- Jon: Oh, okay. "And the sea is his."
- Tim: The sea and the dry land.
- Jon: So mountain peaks are kind of at the sky?

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Tim: Yeah, they're touching the sky. So from the water below the earth to the highest point of the earth, it that touches the heavens or the sea in the dry land. Just kind of a horizontal. Oh, that's interesting. Vertical. I've never noticed that. Vs. 4 is vertical, vs. 5 is horizontal. The sea and the dry land.

Jon: But all of the cosmos?

Tim: Yeah, the whole cosmos is the work of His hands. "So let's bow down and worship kneel before the Lord. Yahweh our maker, he made the cosmos and he made us." How did he make his people? "He's our Elohim. We are the people of his pasture. We are the flock that he cares for." We are his flock.

Jon: That's the first half of Psalm 35?

Tim: Yeah. When did God create a flock of His people? I think we're meant to upload the exodus story here. Because the Exodus is how he creates. It's a new creation act where He brings his people through the waters to the dry land of rest and so on. The point is this Psalm is riffing off all kinds of stuff in Genesis and Exodus. But this phrase "the rock of our salvation..."

There's an interesting story right after the people go through the waters in Exodus and in Exodus 17 the people are thirsty.

Jon: The marah is the bitter water?

Tim: Yeah, Rephidim. And there's no water there, and so the people quarrel with Moses. They say, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to kill us of thirst out here in the wilderness?" Here's what God says to Moses...

Jon: Speak to the rock?

Tim: We're almost there. This is Exodus 17:5. "The Lord answered Moses, "go out in front of the people, take with you some of the elders, take in your hand the staff. You know that one that you struck the Nile with? Strike the rock." Oh, Vs. 6, sorry. This is the key detail. it's what he always says. "I will stand there for you on the rock at Mount Horeb. Strike that rock and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this and they called the place testing (Massah) and Meribah (quarreling) because they Massah and Meribah. That's the story,

Jon: This is the story he got in trouble for it?

Tim: Ah-ah.

Jon: Oh, it's a different story.

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Tim: We'll talk about that in a second. The whole point is this is the rock of rescue.

Jon: This is the rock of rescue.

Tim: The rock of rescue. Yahweh stands on the rock. That's what he says. And he says, "Moses, strike the rock." And then He provides water for the people out of the rock. Then what you find is in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses, for the first time, he recalls these wilderness journeys in Deuteronomy 32, specifically, vs. 15, and he calls Yahweh "the rock of rescue."

Jon: Oh, he does in Deuteronomy?

Tim: The rock that rescued them. So this is a thing. Yahweh is the rock of rescue. How? By providing water. Providing life in the middle of a wilderness space. There are these wilderness stories of rebellion that involve the manna. You remember we looked at this one. They want to quail and meat and they wanted water here. Then they're camped out at Mount Sinai for a year. And then on the other side of Sinai, they leave in the book of Numbers. So they leave Mount Sinai in Numbers 10. What follows are a whole series of rebellion stories in Numbers 11-21. Do you want to just guess how many really rebellions stories there are?

Jon: They are seven.

Tim: There are seven. Exactly. And even more so, they're in a symmetrical design so that the first one matches the last, the second one matches the fifth...

Jon: It's chiasm.

Tim: It's a chiasm.

Jon: The one in the middle then...

Tim: The one in the middle is number four. It's where the spies go into the land and they see the giants, the Sons of Anakim who were as big as the Nephilim. And they're freaked out and they're like, "No, we can't do it." And Caleb and Joshua were like, "Yeah, we can." That's the pivot. Because that's the story where God makes an oath: "I will not let them enter my rest." That's the center story. There's a collection of seven rebellion stories.

Jon: And at the center is the one that got him booted from the rest.

Tim: At the center is the one that's being referred to in Psalm 95 at the end. But then what's interesting is the sixth one is where the people are

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thirsty, and they say, "Why did you bring us out here to kill us with thirst?" And what God tells Moses to do is speak to the rock, not strike it. He gets angry and strikes the rock anyway—two times. And then God says that that was a lack of faith. And Moses fails. This is the moment of Moses' failure too.

In other words, it seems like the author of Hebrews is using Psalm 95 because simultaneously is activating the rebellion stories on both sides and Mount Sinai before and after. The mention of the rock of rescue allows him to use this title for God who gave them life in the desert, but ultimately, they rejected the life that God wanted to give them in the desert. These are exactly the things that the author of Hebrews is going to bring up. Sorry, I don't know if that's too long.

Oh, but the point of those seven stories, these are the seven stories that exclude them from the ultimate seventh-day rest.

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: Right?

Jon: The seven rebellions that keep them from...

Tim: Entering the seventh-day rest.

Jon: Which for them was the promised land.

Tim: Promised Land is that rest. Exactly right. Yeah, that's exactly right.

[00:33:27]

Jon: What these are is design patterns in the future if you're reading throughout the Torah. As you come back to Hebrews 3 then, what he's going to go on to do say, "Listen, this Psalm wasn't just about our ancestors in the past. This Psalm is to every generation of Israel who has yet to enter the ultimate seventh-day rest." Which is exactly the point that he draws. He says, "Listen, everybody, let's encourage each other every day as long as it's called today of Psalm 95."

Psalm 95 says, "Today, listen...the past is just the instruction for the people waiting to go into the future rest. So today, we have come to share in the Messiah, if we hold on to our conviction firmly until the very end, just like it's been said, Hey, don't be like the people of the wilderness generation. Who were the people who heard and rebelled? Well, it was the people Moses led out. Why did they perish there in the wilderness? Because of their lack of trust?" He says. The point is, he reads those wilderness narratives as a challenge and exhortation to every future generation that from...

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- Jon: You can get lost in the wilderness too if you don't listen to His voice and you harden your heart, you rebel.
- Tim: Correct. That's right. The whole design of the wilderness narratives in the Torah is trying to tell you that the promised land itself is an image of the ultimate future seventh-day rest.
- Jon: Say that again.
- Tim: The design of the wilderness narratives in the Torah itself is trying to tell us that the arrival in the promised land is an image of the future seventh-day rest that is beyond.
- Jon: How does it do that?
- Tim: Well, those rebellion narratives are a huge wet blanket on the storyline of going into the promised land. They go into the promised land, but it's only the second generation because all the...
- Jon: But the second generation get in, so they find the rest.
- Tim: Right. In theory. In theory, until they repeat the sins of their ancestor...
- Jon: And they never really do find the rest.
- Tim: ...in the land. Correct.
- Jon: And so you're saying because there really isn't ever any rest found in the promised land throughout the whole Hebrew Bible, you read that and you're clearly like, "Whatever this promised land rest is, it doesn't happen when you enter the promised land and inhabit it."
- Tim: That's right. The point of Psalm 95 is those past narratives are an image of the future hope.
- Jon: Now we haven't done any sort of theme on land.
- Tim: Oh, yeah. In a way this video is it.
- Jon: This video?
- Tim: It represents one aspect of what the land is.
- Jon: Someone was just remarking about how the number one promise in the Hebrew Bible is about the land.
- Tim: Yes, totally.

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Jon: And then it seems like here when we're talking about entering the rest, we're referring to the promise of the land. But are we talking about the promise of the land anymore?

Tim: In its narrative sense.

Jon: What does that mean its narrative sense?

Tim: Oh, well, if you're just thinking from the narrative perspective of these characters, it's about the land of Canaan.

Jon: A place where you can live in freedom and abundance.

Tim: That's right. Actually, no, a distinct video on the land would be cool because the land that is actually possessed by the Israelites never even comes close to of the land borders promised to Abraham. And by the time you get into the prophets, the land gets expanded out to encompass the whole of creation.

Jon: When they talk about the land?

Tim: Very often That's right. There's a handful of key texts where just like in the seventh day becomes an image of the transcendent time of the new creation. So that particular plot of land becomes an icon for the whole of the new creation.

Jon: That'd be interesting to look at.

Tim: But you can see part of that going on right here. In Hebrews 4:6, he says, "Listen, everybody, it still remains for some to enter that rest." There's still arrest that is yet to be entered into. A future rest.

Jon: Now, if you were a Jewish person in the first century reading that, you could think, "Oh, yeah, we'll get the land back, we won't be occupied and we'll have abundance and freedom here in this land that was promised to us." Is that with the writer of Hebrews is talking about?

Tim: No, I think he's following a different line of interpretation. In his mind, the promised land, the actual promised land, what we today call Israel-Palestine, is an image of something greater and more expansive. But what he's focusing on on the seventh day, not the land as such. But for him it's universal.

Jon: I see. So he says, "Enter the rest..."

Tim: Let's just watch this logic. Let's go back up to vs. 3 of Chpt. 4. He's contrasting is saying, "Listen, the previous generation, they died in the wilderness." Vs. 3. "We who have trust, we do enter that rest. Just as

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God said - he quotes Psalm 95 - "I declare it on my own, they won't enter my rest." And then he says this: "And yet God's works have been finished since the creation of the world. For you know, somewhere in the Bible it has spoken about the seventh day with these words." He quotes from Genesis 1. "On the seventh day, God rested from all of his work." But then again, in the passage we're talking about, Psalm 95, it says, "They shall never enter my rest." Do you see what he's doing here? He sees Genesis 1 which says God rested...

Jon: That's his rest.

Tim: ...but then he read Psalm 95, and says, "But hear God is saying my rest is something yet to come." So which is it? Did God rest in the past or is the rest to come yet in the future? So he draws the conclusion. Vs. 6. "It still remains. There's still..."

Jon: Seventh day is yet to come.

Tim: Seventh day is yet to come.

Jon: But he also said in vs. 3, "we have entered it by believing."

Tim: Yeah, that's right. It's something you enter in the present, which will come to its ultimate fulfillment in the future. That's right.

Jon: It's something that God did in the past, something we could enter the present, and it's something is yet to be fulfilled in the future.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. That's right.

[00:40:59]

Tim: Since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since the people who formerly had good news announced to them didn't enter into it, thinking about the wilderness generation, through Psalm 95, God is, as it were, renewing the call, calling it today, saying, "Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts." Then look at this. Vs. 8 "For if Joshua had given them rest..."

Jon: Because he's the one that brought them into the promised land?

Tim: Yes, totally. Now he's writing in Greek. Just spell "Joshua" in Greek with the Greek letters. Iesous. It's the name "Jesus." In other words, if you're reading this in Greek, it's the name "Jesus." And that's for sure he's winking at you here. So if that previous Jesus had given them rest, why are we talking about another day in Psalm 95? And then vs. 9, "So I'm telling you there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." The implication is the risen Jesus, not the Jesus of the past has opened up the

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Sabbath rest for the people of God. Anyone who enters God's rest also rest from their works just as God did from his. So let's make every effort to enter into that rest."

This guy's all over the Old Testament Scriptures. But he's drawing together these threads from Genesis 1 from the image of the promised land as a New Eden ultimate seventh-day rest from the wilderness narratives, showing how Israel never attained to that rest. And in this author's mind, that actually summarizes the whole Old Testament story, even the whole monarchy with David and Solomon, he just dismisses as one long period of disobedience. Which is how the prophets understood it too.

And so he reads the Old Testament, the way that the final shapers of the Tanak did, which is that the ultimate rest has never yet happened to our people yet. But the one who's greater than Moses and greater than Joshua, Jesus, will have opened up that rest for us.

Want to see something interesting? If you look in Chpt. 12 of Hebrews, he actually talks even more about how we have come to that rest. It's available in the present. Look at vs. 22 of Chpt. 12. He says, "You all have arrived at Mount Zion to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels and joyous assembly, that's the divine council to the assembly or the church, Ecclesia of the firstborn whose names are all written in heaven. You've come to the god, the judge of all to the spirits of the righteous made perfect. You've come to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and his sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than a blood even of Abel." In other words...

Jon: It's pretty bad.

Tim: Totally. The point is, is he believes in the present. In this present age, we have already come into contact with the new creation, the ultimate seventh-day rest, which he calls Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. All of the new humanity that inhabits the new creation it's already happening. It's already something you can experience in the present. He says in Chpt. 6, you get a taste of the these powers of the new creation through the Spirit.

You drew attention this moment ago, where, wait, is the ultimate rest something in the past? Is it in the present or in the future? And in his mind, it's all of them.

Jon: If you were to sit him down - it's a him now all of a sudden - but the author of Hebrews and say, "Okay, that's very beautiful language. What do you mean? I'm a first-century Roman citizen, my allegiance is to Jesus

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now, I'm serving the poor, I'm eating these meals in a community where we love each other and hierarchies don't matter, but life is still difficult. I'm still paying taxes. Sometimes the crops sucks. What are you talking about "I've come to Mount Zion?" I'm not. I'm not on Mount Zion. I'm wherever. I'm in Ephesus, and I don't see angels everywhere. What are you talking?"

Tim: Yeah, I know. I'm not like dismissing this. I'm saying this is a written sermon. This is the point at which in a sermon I'm not this kind of preacher. I'm really a teacher is what I am. But...

Jon: It's motivating.

Tim: Yeah, he's being a motivational preacher.

Jon: Yeah, totally.

Tim: And what he's also referring to, I think, is the service of worship in their gathering. The idea is, and this concept of worship, this is a whole new frontier for me that I'm reading deep into right now as we get into apocalyptic, is that the temple Liturgy of Israel's temple has had a fundamental influence on the history of concepts of worship right into Messianic Judaism and early Christianity. So that when the gathered people of God come together, it's as if they create on Earth the mirror of the celebration happening in the new creation.

Pick your metaphor. If you want to use spatial metaphors, it's in the heavenly Jerusalem. If you want to use time imagery, it's in the future rest. But the point is, in the present, when God's people gather to bring their prayers and their joys and celebrate together in the name of Jesus, they are creating a bit of heaven on earth through worship. I think that's why he brings up "you've come essentially to the temple and are participating in angels and the souls of the righteous made perfect in a joyful assembly." He's describing like a Sabbath day in the temple courts when the Levitical choirs are doing their thing.

I think that's what he's referring to here. He or she really believes that when God's people are gathered in the power of the Spirit, praising Jesus that...And you bring all of the stuff in the week for you tried to love your neighbor and you've tried to be aware of the people hurting people around you, and you bring all those burdens and cares and joys into the weekly gathering. And you bring it all before Jesus alongside all these other people who are trying to follow Jesus too. And you announce that he's the king of the universe despite what everybody else says around us. I think that's what he means right here. The stuff happens.

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By the way, I'm not describing how I feel about Church. I mean, Sundays. The way I often feel and experience church is that my 6-year-old is asking for like a snack if he's like tired and falling asleep and my 8-year-old can't stay still and all of a sudden, 20 minutes has gone by and I haven't listened to anything. That's often my experience with church.

Jon: I think that's one reason why this idea of practicing a Sabbath or practicing the Sabbath in a traditional way even has become really appealing to people is because there's this restlessness about the lack of significance and meaning in some Protestant traditions.

Tim: I think you're right about that.

Jon: And there's this desire of like, "There's got to be something just to shake that up and make this really come to life more."

Tim: And some people might find that by discovering traditions that are more connected to the historical form of a Christian liturgy.

Jon: Yeah, people are doing that.

Tim: I understand that appeal more than ever because it's a type of church experience that's not designed to meet my needs in any way. There's no marketing involved. It's just like...

Jon: "This is how we do it."

Tim: "There's this story that's been being retold through the symbols and practices for thousands of years, and I go participate in it to remind myself of what is ultimately true." But there are some people who experience that as it doesn't help them. It's not helping them connect to ultimate reality and to the personal presence of Jesus. For some people, their local church and Sunday gathering is where that happens. And for other people, it might need to be reinventing it and discovering something in their home or in their family or in the house or something. I don't know.

Jon: But I think what's exciting is to think about the opportunity. Regardless of how you're going to do it, is that we live in the story and where history is being culminated in a seventh day. And that seventh day is still packed with all that meaning of creation as it should be resting and ruling with God and His wisdom, and abundance and freedom. And to anticipate that is part of our calling. And however you do that, there are tons of cool ways you could do that. That really shapes you and it gives you kind of a new vision for how to think about the world that we're navigating and all of its problems.

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Then on top of that, we've got another image of, yes, that seventh day is coming, but it's also it happened with Jesus, which inaugurated a new week, and we get to celebrate that too - a resurrection and new creation in this, like at this next level of anticipation. If the way that you're remembering that in community is feeling stale, there are tons of ways to mix that up.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: I think for me, and for people who come from a tradition that's kind of been...I come from a non-denominational tradition. So it's kind of like we don't have any tradition. Like we just kind of like...

[00:51:34]

Tim: The tradition of not having traditions.

Jon: Yeah. And so there's this willy nilly spirit of like, "We'll just do youth group however we want to. We'll do this." That has its own trap in which you're now just kind of like chasing the new fad usually a decade late. And that's become tiring. So then there's this thought of like, "Let's just do something that's been done for ages. But then for other people, there's going to be different sentiment.

Tim: Yeah, sure. I mean, think of the core principles we talked through in the series. Back to that first conversation we had, that in the history of Sabbath practice, one of the main things is by inconveniencing my life one day, in a weekly rhythm, it reminds me that my time is not my own, but it's subject to the rule and reign of God. That's awesome. I need to be reminded of that. The way and the rhythm, a cultural form that that takes will probably...well it has varied in the course of my own life, and it probably will need to vary again. But that's the core idea.

The idea that the ultimate reign and rule of God which is what I hope for in the culmination of all creation has already been launched, and is already at work in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. So what does it mean for me to participate that in that with my entire life. But then also to mark out rhythms and weekly moments where I can remind myself of that story, because it's difficult to believe, at least for me, and I need rhythms to remind me of it. Those are things that could be expressed in lots of different forms. Couldn't they?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I think. And I think that's what the apostles thought, which is why they made the decisions that they did at the Jerusalem council to which you and I stand indebted to. Those Gentiles right on the other side of the planet, 2,000 years later, we are directly affected by their decision. Right?

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Jon: In that, we're not following all the Jewish laws.

Tim: Yeah. Or that it creates an open space of freedom for the Holy Spirit to guide future generations in how they're going to faithfully and rhythmically live out this vision of life and of the universe and of the hope for the seventh-day rest. I think that's what we see Paul pushing his communities towards in the places where Sabbath became a controversy, whether in Croatia or in Colossae or in Rome.

It's unfortunate that it's become such a point of controversy, Sabbath practices, because what it has always been meant to do is create a space for freedom, and creativity, and hope. I hope that's what these conversations and I really hope that's what the video can invite people into.

Jon: Cool. Thanks for listening to this episode of The Bible Project podcast. This video on seventh-day rest is going to release on our YouTube channel in the first week of 2020. I just got to watch the final version with sound design, and it is my new favorite video. I'm excited for y'all to see it. I feel like it recaps what we discussed really well, has some really beautiful symbols in it. It's great. I'm looking forward to you all seeing that.

Thanks for listening through this pretty dense conversation on seventh-day rest. We're going to begin in the new year a new series on trees in the Bible.

Tim: Trees, they have a significant animated role in the biblical story. They are not passive. Trees play an active role.

Jon: This is a really exciting series. I am looking forward to releasing it in 2020. The Bible Project is a nonprofit organization we are in Portland, Oregon. We exist to show that the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. We make all sorts of videos that you can find on our website, thebibleproject.com. And they're all for free because of a huge group of people like you who are supporting this. Thank you so much. We also have this podcast, other resources. You can check it out. Check back tomorrow, we're going to release a real special quick podcast update on the last day of the year. If you don't listen to that, then I'll say now, Happy, happy New Year. We're so glad to be a part of this with you.

Micah: Hi, my name is Micah.

Brent: I'm Brent.

Audrey: And this is Audrey.

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Micah: We're all from Air Christian School. I first heard about The Bible Project when my church did a little video of it and I thought it was really cool. So I went home with my brothers and we got right onto our computers and started watching it right away.

Brent: I use The Bible Project to help me understand the verses that are hard for me to go over my head.

Audrey: My favorite thing about The Bible Project is that it's local here in Portland so you can actually come and meet the people who run this. We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus.

Brent: We're a crowdfunded project by people like me.

Micah: Find free videos, study notes, podcasts and more of thebibleproject.com.