

## Biblical Forensics©

### “Unbelief - Point of Reckoning” Part 8

As we conclude this study series, the important point to keep in mind, as one moves forward in their Christian faith, is that the Rapture is a “blessing” for the overcomers who are born-again, spirit-filled, Bible-believing Christians. This is why one group is taken and the other remains and is noted in four specific parables. These are specific or special blessings for those who love “His appearing”: **“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at the day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing”.** -(2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:8). The crown of righteousness is the garland (here, not a diadem) which will be given to those believers who have exhibited righteousness in their service. Indeed, **it will be given to all those who have loved Christ's appearing.** If a man really longs with affection for the coming of Christ and lives in the light of that event, then his life will be righteous, and he will be rewarded accordingly. Here is a fresh reminder that the Second Coming of Christ, when truly believed and loved, exercises a sanctifying influence on one's life.  
(a)

That same idea is revealed in Titus 2:13-14: **“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”.** "Looking" is **“prosdech-omai”**, "to receive to one's self, to admit, give access to one's self, to receive into intercourse and companionship, to expect, look for, and wait for." The verb has an atmosphere of **expectancy** about it, and a **readiness** to welcome the person looked for and expected. The A.V. makes "that blessed hope" and "the glorious appearing" to be two different things, whereas the Greek text requires that they be construed as one. We have Granville Sharp's rule here, which says that when there are two nouns in the same case connected by **“kai”** (and), the first noun having the article, the second noun not having the article, the second noun refers to the same thing the first noun does and is a further description of it. Thus, that blessed hope is the glorious appearing of our Lord. The translation should read, "that blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."<sup>(b)</sup>

Hebrews 9:28 builds on this: **“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”** To his people. It is one of the characteristics of Christians that they look for the return of their Lord; Titus 2:13; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:12. **They fully believe that he will come. They earnestly desire that He will come;** 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:8; Revelation 22:20. They are waiting for His appearing; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:10. He left the world and ascended to heaven, but He will again return to earth, and His people are looking for that time as the

period when they shall be raised up from their graves; when they shall be publicly acknowledged to be His, and when they shall be admitted to heaven.<sup>(c)</sup>

### **This explains why:**

- Some are **overcomers** (the Bride/Church) – the first fruits of the harvest.
- Some **remain** and **die martyrs** in the Tribulation –(Revelation 6)
- Some **make their robes white** and come through Great Tribulation.

***“And I said unto Him, Sir, thou knowest, And He said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”.*** –(Revelation 7:14). The Jews were numbered, but this multitude could not be numbered. These Gentiles are the fruit of the labors of the 144,000, and they come from every nation under heaven. They are **not a part of the church**, since we see them **before the throne, and not on thrones**, as are the elders. Revelation 7:14 makes it clear that they come (not “came”) out of the Great Tribulation. Here John sees them standing before the heavenly throne, praising God and the Lamb. Their “palms” suggest the Feast of Tabernacles in the Old Testament –(Leviticus 23:40-43), the event at which Israel rejoiced at the blessings of the Lord. They are dressed in white robes, which indicates their righteousness through the Lamb. Revelation 7:14 says that these Gentiles were saved by faith in Christ, for this is the only way anyone can be saved.<sup>(d)</sup>

This is an unrelated point, but it explains why to this very day Jews in general literally hate the Apostle Paul who was formerly a Pharisee named Saul. I have contact with slightly more than a dozen Jewish rabbis and they all express derision and negative remarks about one of their own, yet he became the greatest New Testament Apostle.

There are other areas which have not been addressed in this particular series but the overall picture has been clearly illustrated many times so that there is no need for me to discuss the Jewish wedding here. Incidentally, I prepared a multi-part series on the Biblical Theme of the Bride.<sup>(1)</sup> Off hand, I can think of several Biblical themes that corroborate well beyond our need here to make the point. Hebrews, chapters 11, 12, and 13, makes a clear case to buttress my premises. These chapters presents a serious case for judgment against people who hold onto the “sin of unbelief”. The book of Hebrews restates the Old Testament narrative. God made a promise against the people who refused to obey Him. –(Proverbs 20:22).

These were the same people God delivered from the harsh yoke of bondage to Egypt; however, nearly all the adults who left Egypt had the same wrong attitudes. They would not trust God, and they did not want to obey Him. So God declared that they would all die in the desert. As a result, the Israelites would not enter the land that God had promised to them. What should have taken no more than two weeks, cost them dearly; and, they paid for their unbelief with their lives while they spent forty years wandering in the wilderness because of their

disobedience and so God declared their outcome. -(The entire second half of the book of Exodus deals with their struggle with unbelief).

Only two men, Joshua and Caleb, remained loyal to God. As a blessing for their obedience, they were permitted to enter along with the people's children who were 20 years and younger; the Israelites older than 20 years died in the desert. -(Deuteronomy 1:26-39). The lesson was an obvious one, disobedience to God is gravely wrong. Furthermore, **mistrusting God is a sin that carries perilous consequences. The Israelites were to have unquestioning faith.**

The fact that this was problematic for the Israelites is no less important for Gentiles today, including those who profess to be Christians. **Faith means active belief and trust in the promises God has revealed in Scripture.** We are to wear our faith on our collar, so to speak. We act on our faith when we are obedient and submissive to God. It is not enough to have the kind of belief that is just an idea in our minds. Speaking of faith, James writes: ***“Even so, if it does not have works, faith is dead, being by itself.”*** -(James 2:17). Thus also faith by itself if it does not have works, is dead. A faith without works is not real faith at all. **It is only a matter of words.** James is not saying that we are saved by faith plus works. To hold such a view would be to dishonor the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If, we are saved by faith plus works, then there would be two saviors—Jesus and ourselves. But the New Testament is very clear that Christ is the one and only Savior. What James is emphasizing is that, we are not saved by a faith of words only but by that kind of faith which results in a life of good works. In other words, **works are not the root of salvation but the fruit; they are not the cause but the effect.** Calvin put it tersely: *“We are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone.”*<sup>(a)</sup>

It is not enough to believe that God exists -(James 2:19). A man's professed faith may be nothing more than mental assent to a well-known fact. Such intellectual agreement involves no committal of the person, and does not produce a transformed life. It is not enough to believe in the existence of God. True, this is essential, but it is not sufficient. Even the demons believe in the existence of God and they shudder at the thought of their eventual punishment by Him. The demons believe the fact, but they do not surrender to the Person. This is not saving faith. When a person truly believes on the Lord, it involves a commitment of spirit, soul, and body. This commitment in turn results in a changed life. **Faith apart from works is head belief, and therefore dead belief.**<sup>(a)</sup>

It is not enough to say you were born into a Christian family that went to church faithfully every Sunday, and were in church when the doors opened. Perhaps that may be the false assumption held by many who claim to be Christian. These types of Christians can be referred to as CINO's (Christian in name only)! Having been a pastor for over five decades, it always strikes me as being strange to learn of a member who fell into apostasy yet their family were pillars of the church.

If we do not obey God, we will not receive his gifts or promises to us. That happened to the people that Moses led out of Egypt. God wanted to give a land

to them and He defined its borders. That is the primary meaning of “God’s ‘rest’” noted in the previous segment of this series which is found in Hebrews 3:11 and 18. When you get to chapter 4 of Hebrews, there is a reality that is missed by so many. That meaning is critically important for people now. It is this: **We shall not receive that ‘rest’ if we do not trust God.** The “sin of unbelief” poisoned the Israelites of Moses’ day. That “sin of unbelief” can destroy one’s relationship with God today as well.

I believe the Apostle Paul was the author of Hebrews, because the book of Hebrews reveals the characteristics of Paul’s writing style (Paul had reasons for refraining from indicating his name as author). All that aside, the author warns us of an important point that we must pay close attention to in order to remember. Matthew 11:28-29 shares a promise to Christians. **“Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke on you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls.”** The promise and its expectations are laid out for any who choose to follow Jesus Christ. God promised Moses and his people rest in Exodus 33:14.

God wanted Moses and his people to know that God was with them, and that He would be with them **all the time**. It was a hard lesson for the Israelites to understand, and over the centuries one tends to wonder if they ever learned that lesson.

God wants to be present with His people; this is true back then as well as it is for us today. He wants and requires obedience but He does not want people struggling where the work is too hard. God is not a hard task master and He has bestowed abundant promises on His people. God may have had second thoughts about giving man sovereignty with regards to acting and operating under “Free Will”, but He also recognized the issues involved with permitting us to choose for ourselves. Because of God’s sovereignty, He set the parameters concerning who receives His blessings, but in this case the “sin of unbelief” becomes a serious deal breaker. God’s Good News is still the Good News but there is a difference between that first recorded in the story of Exodus and the promise of “rest” that is offered for us today. The author of Hebrews is writing about the Good News *ex post facto*, ('out of the aftermath')<sup>(2)</sup> and is revealing the Good News **as a reality in the life of Jesus Christ.**

But there is a difference between us (born-again believers), and the people who first heard Moses’ law. The difference is not the good news or the meaning of the message. **The difference is, or should be, in our reaction response.** We know from history that their reaction, their choice and their attitude was all wrong. **They did not have faith, an active faith and belief and trust in God.** Whereas, Christians today have had the benefit of centuries of the Good News, as received and delivered by the Messiah, Christ Jesus Himself. So **a Christian’s responsibility is much greater.**

If we examine the first story in the Bible of Adam and Eve and we see a prime example and its result of this entire theme of the “Sin of Unbelief”. God

gave them one central instruction –(Genesis 2:16-17). How difficult was that for them to follow? Because of their disobedience, God had them driven from the Garden, and humanity has suffered under the curse of sin ever since.

As we get closer and closer to the Rapture, more and more people are going to believe they are going to be recipients of the Rapture blessing, but as long as a person remains in the attitude of unbelief, they need to know and understand that the “sin of unbelief” has serious consequences.

The main reason for this series is to warn those living with this kind of attitude or who are deliberately living in a state of unbelief. God has offered everyone a chance to choose for themselves whom they will follow. **The Rapture is reserved for the faithful, a blessing for faithful obedience to the Word of God.** The Rapture is not a blessing for salvation as noted before, but rather is **a blessing for faithfulness to those who have been obedient to Jesus Christ!**

### **Notes:**

1. The Biblical Theme of the Bride Parts 1 thru 22: <http://www.jesusthewaythetruththelife.com/node/22>
2. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ex\\_post\\_facto\\_law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ex_post_facto_law)

### **Commentaries:**

- a. Believer's Bible Commentary
- b. Wuest's Word Studies
- c. Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible
- d. Wiersbe's Expository Outlines

## **Hebrews 4:1-13**

***“Therefore, a promise being left to enter into His rest, let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it. For also we have had the gospel preached, as well as them. But the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter into the rest, as He said, “I have sworn in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest;” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.***

***For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, “They shall not enter into My rest.” Since then it remains that some must enter into it, and since they to whom it was first preached did not enter in because of unbelief, He again marks out a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” (after so long a time). Even as it is said, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. So then there remains a rest to the people of God. For he who has entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His.***

**Therefore let us labor to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of unbelief.**

***For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.***

### **Believer's Bible Commentary:**

#### **Hebrews 4:1-13**

4:1 No one should think that the promise of rest is no longer valid. It has never had a complete and final fulfillment in the past; therefore **the offer is still in effect.** But all who profess to be believers should make sure that they do not come short of the goal. If their profession is empty, there is always the danger of turning away from Christ and embracing some religious system that is powerless to save.

4:2 We have had good news preached to us—the good news of eternal life through faith in Christ. The Israelites also had good news preached to them—the good news of rest in the land of Canaan. But they did not benefit from the gospel of rest. There are two possible explanations for their failure, depending on which manuscript reading of verse 2 we adopt. According to the NKJV, the reason for their failure was that **the message was not mixed with faith in those who heard it.** In other words, **they did not believe it or act upon it.**

The other reading (NKJV margin) is that **“they were not united by faith with those who heeded it.”** The meaning here is that the majority of the Israelites were not united by faith with Caleb and Joshua, the two spies who believed the promise of God. **In either case, the prominent idea is that unbelief excluded them from the rest** which God had prepared for them in the land of promise.

4:3 The continuity of thought becomes difficult in this verse. There seem to be three disjointed and unrelated clauses, yet we can see that there is a common thread in each clause—the theme of God's rest. First we learn that we who have believed are the ones who enter God's rest. **Faith is the key that opens the door.** As has been pointed out already, believers today enjoy rest of conscience because they know that they will never be brought into judgment for their sins -(John 5:24). But it is also true that **those who believe are the only ones who will ever enter God's final rest in glory.** It is probably this future rest that is primarily intended here.

The next clause reinforces the idea by stating it negatively: as He has said: “So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’” (quoted from Psalm 95:11). **Just as faith admits, so unbelief excludes.** We who trust Christ are sure of God's rest; the unbelieving Israelites could not be sure of it because they did not believe God's word.

The third clause presents the most difficulty: it says, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. Perhaps the simplest explanation is found by linking this with the preceding clause. There God had used the future tense in speaking of His rest: They shall not enter My rest. The future tense implies that God's rest is still a live option, even though some forfeited it through disobedience, and this rest is still available in spite of the fact that God's works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4:4 This verse is intended to prove from Scripture that God rested after the work of creation was completed. The author's vagueness in identifying the passage quoted does not indicate any ignorance on his part. It is merely a literary device in quoting a verse from a book that was not at that time divided into chapters and verses. The verse is adapted from Genesis 2:2: **“And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.”** Here the past tense is used and it might seem to indicate to some that God's rest belongs only to history and not to prophecy, that it has no relevance for us today. But **that is not the case.**

4:5 To reinforce the idea that the reference to God's rest after creation does not mean that it is a closed issue, the writer again quotes with slight change from Psalm 95:11, where the future tense is used, ***"They shall not enter My rest."*** He is saying, in effect, *"In your thinking, do not confine God's rest to what happened back in Genesis 2; remember that God later spoke about His rest as something that was still available."*

4:6 Up to this point in the argument we have seen that, from the creation, God has been offering rest to mankind. The admission gate has been open. The Israelites in the wilderness failed to enter because of their disobedience. But that did not mean that the promise was no longer in effect!

4:7 The next step is to show that even in the case of David, about 500 years after the Israelites were shut out from Canaan, God was still using the word "Today" as a day of opportunity. The writer had already quoted Psalm 95:7-8 in Hebrews 3:7-8, Hebrews 3:15. He now quotes it again to prove that God's promise of rest did not cease with the Israelites in the wilderness. In David's time, He was still pleading with men to trust Him and not to harden their hearts.

4:8 Some Israelites did, of course, enter Canaan with Joshua. But even these did not enjoy the final rest which God has prepared for those who love Him. There was conflict in Canaan, and sin, sickness, sorrow, suffering, and death. If they had exhausted God's promise of rest, then He would not have offered it again in the time of David.

4:9 The preceding verses have been leading up to this conclusion: **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.** Here the writer uses a different Greek word for rest ("**sabbatismos**"), which is related to the word Sabbath. It refers to the eternal rest which will be enjoyed by all who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. It is a "Sabbath" keeping **that will never end.**

4:10 Whoever enters God's rest enjoys a cessation from labor, just as God did on the seventh day. Before we were saved, we may have tried to work for our salvation. When we realized that Christ had finished the work at Calvary, we abandoned our own worthless efforts and trusted the risen Redeemer. After salvation, we expend ourselves in loving toil for the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. Our good works are the fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We are often weary in His service, though not weary of it. In God's eternal rest, we shall cease from our labors down here. This does not mean that we will be inactive in heaven. We shall still worship and serve Him, but there will be no fatigue, distress, persecution, or affliction.

4:11 The previous verses demonstrate that God's rest is still available. This verse says that **diligence is necessary in order to enter that rest.** We must be diligent to make sure that our only hope is Christ the Lord. **We must diligently resist any temptation merely to profess faith in Him and then to renounce Him in the heat of suffering and persecution.** The Israelites were careless. They treated God's promises lightly. They hankered for Egypt, the land of their bondage. They were not diligent in appropriating God's promises by faith. As a result, they never reached Canaan. We should be warned by their example.

4:12 The next two verses contain a solemn warning that **unbelief never goes undetected. It is detected first by the word of God.** (The term used here for the word is "**rhema**" not "**logos**", the familiar word used by John in the prologue to his Gospel. This verse refers, not to the Living Word, Jesus, but to the written word, the Bible.) This word of God is:

**living**—constantly and actively alive.

**powerful**—energizing.

**cutting**—sharper than any two-edged sword.

**dividing**—piercing the soul and spirit, the two invisible, nonmaterial parts of man. Piercing the joints and marrow, the joints permitting the outward movements and the marrow being the hidden but vital life of the bones.

**discerning**—discriminating and judging with regard to the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is the word that judges us, not we who judge the word.

4:13 Second, **unbelief is detected by the living Lord.** Here the pronoun shifts from the impersonal to the personal: And there is no creature hidden from His sight. **Nothing escapes His notice. He is absolutely omniscient.** He is constantly aware of all that is going on in the

universe. Of course, the important point in the context is that **He knows where there is real faith and where there is only an intellectual assent to facts.**

Pastor Bob