

2,18,21 Entering His Rest

In the time remaining before the rapture, the Lord is finalizing the Church age by lessening His restraint on Satan, allowing an increase in his ability to deceive the nations and to ramp up the swiftness of his technological and spiritual preparation for the kingdom of antichrist.

Simultaneously, God is finalizing the purification of the bride, completing the ingathering of the gentiles, and preparing for the judgment of Laodicea.

Then He will remove the Church from the earth, completely remove *all* restraint from Satan's agenda and He will send the world a strong delusion so they will believe the lie, and the Antichrist will reign supreme for seven years.

Some of the evidences we see;

The rollout of a vaccine designed as a bioweapon to be a means of population control and also to provide psychological conditioning.

Bringing the United States into the mindset needed for the acceptance of global governance (which is described in The World Economic Forum's "Great Reset.")

The increased suffering of the remnant throughout the world to remove all vestiges of the flesh.

The increased outreach of the Church to the gentile nations.

And the increasingly defined line of demarcation between the overcomers and Laodicea.

We have discussed each segment of what I just shared, so I won't break this down again now.

But I'd like to share a few brief quotes from a variety of authors I've been reading lately;

“We live, contented and safe, with the idea that in a civilized country, in the mostly cultured and democratic environment of our times, a coercive regime assuming control is impossible. We forget that when destabilization occurs in a society, a certain political structure can lead to indoctrination and fear, where stages of brainwashing have already been implemented. This, at first, is quite inconspicuous. However, often in a very short time, it can develop into a full totalitarian system. . . It only takes a catalyst like war, economic depression, a pandemic, or some other severe and prolonged crisis that brings the legitimacy of the democratic system into question. . . *Once the German Health Dept. classified the Jews as ‘diseased’ and therefore a threat to the health of German citizens, everything else was easy.*”

As followers of Christ, we just need to keep in mind that we must never disconnect from the clear prophetic instructions we see in the Bible while we’re examining world events.

When we view things from a position of Biblical objectivity, instead of fear and emotion, events around us become much clearer and easier to interpret – because then we’re interpreting based on the purpose and interests of Christ, instead of from self-interest.

Ultimately, it will come down to who we believe and how good we are at seeing everything through a scriptural grid.

I don’t know how many of you heard J.D. Farag’s latest update, but he read something that I’ve seen in a lot of Christians, but I didn’t have a name for it. It’s called “Normalcy Bias”. See if this sounds like anyone you know – here’s the definition:

“Normalcy bias, refers to a mental state people enter when facing a disaster. It causes people to underestimate both the possibility of a disaster occurring and its possible effects. This often results in situations where people fail to adequately prepare for a disaster, and on a larger scale, the failure of governments to include the populace in its disaster preparations.

The assumption that is made in the case of the normalcy bias, is that since a disaster never has occurred (for this person), then it (probably) never *will* occur. It also results in the inability of people to cope with a disaster once it occurs. People with a normalcy bias have difficulties reacting to something they have not experienced before. People also tend to interpret warnings in the most optimistic way possible, seizing on any ambiguities to infer a less serious situation.”

This generation, and the movements within it, are foreshadowing and revealing the final development of the antichrist kingdom.

But, as related to us, if we are growing in Christ, the gates of hell (no matter what form they take,) will not prevail against us. We have no need to lose our confidence in the Lord’s care of us just because everything around us is crashing.

Maybe the most important reality we need to hold onto is shown in these comments by Sparks,

“There is a great weight made to rest upon that little word "for" – "For God so loved the world." We say that John 3:16 is the heart of the gospel: but it is much more than that, it is the heart of the universe. There is back of all things in this created universe a heart; not just a mind or a will, a design, a reason, a power, a fiat - but a heart. We are familiar with the attempts to prove there is a design in creation, that there is a mind behind the universe, and that a will brought it into being. That is all quite good and right; but we are not so often asked to consider that behind it all there is a heart – and more heart than anything else. The reason, the will, the design, come from the heart. Everything takes its rise from (the love) of God. Heart then, for us, means love, and when we say that back of all things and at the center of all things there is a heart, we mean there is love.”

This ties into what I closed with in our last study; that God’s desire for us is to use the Bible as a means to an end – that end being a personal knowledge of the Lord that is so deep and clear that even when we don’t understand what’s happening around us or to us, our foundation stands firm; as Paul said in 2 Tim. 2:12;

“For this reason, I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”

He’s ‘convinced’ of God’s faithfulness; not just because He believes the scriptures (which he does) but because He has come to know the Person Who wrote them.

Everything we learn in the Bible is meant to introduce us to a Person, not just to systematic theology. Theology is the study of God; not the study of theology.

What I want to look at in more depth tonight is the issue of “entering into God’s rest”.

I’ll start with Heb. 4:1-2;

“Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest remains, let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it. For the good news was preached to us as well as to them. But the word preached did not benefit them, because it was not mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed have entered this rest.”

We’ve seen that the ultimate goal of Church is dominion with Christ over creation – the offer to the overcomers of sharing His throne.

To prepare us for that role, we must grow into an unquestioning faith in the Lord; to a place where He can entrust us with the responsibility of carrying out His administrative will in this universe.

When a person is willing to trust, worship and give thanks to the Lord while in intense, unexplained pain (like Job did) that person is someone God can trust with great authority.

Entering into God’s rest means that we have removed any controversy we might have with Him; we trust Him; and we follow Him as His disciples wherever He leads us.

Inward rest is the absence of anxious resistance to the will of God.

I'm not talking about the struggles we all have with life in general. In Heb. 3 & 4 Canaan is used as the illustration the author gives for entering into God's rest. And Canaan was *not* without struggles; even failures.

We also aren't talking about the rest we will experience in heaven because, as Heb 4:2 said, "We who have believed have entered (present tense) into rest".

The rest is entered into, in time, by believers who have moved past what Heb. 6:1 calls "the basic or elementary" stages of Christianity and, like the second generation of Jews who left Egypt, growing believers in the Church age have continued their pursuit to move from infancy to maturity.

Here's the verse in Heb. 6;

"Therefore, leaving the elementary principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to maturity. . . "

So, the issue is not, 'are you saved?' or 'do you understand the characteristics of heaven?'; it's 'are you continuing to grow or have you settled for something less than what the Lord has been drawing us toward since we became His children?'

Here's another take on this;

"What does it mean to us, and to all the Lord's people? It means this: that before all else there must be spiritual position, as represented by the land. The first thing is our spiritual relation to Christ. It is not our salvation, it is not our devotion to the Lord, it is our rest in Christ. It is rest from spiritual as well as temporal anxiety, rest from all our (self-directed) works. This "being in the land" - or, in the language of that which is its counterpart, this "being in Christ" - is not merely a kind of spiritual location. . . it is a condition, a spiritual state. It is a living, inward fellowship with a living Person. Let us emphasize each of those words. It is a *living inward fellowship* with a living Person."

A young Christian who is rich in faith can, to some extent, rest in Christ, but it will never be as deep or as strong as the believer who has gotten to know the Lord over a lifetime of having a history with Him.

When that happens, we can begin to understand what Paul wrote in Gal. 2:20;

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

One commentator on Galatians wrote this;

“It can only come when we come to an end of ourselves, but when it comes, faith acts. From this time onward, from this moment for ever, Christ is my all; my life, my strength, my wisdom, my righteousness, my love, my joy, my rest, my meekness . . . “The life”, which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God.”

Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey. It was the promised destination of God’s people in the Old Testament. They heard about it; they longed for it; and some of them pressed on to obtain it.

For us, Canaan is Christ. We have Him, but we may or may not be enjoying Him. Here are some thoughts on what that means;

“When Christ really captivates, everything happens and anything can happen. That is how it was with Paul and with these people. Christ had captivated them. They had no other thought in life than Christ. They may have had their businesses, their trades, their professions, their different walks of life and occupations in the world, but they had one all-dominating thought, concern and interest and that interest was Christ. There is no other word for it. He just captivated them. Simple as it may sound, that explains everything. It explains Paul, it explains these New Testament believers, it explains their mutual love. It solved their problems, cleared up their difficulties. This is what we need! If only you and I were like this, if we really after all were captivated by Christ! After all, nine-tenths of all our troubles can be traced to the fact that we have other personal interests influencing us, governing us and controlling us – other aspects of life than Christ. If only it could be true that Christ has captured our hearts and become our glorious obsession!”

And, of course, being captivated with Christ has the added benefit of *not* being captivated with ourselves – becoming obsessed with the Lord is the most pleasant way to “lose our self-lives” so we can find our life in Him.

These are the experiential realities of a relationship with Christ that is founded on a restful trust in Him and a never-ending pursuit of a deepening knowledge of Him.

This is why the writer of Hebrews is so desperate for us to move to maturity – that’s the spiritual position of the child of God in which the fullness of Christ can be known and experienced.

Anything less is settling for less than what the Lord has offered us; just like the Jews who settled for the wilderness over Canaan.

We saw last time that many third-world believers seem to have a much greater love for the Lord than we do; even though we have greater access to Bible knowledge. What we have just looked at tells us why – Christ captivated them; so, even though we may be ‘admirers’ of our Savior, we may not yet be lovers of Him.

Another extremely important benefit of knowing the Lord like this is related to our spiritual survival at this time in history. If we are developing this kind of intimacy with Christ, we will have an inward spiritual intelligence developed that will allow us to sense when something is right and when something is wrong.

Here’s what I mean.

You walk into a church and listen to the Sunday sermon. You’re in an awesome building, they’ve got cutting-edge programs, they’re committed to missions, their worship is powerful and moving and the people are super friendly.

I know those things are genuinely impressive, but from God’s standpoint it all comes down to whether what you are experiencing is the outward expression of the presence and activity of Christ, or whether it is merely man’s best effort to imitate the Bible and the contemporary forms of Christianity.

How do we know that what we are hearing or experiencing in Jesus’ name has any correlation to what He’s really after? Are we able to sense the presence or absence of Christ in this?

The stagnant believer only has his soul to interpret what he experiences. He has his five senses and his mind to see, feel, reason out and interpret what those senses tell him.

Christianity, as religion, can fully convince the natural mind that genuine spiritual life is occurring. And since the carnal believer is ruled by his soul and not his human spirit, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, his only hope of accurately interpreting spiritual reality is gone.

There's no way a carnal Christian can spiritually interpret his experiences, which is why millions have been carried away into everything from charismania to Calvinism. Either their emotions or their intellect have determined their reality.

If there is exegetical teaching or what appears to be spiritual experiences and inspiring music, they assume the Spirit of Christ is present and active.

But those things can be imitated.

As Paul tells us in 2nd Timothy, one of the primary characteristics of resistance to God's testimony the last days is offered by those who *imitate* what we would expect to see in a Christian church.

For example, in 2 Timothy 3:8, Paul describes the activities in the last days, in our generation, and compares them to the work of Jannes and Jambres.

“As Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so these also will resist the truth.”

These were the magicians of Pharaoh who ‘resisted’ Moses in Ex. 7

They imitated whatever Moses did, so that from an objective observer's viewpoint, there was no significant difference. A miracle is a miracle. If Moses wrought miracles to get the people out of Egypt, they would work miracles to keep them in.

The primary character of satanic resistance to God's testimony in the world in the last days is offered by those who imitate true Christianity.

The Church has severely underestimated the intelligence and deceptive capability of our enemy. As Vance Hafner puts it,

“The devil is not fighting religion. He's too smart for that. He is producing a counterfeit Christianity, so much like the real one that good Christians are afraid to speak out against it. We are plainly told in the Scriptures that in the last days men will not endure sound doctrine and will . . . heap to themselves teachers to tickle their ears. We live in an epidemic of this itch, and popular preachers have developed ear-tickling into a fine art”.

Pastors and Christians caught up in this counterfeit Christianity can do the same things, adopt the same forms, use the same theology, phraseology and profess the same convictions as those in genuinely spiritual churches.

If the spiritual Christian feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, visits the sick, teaches the scriptures, witnesses to the lost, engages in prayer, sings worship songs, then the imitator will also do these things.

Again, this is the special character of the resistance offered to the truth “in the last days”. This is the spirit and work of 21st century “Jannes and Jambres.”

It is incredibly powerful and dangerous, and only spiritual discernment can distinguish the imitation from the real; external observance alone cannot separate the two.

(Hebrews 5:14) “Solid food belongs to those who are mature, for those who through practice have powers of discernment that are trained to distinguish good from evil.”

Young believers are dependent on those who are mature to ‘distinguish good from evil’ when it’s operating at this level of deception.

So, as I said earlier, one of the most vital benefits of knowing Christ as He is, is the ability to spiritually discern between what is genuinely of the Lord and what is a near perfect imitation.

A personal, deepening relationship with the Lord puts us in a place spiritually where we will quickly see and sense that something is off.

I can’t count the times I’ve had young believers tell me that they’ve checked out a church and everything seemed perfect; everything was exactly what they hoped for and expected in a spiritually alive Church – but for reasons they couldn’t explain or identify, something inside them was holding them back from fully accepting what they saw.

They thought they were being judgmental and critical. They didn’t know why they felt like they did, but they couldn’t ignore it either.

Eventually, as they grew, and looked back on those experiences, they could see what they only sensed then – that this was *not* true spirituality, but a counterfeit spirituality. The doctrine may have been right as far as it went; the experiences they had during worship; the hands raised and closed eyes; all these things were very real.

But Christ wasn't there – and eventually they realized that.

All of this is also true when it comes to interpreting current events in the world and in our nation.

If you ever wonder why some Christians can't see the obvious overthrow of our nation by Marxism; the attempt to replace our culture by cancelling the old and bringing in a new, God-hating replacement. Or, the shifting of nations to establish a global government, and a thousand other things from the weaponized vaccine to the deception of the Social Justice Warriors – you now have an explanation.

It's soul dominating spirit.

Reason and the five senses interpreting reality, rather than the spiritual discernment of the maturing Christian.

Spiritual discernment and interpretation require the human spirit being in control, not the soul, not emotion, not self in any form.

Here's one author's angle on what we looked at earlier on the potential of imitation in the Church. This based on 1 Cor. 3:13; "The fire will test what sort of work each one has done."

"There are many things to which the name of the Lord is being affixed, which are being constructed, and which appear fine and great and like "the Church," but the twofold reality is neither in the builders or the buildings. They are destined to collapse when God's hurricane and fire tests every man's work. Good works: philanthropy, hospitality, reform, education, religion, relief, etc. may be the products, or by-products, of what is called "Christian civilization", but let us not confuse these with the new creation. The Church is nothing which man can build by any resource in himself personally or collectively.

“The Church is an organism, not an organization. ‘Behold, I show you a mystery, we are members of His flesh and of His bones.’ Build that, if you can! organize that! It cannot be done. It is the spontaneous outworking of spiritual forces released, in the acceptance by faith of tremendous facts concerning Christ; which facts are lived out of experience in the power of the Holy Spirit. Not the theological Christ; not the doctrinal Christ; not the Christ of the letter, but the Christ of eternity in all the meaning of His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to the Throne of God revealed in the heart by the Holy Spirit. This alone grants authority to teach, to serve, to build in relation to the house of God. It is folly to spend time and strength otherwise. It is wisdom to labor on this foundation.”

When we drop back to our discussion of entering God’s rest, it’s also very *restful* to be able to see the world and the Church as the Lord sees them; being able to look through the externals and see the spiritual realities behind them.

Now, listen to these words from Evan Hopkins;

“Christ learned obedience by the things He suffered” (Heb. 5:8). This is not a transition from disobedience to obedience, but the development in His own person and experience of the principle of entire surrender to God in connection with the sufferings of real human life, which constituted Him the Captain of our salvation. The perfecting of Jesus was historically accomplished in His person, and in this manner, by His having actually passed through His career of human trial and suffering. He traversed the whole realm of faith; He ascended the whole scale, from the lowest to the highest step; He has gone through the whole course. He has preceded us in order to bring His victory, His life, to us. Faith cannot be exhibited without trial. Trial must have its course. In the process of time and faith, Christ becomes our righteousness.”

Christ is God’s Sabbath, His rest. We are being asked in Hebrews to ‘enter God’s rest’. The work has already been done.

(Hebrews 4:10) “All who have entered into God’s rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world.”

When we, by faith, enter into Christ's righteousness, we enter into God's rest. Another way to express this is from this author who wrote,

"The Lord says to us, in quite simple language, "If only you will trust Me, and trust My provision, and stop worrying, stop being anxious; if you will but believe Me, I have the ground upon which I could meet all your need.

Worry is a destroying thing. At the back of a lot that we suffer in body, and in mind, there is so often a secret, hidden restlessness, something deep down in our subconscious being of a fret, an anxiety, something that is not rest. It takes many forms. Entering God's rest is not a call for passivity, for abandon of concern for the things of the Lord; but it is possible for us to have the things of the Lord on our hearts and yet not to have faith in God *about* them. There are hidden secrets to a great deal of our weakness and defeat, and unnecessary suffering. They are the hidden things of something which is other than just restful faith in God. There are some people who need to take things to heart a little more than they do, but for many the trouble is perhaps of the other kind. They are thinking that they have to run God's universe for Him; they must look after things or else they will never be looked after. But to recognize Christ as God's Rest through righteousness, is Life which conquers death, because it is righteousness which cannot be destroyed."

Heb. 4:12 calls this the separation of soul and spirit, which is the process of progressive sanctification in the life of a believer accomplished by the discipline written about in Heb. 12:11,

"No discipline seems to be joyful at the time, but grievous. Yet afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness in those who have been trained by it."

The peaceful fruit of righteousness is the release of the spirit by the weakening of the flesh through suffering.

James puts it this way;

"My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith develops patience. But let patience perfect its work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

When the soul dominated by the flesh is our “walk” as a Christian, there *is* no rest, no release of the Spirit or walking in the Spirit.

To get practical about all this: You get up in the morning and move into your day by faith and surrender to the circumstances and conditions God has placed you in; or you get up and move by self-reliance and stress.

Most Christians, myself included, live in a perpetual state of “if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me.”

Then sometimes (too rarely) we remember that when there’s no cross, there’s no resurrection. Which, for us as those already saved, means that the power of the resurrection can’t be expressed through the life of an uncrucified believer.

Eventually, hopefully, our faith in God’s word and our vision of what He is seeking to accomplish in us, begin to rise above our self-interest, and we add, “nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.”

Not because it’s easy or even desirable, but because our love for the Lord has overcome our love of ourselves.

So, when surrendering our will to His becomes constant (instead of sporadic) the expression of His resurrection life through us will also be constant.

Training for this can be extremely painful, as we saw in Heb. 12 and James 1. But inwardly, when the spirit rules the soul, over time there is the development of understanding, submission, peace and even joy in the midst of all these things.

Which, of course, confuses those around us.

But sometimes it gets their attention. When that happens, we have the opportunity to explain the “why” of our approach to life; we can testify to the work of Christ in us.

It’s important to keep in mind that we are here to be, as Paul says it, “spent” for others; whether that’s friends, family, the Church, or the lost.

Whatever we go through, and whatever we do with what we go through, is not just for our benefit; it’s so that we can become vessels fit for the Master’s use.

I’ll close with additional comments by Sparks on the process God uses to get us there;

“What is it all about? Why does our path seem so hard, that it sometimes makes us almost cry out to the Lord as to why He deals with us as His own dear children in this way, those for whom He has declared His love? Why are we constantly brought to the end of all our wisdom, our knowledge and our understanding? It is to bring us into *spiritual* knowledge, a completely different kind of knowledge than we are familiar with. If we were able to see the transition that was taking place in us through all our baffling and confounding experiences, we would find that we were moving into another kind of understanding altogether.

“Sometimes things seem to go wrong; altogether different from, and contrary to, what we had prayed for and even trusted for and expected; and we are baffled, confused, and defeated. We thought He had abandoned us; that He had no interest in us, but then all of it turned out to far greater gain – greater gain spiritually.

“What about the power and the energy side? Why is all our power and energy sapped and drained, and brought to weakness? It’s all broken down, and you are brought to the place where, with all your energetic disposition you can do nothing, you are helpless; your strength has gone — perhaps even spiritually. Paul has a lot to say about that, about ‘His strength being perfected in weakness’ — “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). There is *another* kind of strength; a spiritual kind, and it is *completely different* than the strength of our nature.”

I’ve mentioned in past studies that when these things are happening, the only thing *we* see and feel is our weakness, and the desperation of our need for God’s intervention. But what *others* see is God’s strength coming through us.

Invisible to us – but not to them. It’s a paradox, but it’s real.

Entering God’s rest is coming to a place where all self-expectation is rejected and all that’s left is to turn our expectation and hope, our confidence, to the God of Heaven.