

Hebrews 4:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

Analysis

And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. This verse continues the author's exposition of Psalm 95:11, where God swore in His wrath that the wilderness generation would not enter His rest. The phrase "in this place again" (en toutō palin, ἐν τούτῳ πάλιν) emphasizes the repetition and reinforcement of God's solemn oath. The conditional "if they shall enter" is actually an emphatic negation in the original Greek—a Hebraic oath formula meaning "they shall certainly not enter."

The concept of "rest" (katapausis, κατάπαυσις) is multifaceted: it includes the physical rest of Canaan, the Sabbath rest commemorating creation, and ultimately the eternal rest of salvation. The author is establishing that Israel's failure to enter Canaan was symptomatic of deeper unbelief that barred them from spiritual rest in God. The repetition of this warning throughout Hebrews 3-4 underscores its urgent relevance for the original Hebrew Christian audience facing persecution and the temptation to abandon faith.

Theologically, this verse reveals that entry into God's rest is conditional upon faith and obedience. The wilderness generation's exclusion serves as a perpetual warning against hardening one's heart through unbelief. God's rest remains available, but it demands wholehearted trust and perseverance. The author will develop how this rest finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, who alone provides true spiritual rest for God's people.

Historical Context

This passage references the pivotal moment at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 13-14) when Israel refused to enter the Promised Land despite God's command. After the twelve spies returned, ten brought a fearful report that led the people to rebellion. God's judgment was severe: the entire generation (except Caleb and Joshua) would die in the wilderness over forty years of wandering.

The original audience of Hebrews, likely Jewish Christians in the 60s AD, faced similar temptation to turn back from their profession of faith in Christ. Under increasing persecution from both Roman authorities and Jewish leadership, some were considering returning to Judaism to escape suffering. The author uses Israel's wilderness failure as a sobering parallel—just as physical proximity to Canaan couldn't save the faithless generation, mere association with the Christian community couldn't save those who abandoned Christ.

The quotation from Psalm 95, written centuries after the wilderness wandering, demonstrates that God's warning remained perpetually relevant. Each generation faces the same choice: trust God and enter His rest, or harden hearts in unbelief and forfeit the promises.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does persistent unbelief prevent us from experiencing the spiritual rest God offers in Christ?
2. In what ways might we be in danger of hardening our hearts like the wilderness generation?
3. What does this verse teach us about the relationship between faith, obedience, and entering God's promises?

4. How should the severity of God's judgment against unbelief shape our attitude toward perseverance in faith?
5. What specific areas of your life reveal whether you are truly resting in God or striving in unbelief?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἐν	τούτῳ	πάλιν	Εἰ	εἰσελεύσονται	εἰς	τὴν	
And	in	this	place again	If	they shall enter	into	the	G3588
G2532	G1722	G5129	G3825	G1487	G1525	G1519		
κατάπαυσίν μου								
				rest	my			
				G2663	G3450			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 95:11 (Parallel theme): Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

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