

# Jesus Is Superior

## Superior To Joshua

Hebrews 4



When Israel had been in bondage in Egypt they were made to work tirelessly. When God sent them a deliverer, Moses, they were promised that if they followed God they would have “rest”. As great as this deliverer was, the people still failed to enter into the rest, which God was speaking of. In our previous study we saw how the writer to the Hebrews showed how Christ was superior to Moses. In this study we will

see how the writer shows that Christ is superior to Joshua, the leader who brought Israel into their Promised Land.

The promise of ‘rest’ was closely associated with possessing their own land and thus being their own masters rather than slaves to a foreign ruler. But God was referring to another type of rest that went way beyond mere deliverance from slavery.

1. Note Hebrews 4:8. How does this verse indicate that God was speaking of a rest that went beyond merely possessing the Promised Land?

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Just like Israel of old, many people are looking for something that they think will bring them fulfilment. In Israel's case it was the thought of possessing their own land. For some today, their concept of a personal Promised Land looks like a bigger bank balance, or a new toy, or a holiday, or even a new spouse. But God was trying to show Israel of old that true fulfilment was to be found in Him alone.

2. How did Jesus sum this up in Matthew 11:28?

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The writer to the Hebrews was deeply concerned that his Jewish Christian readers were now contemplating returning to Judaism and abandoning their relationship with Christ. He now sets out to show that the rest, which the Hebrews sought under the Law, was not available through works of religious effort.

3. According to Hebrews 4:2, what did Israel fail to do with the Word of God they heard?

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The opening verse of chapter 4 contains a stern warning based on a reminder of what happened to the generation of Hebrews who failed to believe when they came out of Egypt. "Let us fear" is the injunction to the readers.

4. How does Philippians 2:12 make 'fear' a positive action?

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God wanted Israel to recognise Him for who He was. He wanted them to love Him for who He was, not just what He could do for or give them (Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12). Just after they came out of Egypt, something extremely tragic happened.

5. Why is the statement in Exodus 20:19 so tragic?

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God wanted intimacy with His people, but His people did not seem to want intimacy with Him! He had called the entire nation to be priests, not just a few privileged tribal members.

6. Note now the context of Exodus 20:19 by seeing what God had just said to the Israelites in Exodus 19:6. What was His desire for all Israel?

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Almost from the moment that Israel came out Egypt they complained against God. He wanted their intimate fellowship. They wanted Him to feed, clothe, water, bless, and provide for them. When He called them to come near, they refused. So for the next forty years He waited for them to want Him not what He could do for them. Today, many Christians are only loyal to God when they feel He is meeting their needs. The moment they feel that God is no longer serving their purposes they cease to be loyal to Him. The irony of this is that they never find the kind of fulfilment that can fill their hearts because they refuse to empty and open their hearts to Him.

7. How does Matthew 10:39 (and 16:25) reinforce this concept of seeking God rather than merely His blessings?

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## Enter God's Rest

Rest comes when someone stops being active (Hebrews 4:10). Rest brings refreshment and restoration. Even God rested after his work of creation as a model for His creation. All of creation needs to rest. Yet the kind of rest that the deepest longing of the human yearns for can only be satisfied by entering into the 'rest' which God offers.

8. According to Hebrews 4:2, 6 how do we enter into God's rest?

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9. Can someone claim to have faith in God yet refuse to obey Him? (Note James 2:14-17)

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10. Conversely, can someone claim to obey God yet not trust Him? (Hebrews 11:6)

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Hebrews 4 carries a theme of judgment. It opens with the warning that Christians who abandon Christ by refusing to continue to trust and obey Christ risk being judged (Hebrews 4:1). The chapter closes with a reminder that nothing is hidden from God's sight (Hebrews 4:13). Therefore, let us not think that we can earn our salvation, or find fulfilment in life without realising that God is worth knowing intimately even if He was never to bless us.

*Amen.*