

# We See Jesus (4): Are We Here As Straying Pilgrims?

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(Hebrews 4:1-11)

## I. Introduction

- A. There was a fundamental difference in Pilgrims of Mass. Bay and colonists of Jamestown
1. From my perspective as a Virginian, big difference is the Pilgrims had **great publicist**
    - a. I mean, when people think of the country's founding, they think of Plymouth Rock
    - b. First Thanksgiving? Pilgrims get credit, but Berkeley planation was 3 years before
    - c. Philadelphia is the "*birthplace of liberty*," the heavy lifting was done by Virginians
  2. The big difference between the two colonies is WHY they were founded in first place
    - a. The Massachusetts pilgrims came here looking for religious freedom and liberty
    - b. The Virginians colonists came for quick wealth, saying, "Show me the money!"
- B. Which colony really won? Well, I would argue without any doubt that it was Virginia
1. When Massachusetts founded a colony, they threw religious liberty under the bus!
    - a. Anyone who worshipped outside their religious norm was immediately persecuted
    - b. Before long new pilgrims left Massachusetts looking for rest in Rhode Island colony
  2. It was "*Puritan Work Ethic*" that led to great prosperity and wealth in the new world
    - a. The very pilgrims that came seeking God were soon distracted by prosperity
    - b. Alistair Cook says the pilgrimage that began at Plymouth would end in Las Vegas!
  3. So the Virginia company won—it was prosperity that became the American dream!
- C. That is something of a parable the pilgrimage of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land
1. Exodus began with such a dream of promise and freedom in a new Promised Land
    - a. Pilgrimage began with bang—Red Sea and destruction of Egypt. (*Saw this at camp*)
    - b. The song of Moses, "*I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted*" (**Exo 15:1-2**)
  2. Their song doesn't last a whole chapter; they soon sing another tune (**Exo 15:23-24**)
    - a. Second verse, same as the first, little bit louder and whole lot worse (**Exo 16:2-3**)
    - b. Those pilgrims whined all way to Canaan... and then they refused even to enter it!
  3. Sometimes pilgrims get tired of the journey and don't find the rest they're looking for
- D. Hebrews is written to tired pilgrims with "*feeble arms and weak knees.*" People like us.
1. In **Hebrews 4:1-11**, writer makes 3 points about spiritual rest from Israel's failures.
  2. He will make three points about our pilgrimage that we need to keep in mind today
  3. Pilgrims must keep moving; can't settle in and stop if we're to reach Promised Land

## II. Are We Here As Straying Pilgrims?

A. **First**, we must keep on believing— we have to hold onto our faith ([Heb 4:1-2](#))

1. Israel gave up on their pilgrimage because they gave up on their faith
  - a. They did not combine God’s promise (of a land and nation) with their faith
  - b. So when hard times kept coming, they were ready to go back and be slaves again
2. He has been stressing that “*hold on during hard times*” theme ([Heb 3:6, 3:14](#))
  - a. That makes sense, right? They were tempted to give up and fit in with their world
  - b. So they need to “*hold on!*” That’s where Israel failed; that’s where they struggled
3. So do we. What do you hold onto when the world is beating on you and your faith?
  - a. Of course, you hold onto **prayer**. God is never going to leave us or forsake us
  - b. Hold onto **each other!** That is a key we’ll see later (*preview*). ([Heb 10:24-25](#))
    - 1) In Hebrews, faith is seen as something that is *communal*. We need each other!
    - 2) It is never safe to pilgrim through this world alone; there is safety in numbers
  - c. Someone once told me in describing the dynamic of *Alcoholics Anonymous*  
*We are there to pat them on the back when they need that-- but we are also are ready to kick them just wee bit lower when they need that too!*
    - 1) The point is this— we are recovering sinners and sometimes wavering pilgrim
    - 2) Sometimes we need patting on the back, but sometimes we also need kicking!
    - 3) Who will do that for us except our fellow pilgrims (*need more patter-kickers*)
  - d. We must hold onto our faith and be around other to help them holding into theirs!

B. **Second**, we must understand the urgency of staying faithful today ([Heb 4:6-7](#)).

1. The writer does sometimes pat us on the back—here he is kicking us a little lower
  - a. In chapter 6, he’ll talk about some that it’s impossible to bring back to repentance
  - b. We’ll talk about that later—for now the point is simple—don’t put repentance off
2. *Do put things off!* I was going to join *Procrastinators Anonymous*, kept putting it off
  - a. Why do anything early? Jesus could return anytime now; it would just be wasted
  - b. But if we really think something is important, we find a way to get it done, right
    - 1) If I kept saying through the service, “*Room 16! Room 16!*” It makes no sense...
    - 2) If I said, “*Elders will give away \$100 in Room 16,*” then you’d find room 12!
    - 3) But we have no room 16, but you look in the basement for it (*no basement either*)
  - c. The writer isn’t just telling us to be faithful; he’s telling us that the stakes are high
  - d. If we give up when the trip gets hard, monotonous or boring, we’ve lost everything!

C. **Third**, we do have to understand the final destination (**Heb 4:9-11**)

1. Israel should've focused on their destination, not difficulties of the road they traveled
  - a. Yes, the hardships were real—the desert was dry. There wasn't much food.
  - b. But rest was coming. God promised a land of milk and honey (code = "very good")
    - 1) If they'd would have focused on end game, they could have put up with the trip
    - 2) And maybe not only that-- maybe could have even enjoyed the trip itself!
2. There will be times in life when we will be bone weary as we travel through life
  - a. We will try so hard to do the right thing, and we aren't appreciated
  - b. Life will pile on us to point where we feel like we just can't go on.
    - 1) **Cartoon:** "No matter how hard you work, no matter how right you are, sometimes the dragon wins."
    - 2) Do all right things—get sick, lose job, marriage fail, someone lets you down
3. The writer here tells us that we must never to lose sight of where it is we are going.
  - a. There's place of rest where God will wipe away tear—there is a Sabbath rest
  - b. And that Sabbath rest will make our every bone-weariness worthwhile (**Rom 8:18**)
4. I once drove across the entire state of Tennessee and Virginia for a weekend.
  - a. I really, truly hate to drive... but I drove 30 hours roundtrip for a 22 hour visit.
    - 1) Why? There was this girl I was going to marry... *she didn't know it at the time*
    - 2) When there is something worth it at the other end, any trip is worth the trouble
  - b. That means we can't take our eyes off the prize—got to keep focused on destination

### III. Conclusion

- A. What will we do when we get so tired on our life's journey. Writer here says, "Hold on!"
1. We can't give up. We can't give in. We have to hold on and keep going
  2. Twila Paris wrote these words to the song *Hold On*; could have been on Hebrews  
*We can hold on to sorrow, hold on to pain*  
*We can hold on to anger when there is nothing to be gained*  
*We can hold on to money, hold on to fame*  
*We can hold on to glory and the honor of a name*  
*We can hold to a thread at the end of a rope*  
*But if we hold on to Jesus, if we hold on to Jesus*  
*If we hold on to Jesus we are holding on to hope. Hold on!*
- B. What is it that you are holding onto today? *And what is it that you need to let go of?*
- C. Song we sing— "Though the storms may come, I am holding on and to the Rock I cling."