

"I Will Give You Rest": The Rest Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3–4. By Jon Laansma. WUNT 98. Tübingen: Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1997, xv + 459 pp., n.p. paper.

In this published form of a doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of I. Howard Marshall and Paul Ellingworth and defended at the University of Aberdeen in 1995, Laansma, while refocusing on the two passages stipulated in the subtitle, offers us the contours of a Biblical theology of "rest."

The brief opening chapter sets up the problems Laansma wishes to address. Contemporary scholarship has largely been so interested in establishing a wisdom Christology background to Matt 11:25–30 that it has paid insufficient attention to rest as a soteriological category. Contemporary debates on Hebrews 3–4, influenced by such giants as Käsemann and Hofius, have often focused on whether these chapters depict the *traveling* people of God or the *waiting* people of God, and the "rest" theme has been invoked primarily to substantiate one of these (or other) theories. The purpose of Laansma's book is to study both of these passages again, against the background of two OT themes: rest as it is related to the promised land and the end of the nomadic existence of the people of God, and rest as it is tied to the Sabbath theme of the OT.

In the lengthy second chapter, Laansma works his way through the most important OT passages dealing with these two themes. The rest tradition, Laansma asserts, is "a very prominent OT redemptive category" (p. 75), and tied to such themes as the temple, the Davidic kingship and weariness. The rest motif in the Sabbath passages is associated with redemption from bondage, and that is when it comes closest to the promise of rest in the land. There may be shadows of an "eschatological Sabbath," but more typically the hope of a future Sabbath is tied to a vision of "purified covenant life, free of hostile and profane interference" (p. 76). Laansma warns that the almost complete textual independence of these themes cautions us against reading one of these two traditions into the other. Nevertheless, he perceives a number of important thematic overlaps.

The third chapter focuses on the "rest" theme in the LXX (Laansma rightly recognizes that "LXX" is a useful label for what were probably multiple translation traditions), and is primarily an introduction of the important relevant words (*ἀναπαύω*, *ἀνάπαυσις*, *καταπαύω*, *κατάπαυσις*). Chapter four surveys the rest theme in other Jewish and Chris-

tian literature, and adds a brief appendix on rest in gnostic mythology. Among the important conclusions is that although the theme of “rest” is abundant in this literature, it is not stereotyped into one or two tightly defined streams, so there is no particular reason to press the NT passages into a particular second-temple tradition.

Chapter five examines Matt 11:28–30 and Matthew’s ostensible wisdom Christology, along the way focusing not only on the target passage but also on Matt 11:19, 25–27; 23:34–39. Against the trend, but rightly in my view, Laansma denies that Matthew is actively advancing a wisdom Christology. In Matt 11:27, which is critical for the discussion, Matthew’s aim is not to present the Son as wisdom, but to present the Son, “who is to some extent mirrored by Wisdom,” as “the final representative of Israel, probably also as the one greater even than Moses” (p. 207). “The conclusion cannot but be that Matthew is not particularly interested to give Wisdom her own chair at the table of his Christology, though Wisdom speculation is one of the possible tributaries to his thought” (p. 208). That is exactly right. Moreover, Laansma’s conclusions are reinforced by another recent doctoral dissertation, one by D. J. Ebert, “Wisdom in New Testament Christology, with Special Reference to Hebrews 1:1–4” (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1998).

In chap. six, Laansma offers his positive exegesis of Matt 11:28–30. The offer of “rest” is not dependent on Sirach; there are closer parallels to OT texts. For Matthew, Jesus utters this critical logion as the Son of David “who himself claims to bring to fulfillment the oft repeated, OT promise of YHWH to his people, the promise of rest” (p. 251). Chapter seven is a lengthy study of Hebrews 3–4, carefully done. Occasionally I wished Laansma had developed a little more the canonical salvation-historical markers that *Auctor* uses to develop his discussion.

This is a valuable piece of work. It is essential reading not only for those working on Matthew and Hebrews, but also for those who are suspicious of the current faddishness of wisdom Christology (and for their opponents!), and for the broader field of Biblical theology.

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