

Hebrews: Chapter 4

Heb 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

- According to what was stated previously, the writer reiterates (*and will continue to*) his warning that some would *fall short* because of a lack of being *alarmed* by the certainty of the fall of Jerusalem. Failing to heed this message would be as if imitating their O.T. counterparts by disobeying God's word through walking away from their ultimate salvation of entering God's *abode*.

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Heb 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

- unto us... as well as unto them- Comparing 'physical' Israel and 'spiritual' Israel. Physical Israel were given the good news concerning the land of promise by Joshua and Caleb (*Num 13:1-33*) but the other ten spies that journeyed with them prevailed in causing such division that God turned the Israelite nation back into the wilderness for forty years. The majority that had no faith in succeeding their quest of Canaan (*which "was only a type of the heavenly land of rest to come"- Hampton*) were not assimilated with those who **did** accept the report, who believed they **could** enter the land with the aid of the LORD. Comparing the Hebrew Christians living in Jerusalem (*to whom this epistle was written*) to their Jewish counterparts during Moses' day, the writer parallels their faith (*and possible lack thereof*) to the consequences the 'physical' Jew encountered for their absence of it (*where a little leaven did leaven the whole lump- Gal 5:9*).

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Heb 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

- Quoting Psa 95:11 the writer shows again the distinction between those of faith and those who did not believe, along with the final result of each. To enter God's rest (*Gk.2663-reposing down*) is to experience what He did at the end of the creation week. His rest is in Heaven while the faithful rest is in Paradise in anticipation of the resurrection. No human has entered Heaven itself (*Jn 3:13*).

- finished from the foundation of the world- This not only is speaking of the physical *arrangement* but also speaks of God's plan to save mankind through His Son. Such a plan "was conceived before all ages and will be fulfilled in the last time" (*Thompson*). God rested on the seventh day "from **all** His work" (*v. 4*) and from that day forward He 'created' nothing (*Gen 2:3*). See also Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9 and 1 Pet 1:20. His plans were set in motion at that time and, as all His plans have been imminently accomplished, so will those that have yet to transpire. (*emp. added*)

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Heb 4:4 For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.

Heb 4:5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest.

"As the quotation from Psa 95:11 shows, God's rest is reserved for those who are truly faithful in service to God."

Gary Hampton

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Heb 4:6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

Heb 4:7 Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

- In the context, a rest for God's people is still available to those who remain "faithful unto death and [Christ] will give you the crown of life" (*Rev 2:10*). The writer here continues to stress the word Today in emphasis of the importance of being right with God **persistently**. Even after Joshua had led the Israelites into Canaan there still remained a rest that only 'spiritual' Israel could enter. David later reemphasized the importance of steadfastness in believing God by not being deluded by their stubbornness (*Ps 95:8-11*). The false "once saved always saved" doctrine is here (*among other places*) discredited since the writer is addressing Christians (*N.T. Israel as he does their counterparts, O.T. Israel*) and the chance of falling out of favor with God through apathy.

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

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Heb 4:8 For if Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

Heb 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

Heb 4:10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.

- The land of Canaan was not the ultimate rest (*Gk.4520- the repose of Christianity [as a type of Heaven]*) for God's people (*Heb 11:40*). Thayer: "the blessed rest from toils and troubles looked for in the age to come by the true worshippers of God and true Christians". Joshua didn't get them there or David wouldn't have said later where those of his day still had to reach it (*v. 7*). Here referring to Paradise as part of the Hadean realm; "The rest has been entered into by some and those who enter do not have to worry with the labor and cares of this world anymore." (*Hampton*) (*See notes on Rev 21 as they apply to the church in both the physical and spiritual realms.*)

- Therefore, it more has to do with the faithful saint's rest from his labors in the realm of Paradise as it compares to the rest God enjoyed in Heaven on the seventh day at the end of the creation week.

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Heb 4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

- There was a continual exhortation to *make an effort* through *diligence* in obedience so that the same thing that happened to O.T. Israel wouldn't happen to the saints living in Jerusalem between Pentecost and 70 AD ("*these last days*"- *1:2*). Having such an affinity toward Abraham that the Jews had, Jesus used his "bosom" (*KJV- Lk 16:22- Paradise*) as the place where Lazarus went, a poor Jew that the rest were indifferent to, in order to make them jealous. Using it here as the place of rest for the victorious saint, the writer's goal was to provoke them to stay alert so that they too, even if it meant martyrdom which

the writer was attempting to prevent, would labour (*Gk.4704- to make effort*) to enter that rest.

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Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

- quick and powerful- It is quick (*Gk.2198-to live; present tense, voice active, indicative [demonstrating true reality]*) since Holy Spirit is still influencing (*powerful; Gk.1756-operative*) both saved (*through continual study of it- 2 Pet 3:18*) and lost (*through the message of salvation- Act 2:38*) via the Spirit inspired words found within (*2 Pet 1:21*).
- any two-edged sword- As the primary weapon of the soldier of the time, any (*no matter how finely crafted it be*) double-edged implement of war was no match for what “the sword of the Spirit” (*Eph 6:17*) was able to do. The word of God stays sharper than the most advanced man-made weapon since it is of a spiritual nature and is being honed for battle “against the schemes of the devil” (*Eph 6:12*). It is with the use of this sword that the Rider of the white horse, in Rev 1:16; 2:16; 19:15, 21, rules as “with a rod of iron”.
- It was by God’s word (*verbal as in Gen 1:3, etc.*) that all things exist and by that same word they will be destroyed (*2 Pet 3:7*). It is able to *penetrate* to the point of making a *separation* between the soul or *animal* sentient principle of man (*his human nature*) and his spirit, defined by Thayer as “the rational part of man, the power of perceiving and grasping divine and eternal things, and upon which the Spirit of God exerts its influence; (says Luther, ‘is the highest and noblest part of man, which qualifies him to lay hold of incomprehensible, invisible, eternal things; in short, it is the house where Faith and God’s word are at home’)” (*1 Pet 3:4*). It is the rational part of man that *discerns* good and evil thus separates man’s natural thinking (*deliberation*) from his moral *understanding*.
- joints and marrow- Since “all are from dust, and to dust all return” (*Ecc 3:20*) as the word spoke man into physical existence so it will speak him back to the dust from which he came. As a sword it “is so sharp that it can divide the ‘very essence of man’” (*Gary Hampton*).

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Heb 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.

- It is through the word of God that all our inner thoughts and contemplations are laid bare and exposed as if a body without clothing. Adam and Eve thought they could hide themselves from God, but He knew where they were, and their nakedness revealed their disobedience to His word (*Gen 3*). No one is immune to the Maker’s *vision* into the inner man.

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Heb 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

- The reason for the writer’s encouragement has to do with the great High Priest that we have. Because He has already passed [through] the heavens (*i.e., “the veil... the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, etc... which our High Priest passed through into the heaven of heavens”- Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary*) and “Who is at the right

hand of God, [and] Who indeed is interceding for us” (*Rom 8:34*), these Hebrew saints were able to *use strength*, that is, *seize or retain the acknowledgement* of Who it is that owned them. (*profession: see notes on 3:1.*)

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Heb 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin.

- Our High Priest didn’t just go through the motions like those mortal priests of the O.T. did since He is able to *feel* “sympathy” with our moral *frailty*. Christ was put to the *test, scrutinized* through *discipline, apart* from the iniquity we have succumbed to.

Jas 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

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Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

- throne of grace- To the Hebrew brethren...

“The illustration or comparison here may have been derived from the temple service. In that service God is represented as seated in the Most Holy Place on the mercy seat. The high priest approaches that seat or throne of the Divine Majesty with the blood of the atonement to make intercession for the people, and to plead for pardon; see the notes on Heb 9:7-8. That scene was emblematic of Heaven. God is seated on a throne of mercy. The great High Priest of the Christian calling, having shed His own blood to make expiation, is represented as approaching God and pleading for the pardon of people.”

Albert Barnes

Worksheet

Hebrews: Chapter 4

1. How could any of the Hebrews “have failed to reach... entering His rest”?
2. Who was the “them” the writer was referring to in verse 2?
3. Why did they not benefit from the “good news” that came to them?
4. Explain the phrase “finished from the foundation of the world”.
5. To whom is God’s rest still available?
6. Why stress the word “today” throughout this chapter?
7. Since neither Joshua nor David led the Israelites to the “rest” they were promised, what is that “rest” referring to and how does one get there?
8. Explain the sharpness of “the word of God” as it relates to “any two-edged sword”.
9. Define the difference between “soul” and “spirit”.
10. In this context, how do you explain the “division... of joints and marrow”?
11. What does it mean to be “naked and exposed” (*v. 13*) and how does that relate to the word of God?
12. What is the significance of acknowledging Christ as our “great high Priest”?
13. How was Christ able “to sympathize with our weaknesses”?
14. What role does “confidence” play in our approach “to the throne of grace”?

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