

Hebrews 04 - The Promise of Rest; The Word of God; Jesus is a Superiority High Priest

I. Doctrinal Section of the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 1:1—10:18)

(3) Christ is superior to Moses (Heb 3:1—4:13)

(C) The Hebrews are warned against disobeying God (Heb 3:7—4:13)

(c) Exhortation to enter the "rest" (4:1-13)

(i) Promise of rest (4:1-2)

(ii) Scriptural pattern of rest (4:3-5)

(iii) Perpetuity of promised rest (4:6-10)

(iv) Exhortation to enter rest (4:11-13)

(4) Christ is superior to Aaron (Heb 4:14—10:18)

(A) Christ is our heavenly, sympathetic high priest (4:14-16)

Hebrews 4

(c) Exhortation to enter the "rest" (4:1-13)

(i) Promise of rest (4:1-2)

1 Therefore, we must **fear** if, while a promise remains of entering His **rest**, any one of you may seem to have come short *of it*.

1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

1 Therefore, as long as the promise of entering his rest remains valid, let us be afraid! Otherwise, some of you will fail to reach it,

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.

- Heb 4 begins with an application to the present readers. Four times the text says that the promise of rest remains (v1,6,9,11).

- The author expressed concern that some of his readers might conclude that they had missed "entering their rest" because the Lord had not yet returned. Later, he urged them to wait patiently for His return (10:36-37).

— None of the readers had failed to enter their rest (inheritance) because they had missed the Lord's return.

- A continuation of Warning #2, which started in Heb 3:17. This is the first of many "Let us" in Hebrews...

- "Therefore" - in light of what the author stated in 3:17-19, in regards to Israel's failure to enter into Canaan Rest, there is now a danger for these believers: *they* may also fall short of entering into a rest that God is offering.

— It is possible that the faith of these Jewish believers will be tried because of the persecution they are experiencing at the time this epistle is written. Because of their present situation, they, too, might fall short of attaining all God wants them to attain in this life.

— The promise of rest is still available because it was never totally fulfilled. The promise of rest in the OT was unfulfilled, but not withdrawn; it is available to those who want it now. The entire purpose of this letter to the Hebrews is to get the Jewish believers to enter the fullness of rest.

- "...fear" - this is the attitude believers must have when they realize that there are spiritual consequences for making the wrong decision

— In this case, these Jewish believers will fall short of the promise. They will miss out on things available to them for failing to believe the promise and entering into it.

- "...rest" - *katapausis*, refers to Canaan Rest (see note **"Rest" in Heb 3:7-4:13** in 3:11)

— The Greek word means "a cessation of activity"; it means rest in the sense of ceasing from activity

— Of the three words used for "rest" in Hebrews, this one is used most (3:11,18; 4:1,3 [2x],5,10-11; Cf. Deut 3:20; 12:9; 25:19; Joshua 11:23; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1)

— The LXX includes notable passages where the word for rest, *katapausis*, in connection with Israel's possession of the land, is clearly paralleled with the word for inheritance, *kleronomia*. Moses showed clearly that for Israel their "rest" was their inheritance (Deut 3:18-20; 12:9-11).

The "Rest" Being Offered

The author has recognized that the Christians to whom he is writing are in a situation parallel to that of Israel at Kadesh. Their intense persecution paralleled the opposition Israel faced from the inhabitants of the land. These Jewish believers had severed their relationship to the established systems by identifying with Christ in baptism (10:22-23). Their renunciation of established Judaism had incurred the wrath of the religious community. They were undergoing intense persecution (v32-34), but had not yet been martyred (12:4), even though they faced that possibility.

On the other hand, these believers lived close enough to Jerusalem to attend the appointed feasts that were observed there. This proximity provided a possible solution to their sufferings. If they, without renouncing their faith in Christ, were to mingle with the

observers of established rituals in the temple, those persecuting them might forget the fact that they had previously renounced it by their baptism. After all, Paul had observed Jewish rituals as memorials to Christ during his ministry (Acts 20:16; 1 Cor 5:7). Thus many were not assembling with the believers, but were seeking to re-identify themselves with established Judaism in order to escape persecution (10:25).

In the second place, like their ancestors at Kadesh, the recipients of the epistle had a promise from God "of entering into his rest" (v1). This is not the rest of salvation, for they are recognized as believers already (3:1). Nor is it the future millennial rest in which all persecution will cease. Such a future expectation would neither provide a solution to their present problems, nor follow the imagery of the rest laid before Israel at Kadesh, which was a faith/life rest to be entered in their present experience. Thus we conclude that the rest referred to in v1 is that faith/life rest into which a believer enters by faith, and in which he enjoys the promised blessings that God gives to those who believe and obey Him.

[Pentecost, J. Dwight, "Kadesh Barnea in the Book of Hebrews" in Basic Theology: Applied, Wesley & Elaine Willis and John & Janet Master, eds. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1995), p. 131-132.]

BELIEVERS' FUTURE INHERITANCE	
<u>What <i>all</i> believers will inherit</u>	<u>What <i>faithful</i> believers will <i>additionally</i> inherit</u>
Entrance into God's kingdom John 3:3, 5; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5	Abundant eternal life James 1:12; Rev. 2:10
Eternal life John 3:16, 36; et al.	Reigning with Christ Luke 19:17, 19; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27
Acceptance by God Rom. 5:1; 8:31-39	Praise from God Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17; John 12:26; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:7; 5:4
No condemnation Rom. 5:9; 8:1; 1 Thess. 1:10	Intimacy with Christ John 15:14
Resurrection or translation 1 Cor. 15:53-57; 1 Thess. 4:13-17 Glorification 1 Pet. 1:9	Various rewards: Matt. 5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18; 10:41-42; 16:27; Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23, 35; 1 Cor. 3:8, 14; 9:16-18, 25, 27; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; Phil. 4:1; Col. 3:24; 1 Thess. 2:19; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:18; 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:8; Heb. 11:6; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 John 8; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 28; 3:5, 11, 12, 21; 11:18; 22:12

2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also *did*; but the word they heard **did not benefit them**, because they were not united with those who listened with faith.

2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

2 because we have had the good news told to us as well as to them. But the message they heard did not help them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened to it.

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.

- These readers are without excuse because they have had the gospel preached to them
- The author again draws a parallel with Num 13-14 (Kadesh Barnea): 12 men came back and gave a report. The Exodus Generation received the report, but the children of Israel made a wrong decision as a result of the report.

- The author is addressing people in a similar situation: these Jewish believers have received a message from the 12 Apostles. What will they do with this report?

- The emphasis is on the necessity of faith to attain spiritual blessings that come with salvation

- "...did not benefit them" - because they refused to trust God and rebelled against Him

- Likewise, the good news of our inheritance and rest may not profit us, if we fail to trust God and turn from Him in unbelief

- By inheritance, Moses and the author of Hebrews both meant all that God wanted and wants to give His people. We will all receive many blessings even if we apostatize because we are God's children (1 Peter 1:3-9); nevertheless we will not enter into full rest, or experience all we could inherit, if we depart from God.

(ii) Scriptural pattern of rest (4:3-5)

3 For **we who have believed** enter *that rest*, just as He has said, "AS I SWORE IN MY ANGER, THEY CERTAINLY SHALL NOT ENTER MY **REST**," although His works were finished **from the foundation of the world**.

3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

3 We who have believed are entering that rest, just as he has said, "So in my anger I swore a solemn oath that they would never enter my rest," even though his actions had been finished since the creation of the world.

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.

- "...we who have believed" - uses the past tense and it refers to the writer and the readers

- Then the author switches to the present tense: we "do [now] enter into rest"; we are presently entering into the spiritual rest

— In v11, the author will point out that the final facet of the rest is *still future*. The point is that because they have believed, they have begun to enter this Creation Rest, though the final facet of it is still future. These Jewish believers must *continue* to exercise faith to enjoy what this rest has to offer.

- "...rest" [2x] - *katapausis*, Canaan Rest (Heb 3:11,18; 4:1,3 [2x],5,10-11; Cf. Deut 3:20; 12:9; 25:19; Joshua 11:23; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1): Israel's conquest and possession of the Promised Land under Joshua. It points to a place of blessing. This is a picture of the kingdom rest.

- The writer again quotes Ps 95:11 to point out that the Wilderness Generation did not enter that rest even though God has possessed it since Creation. God, through the psalmist David, announced the continued existence of this future rest.

- "...from the foundation of the world" - God had planned rest for His people when He created the world

— However, God's purpose and provision did not guarantee that His people would experience it. These things depended their faith. Even Moses failed to enter rest in the Promised Land because he failed to trust God at Meribah (Num 20:12).

4 For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*: "AND GOD **RESTED** ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS";

4 For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";

4 Somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day as follows: "On the seventh day God rested from all his actions,"

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.

- Quoting Gen 2:2 to show that Creation Rest has already been prepared

- "...RESTED" - *katapauo*, Creation/Sabbath Rest (v4,8,10); forfeited after the Fall, provided again in the Kingdom: God's cessation from His creation work. This rest will be manifested in the kingdom age when redeemed mankind enters His inheritance.

— A reference to Gen 2:2: *shabath*, to cease, desist, rest

— This rest illustrates the fact that rest follows work

— The work God called the Israelites to do in the wilderness was trusting and obeying Him. This would have resulted in rest from wandering in the wilderness, and rest in the Land, if they had carried this work out.

— The work God calls believers to do is also to continue to trust and obey Him

5 and again in this *passage*, "THEY CERTAINLY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST."

5 and again in this *passage*, "They shall not enter My rest."

5 and again in this passage, "They will never enter my rest."

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

- Again quoting Ps 95:11, the author links God's Sabbath rest at the time of Creation with the rest that the Israelites missed in the desert

— The typology of salvation rest is used to show that Israel failed to enter into rest *by divine decree*

(iii) Perpetuity of promised rest (4:6-10)

6 Therefore, since **it remains for some to enter it**, and those who previously had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,

6 Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,

6 Therefore, since it is still true that some will enter it, and since those who once heard the good news failed to enter it because of their disobedience,

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

- The argument is that certain ones were to enter this rest, but failed (because of disobedience and unbelief)

— God still desired to fulfill His purpose, so He appointed another day when another invitation would be given

- "...it remains for some to enter it" - the invitation to enter into God's rest *remains* open (Cf. v10), but it must be entered into by faith

— Israel failed to enter because of disobedience and unbelief, nevertheless the invitation to enter is now given

7 He again sets a certain day, "**Today**," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

7 He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."

7 he again fixes a definite day—"Today"—saying long afterward through David, as already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

- God renewed the offer *as late as the time of David* (Ps 95:7-8)

— In this verse, the author ascribes Ps 95 to David; in 3:7 he ascribed it to the Holy Spirit

- "...Today" - the original readers must respond to this immediately because some opportunities are limited to a specific time and specific place

— For Israel back then, “today” was Kadesh-Barnea; for these Jewish believers, it was 70 AD

— Thus, the author urges them to make a once-and-for-all decision to press on to spiritual maturity before they make an irrevocable decision and reach the point of no return. If they make a wrong decision, they will suffer the same fate as the Israelites in the Wilderness: physical death.

Summary

Through an exposition the OT concept of rest, the author exhorted them to “hold fast” to their confidence in Christ (3:6,14). This was meant to “encourage” them to face hardships boldly as “the day” approached (3:13; Cf. 10:25) when the land would be burned (6:7-8) and temple worship would “disappear” (8:13). (This is one of the reasons that this epistle is dated prior to 70 AD.)

Using Ps 95 the author warned that their lack of faith and confidence in Christ could jeopardize their rest, similar to what happened to the Exodus generation, potentially resulting in physical death (3:17-19).

God’s rest refers to Israel’s worship before the personal presence of *YHWH* (Ps 95:2,6), which could be forfeited by hardened, rebellious hearts like those of the Exodus generation (Ps 95:2,8-10). The readers could still “enter His rest” by continuing to place their faith in the life sustaining presence of God (4:1,3-4).

The offer of rest was not limited to the Exodus generation, because it was first experienced by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after God “rested” (Gen 2:7-9,15-22; Cf. Heb 4:4,10). Neither was it limited to the occupation of the land under Joshua because David was offered the same rest in his day (4:7-8).

Quotes from Ps 95:7b-11

It is interesting and necessary to understand that the “rest” the author describes is set in the context of the “Enthronement Psalms” celebrating the Second Coming. Participation in the Kingdom of God, this rest of God, is to be made now on the basis of a decision in the present moment before those events connected with the Second Coming overtake anyone.

In the “pair” of Psalms where this passage is taken (Ps 95 is “paired” with Ps 96; see note on Enthronement Psalms in Psalm 93) a warning and exhortation to enter this rest appears between a triple invitation to praise the Lord based on the fact that He is the only King, Creator, and Shepherd (95:1-7a), and the contents of the “new song” (96:1-13). The passage quoted here (Ps 95:7b-11) warns before it breaks into the triumphant strains of Ps 96, with its announcement in song of the final, universal reign of the Lord.

Once the “pairings” in Ps 93-100 are noticed, it follows that the psalmist’s understanding of “rest” is tied up with the events of the Second Coming. It also follows that the generation in the wilderness ...

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that.

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that.

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken later about another day.

8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

- The purpose of referring to Joshua is to show that the present offer of rest is valid because Joshua did not bring the children of Israel to the rest of spiritual maturity

— The Land of Israel was not the totality of rest that God had planned for His people:

Joshua gave them Canaan Rest (Joshua 21:44; 22:4; 23:1), but failed to give them the kind of rest that comes from spiritual maturity.

9 Consequently, there remains a Sabbath **rest** for the people of God.

9 So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

9 There remains, therefore, a Sabbath rest for the people of God to keep,

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

- “...rest” - *sabbatismos*, the author now turns away from Canaan Rest to Sabbath Rest

— The second Greek word found in this chapter for rest: *sabbatismos* is only used here in the entire NT

— The emphasis was not on the cessation of daily activities but rather on an unhindered opportunity for the people of Israel to celebrate God’s life-sustaining presence among them (Ex 31:12-16; Cf. 2 Macc 8:27). As such, Sabbath celebration was meant to be a time of festive praise including special sacrifices commemorating God’s provisions (Lev 23:27-32; 24:5-8; Num 28:9-10; 1 Chr 9:32; 23:30-31; 2 Chr 2:4; 8:12-13; 31:3).

— Its origin in Creation suggests that this Sabbath celebration transcends the rest forfeited by the Exodus generation and enjoyed under David and Joshua. So this “rest” remains available “today” to everyone who believes (4:4).

This is the *ideal* rest, representing a type of spiritual maturity. It is available today and the readers of Hebrews can attain it by faith. It means reaching a definite stage of attainment after satisfactorily fulfilling God’s purpose for their life. It is the end of self-effort and self-focus, and fulfilling God’s purpose for redeemed people. God finished His work and He entered into Sabbath Rest. It was destined primarily for Israel (Ex 20:8-11). Its symbolic meaning is that it remains for the true believer, both Jew and Gentile. If a believer persists

in his faith, he will reach a level of spiritual maturity when he ceases to constantly struggle over the basics of the spiritual life.

10 For the one who has entered His **rest** has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

10 For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

10 because the one who enters God's rest has himself rested from his own actions, just as God did from his.

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

- "...rest" - *katapauo*, Creation/Sabbath Rest (4:4,8,10); this rest is the Sabbath rest for the one who has entered into it

— This person has ceased from his works as God ceased from His works. It means the believer has ceased to rely on his own works and efforts, and by faith has trusted God to get him through the situation.

— The emphasis is on the future aspect of this rest: for Israel, the future aspect is in the Kingdom; for the individual believer, it is heaven.

— However, there is a position of rest the believer can enjoy today ("he that is entered"). This phrase is in the past tense, showing that some have entered into spiritual rest of the abundant life, which is acquired by faith.

— This rest is acquired by appropriating the rest that God has provided. The believer must trust God for both the present and future forms of this rest.

— The readers need to model their lives after Jesus Christ who "was faithful to the One who appointed Him" (3:2), and must be careful to "hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first" (3:14; 3:6). Only thus would they be able to rest from their works in the joyful possession of their *inheritance in the Messianic Kingdom*.

To summarize this rest, the author has been dealing with it in three tenses. The past tense is salvation. The future tense is Heaven or the Messianic Kingdom. The present tense is spiritual maturity. These Jewish believers have experienced the past tense already; they have become believers. There is a future hope awaiting them. The main emphasis for them is what they need right now. They need to learn to experience the present rest of faith: spiritual maturity. If they can mature in their faith, they will cease to go through these spiritual struggles. They will not be tempted to return to Judaism and they will cease to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

(iv) Exhortation to enter rest (4:11-13)

11 **Therefore** let's make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by *following the same example of disobedience*.

11 Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience.

11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fail by following their example of disobedience.

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

- "Therefore" - in light of what the author has stated in v1-10

— The readers are to "labour" (give diligence) to enter into that rest; this command has a sense of urgency

— The author is not talking about future glory, but rather the need for them to press on now toward spiritual maturity

— Because there is a danger in failing, he warns them against falling into "their example of disobedience"

- "...the same example of disobedience" - the example of Israel's disobedience was the disobedience at Kadesh-Barnea, which resulted in physical death for that generation in the wilderness

— The readers who fail here could also suffer physical death; they will not lose their salvation, but they may lose their physical lives

Overcomer's Promises (Rev 2-3)

- Ephesus - Eat of Tree of Life
- Smyrna - Not hurt of 2nd death
- Pergamos - Hidden manna, white stone, new name
- Thyatira - Power over nations
- Sardis - White raiment; name not blotted out
- Philadelphia - Pillar in temple, name of God, name of His city, new name
- Laodicea - Sit with Him on His throne

The Overcomers

They will:

- Be clothed in white (Rev 3:5)
- "Pillars" in the Lord's temple (Rev 3:12)
- Granted power over the nations (Rev 2:26)
- Enjoy the tree of life (Rev 2:7)
- Not be subject to spiritual death (Rev 2:11)
- Have their names be acknowledged by Christ (Rev 3:5)

- Be fed out of the hidden manna (Rev 2:17)
- Have a white stone with their name (Rev 2:17)
- Write His own Name upon them (Rev 3:12)
- Sit with Christ on His throne (Rev 3:21)

How?

- They remained loyal to God (Rev 2:1-3)
- They overcame tribulation and remained faithful (Rev 2:8-11)
- They were spiritually zealous (Rev 2:19)
- They did not deny Christ (Rev 3:8,10)
- They did not defile their garments (Rev 3:4)
- They kept the word of His patience (Rev 3:10)

The Chain of Inheritance

Sanctification—which leads to *Partaking*—which leads to *Overcoming*—which leads to *Inheriting*

12 For the word of God is **living** and **active**, and **sharper** than any two-edged sword, even **penetrating** as far as the division of **soul** and **spirit**, of both **joints and marrow**, and able to **judge** the **thoughts** and **intentions** of the heart.

12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow, as it judges the thoughts and purposes of the heart.

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.

- After presenting the exhortation to press on to spiritual maturity, the author now gives the reason: unbelief will not go undetected.

— The need to “labour” (v11) is because detection for failure will be conducted by the Word of God

Having completed his exposition of Ps 95 and Israel’s failure to enter rest, the writer brought this warning to a conclusion that is both sobering and comforting.

- “...living” - *zoan*, alive; it’s living because it is the Word of the living God

— Because the Word of God is both living and working, it will one day call all into account before God

- The Word of God can make a spiritually dead sinner spiritually alive
- "...active" - *energes*, effectual, powerful (Cf. Col 1:29)
- The Word of God has a moral and spiritual dynamic. It is so active that it transforms a person.
- "...sharper" - *tomoteros*, precise, decisive (Cf. Eph 6:17)
- "...penetrating" - it is so penetrating that it can decipher a division between "soul" and "spirit"
- "...soul" - *psuche*, psyche, soul
- "...spirit" - *pneuma*, breath, spirit
- The words "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably in Scripture, they are not two separate entities. They emphasize two facets of the immaterial part of man.
- "...joints and marrow" - two facets of the material part of man
- "...judge" - *kritikos*, root for the English word "critic"; the Word of God has discrimination and judgment
- "...thoughts" - points to the objective aspect of the thought process; points to what the man is thinking
- "...intentions" - points to the subjective aspect of the thinking process; points to why the man is thinking it

After we die or are raptured, God will perform a post-mortem on our lives at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10). He will examine our innermost attitudes ("thoughts") and motives ("intentions"). The "scalpel" He will use is His Word. His Word can distinguish between what is "soulish" (natural) and what is spiritual in our motivations and actions. It can do so even when those elements are as close to each other as our "joints and marrow."

Because the Word of God is all these things, and because the Word will call believers into account some day, these Jewish believers need to give diligence to press on to spiritual maturity.

13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must answer.

13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

13 No creature can hide from him, but everyone is exposed and helpless before the eyes of the one to whom we must give a word of explanation.

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.

- The author closes his thought by emphasizing the completeness of the revelation made through the Word of God. There is no creature who will not be manifested in His sight.
- No person ("creature") can avoid His judgment seat. This prospect should motivate every Christian to remain faithful to God until we see Him.
- We should "fear" (v1) (anticipate seriously) as we prepare for it (Cf. 1 John 2:28)
- If, at that time, their lives are seen to be marked by the kind of failure they have been warned against, they will suffer loss of reward/inheritance (1 Cor 3:11-15)

Hebrews is addressed to Jewish Christians who retrogressed in their spiritual life and considered returning to Judaism in order to avoid persecution from the Jews. Through an exposition of the OT concept of rest, the author exhorted them to "hold fast" to their confidence in Christ (3:6,14). This was meant to encourage them to face hardships boldly as "the day" approached (3:13; Cf. 10:25) when the land would be burned (6:7-8) and temple worship would "disappear" (8:13). Using Ps 95 the author warned that their lack of faith and confidence in Christ could jeopardize their rest, similar to what happened to the Exodus generation, potentially resulting in their physical death (3:17-19). In Ps 95 God's rest refers to Israel's worship before the personal presence of Yahweh (v2,6), which could be forfeited by hardened, rebellious hearts like those of the Exodus generation (v8-10). The readers could still "enter His rest" (4:1,3) by continuing to place their faith in the life-sustaining presence of God (4:4). The offer of rest was not limited to the Exodus generation, because it was first experienced by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after God "rested" (Gen 2:7-9,15-22; Cf. Heb 4:4,10). Neither was it limited to the occupation of the land under Joshua because David offered the same rest in his day (4:7-8).

(4) Christ is superior to Aaron (Heb 4:14—10:18)

After the warning on the danger of disobedience, the author now addresses the third major pillar of Judaism: the Levitical Priesthood. The author mentioned previously that Jesus is a High Priest (2:17; 3:1), and now he will deal with this aspect in greater depth. He will prove that the priesthood of Jesus is superior to the Levitical priesthood by stating five contrasts between the two:

1. Jesus has a better position
2. Jesus is a better priest
3. Jesus mediates a better covenant with better promises
4. Jesus functions in a better sanctuary
5. Jesus' priesthood is based on a better sacrifice

(A) Christ is our heavenly, sympathetic high priest (4:14-16)

14 Therefore, since we have a **great high priest** who has passed through the heavens, **Jesus the Son of God, let's hold firmly to our confession.**

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone to heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us live our lives consistent with our confession of faith.

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 first contrast is that Jesus has a better position than the Levitical priest

- "...great high priest" - the author's point is that believers need to take advantage of the kind of high priest they have

- In Greek, "have" is emphatic and emphasizes a continuous availability. In contrast, the Levitical high priest went into the Holy of Holies, completed his duties, then came out. A year later, he went in and came out again.

- By contrast, Jesus has passed through the first and second heavens into the third heaven, and has remained there. His position is now perpetually in heaven as opposed to on the earth, which is a superior position.

- Because His ministry is in heaven, He is able to bring those He represents directly into the presence of God

- The picture of Jesus as High Priest is the most distinctive theme of Hebrews, and it is central to the theology of the epistle

- "...Jesus the Son of God" - "Jesus" emphasizes His human nature, which allows Him to be sympathetic to our fallen nature (v15); yet He is also "the Son of God" which emphasizes His theistic nature

- By noting His deity, the author shows that Jesus has power that the earthly high priests did not possess

- "...let's hold firmly to our profession" - the content of our profession is: Jesus is the Messiah (3:1)

- The readers made this profession when they first became believers, but now he exhorts them to "hold fast" (attach themselves) to it

- Notice that it does not say that since we have such a High Priest, we will inevitably hold fast our profession. Perseverance in faith and good works is not inevitable, though perseverance in salvation is.

- It is because we have such a High Priest, we must be careful to "hold fast our profession." Thus, there is every reason to hold firmly to the faith we profess.

15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot **sympathize with our weaknesses**, but One who has been tempted **in all things** just as *we are*, yet without sin.

15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. Instead, we have one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet he never sinned.

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.

- One of the reasons these Jewish believers should "hold fast their profession" (v14) is because Jesus is no ordinary High Priest: He is both official and personal in that He suffered all the same points of temptation that they (we) have suffered, but He did not sin.

- "...sympathize" - suffer along with

- Because He suffered these things, He is able to be sympathetic with others who suffer the same things

- "...with our weaknesses" - He suffered all the limitations of humanity; He understands social, spiritual or financial problems

- "...in all things" - literally, in every area (Cf. 1 John 2:16); Jesus experienced temptation in every area of His life, as we do, but He was never tempted by an inward desire for sin since He had no sinful nature

- This does not mean that Jesus suffered every type of temptation that we do, or that men suffer every type of temptation that He did

- Since He endured every temptation successfully, He experienced temptations more thoroughly than we do when we yield to them before they pass

- The point is that Jesus understands us, He sympathizes with us, and He overcame temptation Himself

- Only one who fully resists temptation can know the extent of its force; thus, the Sinless One has a greater capacity for compassion than any sinner could have for a fellow sinner

- We read this verse and wonder, I face sexual temptation, but Jesus never faced that; I face temptation to embezzle money from work and cheat on my taxes, but Jesus never faced those temptations?

- But He has...there are only three avenues in which temptation comes, and Jesus was pushed to the furthest degree a human being has ever been pushed, yet without sin. He succeeded where Eve failed, and succeeded where we fail.

Christ's High Priestly Activities During His Present Session

1. Sustains creation (Col 1:16-17)
2. Head over the Church (Eph 1:22-23)
3. Groom of the Church (Eph 5:22-23)
4. Building the Church (Matt 16:18; Acts 2:41; 4:4)

5. Bestows spiritual gifts (Eph 4:7-12)
6. Melchizedekian High Priestly role (Heb 6:20)
7. Keeps the saints (John 10:27-29; 1 Peter 1:5)
8. Intercedes for the saints (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25)
9. Advocate for the saints (Heb 9:24; 1 John 2:1)
10. Restores broken fellowship (1 John 1:9)
11. Disciplines His children (Heb 12:5-13)

Often the best person to give you advice and help on a journey is someone who has travelled the road before you. The best person to help you through an illness is someone who has come through it. [Barclay]

16 Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of *our* need.

16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

16 So let us keep on coming boldly to the throne of grace, so that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

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.

- Jesus' success through the toughest temptations, the writer of Hebrews says, is why today He can be our sympathetic High Priest

— He can be sympathetic to us because He stood in our shoes...maybe He didn't face exactly what we face today, but He faced the toughest temptation in each of the three categories of sin that any human has ever faced, and overcame it.

— Thus when we pray to the Lord in the midst of temptation, He knows exactly what we're going through because He's been in our shoes. Thus, He knows how to provide mercy and grace to us in our time of need.

- The application for the readers, because Jesus is a superior High Priest: because they (we) have a High Priest in the third heaven, who has suffered and been tempted—and is therefore a sympathetic High Priest—they (we) need to use Him.

— Not only are we to "use" Him, but we are to come to Him with boldness and confidence

- Since we have a High Priest to intercede for us with God, we can approach God confidently in prayer (Cf. 3:6; 10:19,35)

— The Jewish readers could come right up to the throne of God. The high priests of Judaism could only approach God at His earthly throne, in the holy of holies in either the tabernacle or temple, only once per year, and only after great ceremonial cleansing.

- The purpose of believers coming boldly and with confidence to our High Priest is to appropriate grace
- The solution to the great struggles and persecutions the Jewish believers were experiencing was not to return to Judaism, but to instead boldly and confidently make use of Jesus, their High Priest, to appropriate grace to get them through this period.
- Whenever a believer stumbles in his spiritual life, it is not because there is insufficient grace, but because we fail to appropriate the grace available to us
- God's throne of judgment (for the Israelites) has now become a "throne of grace" for us