

הַנֶּהָ יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם יְהוָה וְכָרְתִי

אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־בֵּית יְהוּדָה בְּרִית

חֲדָשָׁה: **The Book of**

אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵם בַּיּוֹם הַחֲזִיקִי בְיָדְכֶם לְהוֹצִיאֵם

מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר־הָמָּה הִפְרוּ

Hebrews

יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרַי הַיָּמִים הֵם נְאֻם יְהוָה

נָתַתִּי אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי בְּקֶרֶבְכֶם וְעַל־לִבְכֶם

אֶכְתָּבָנָה וְהֵייתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְהָמָּה

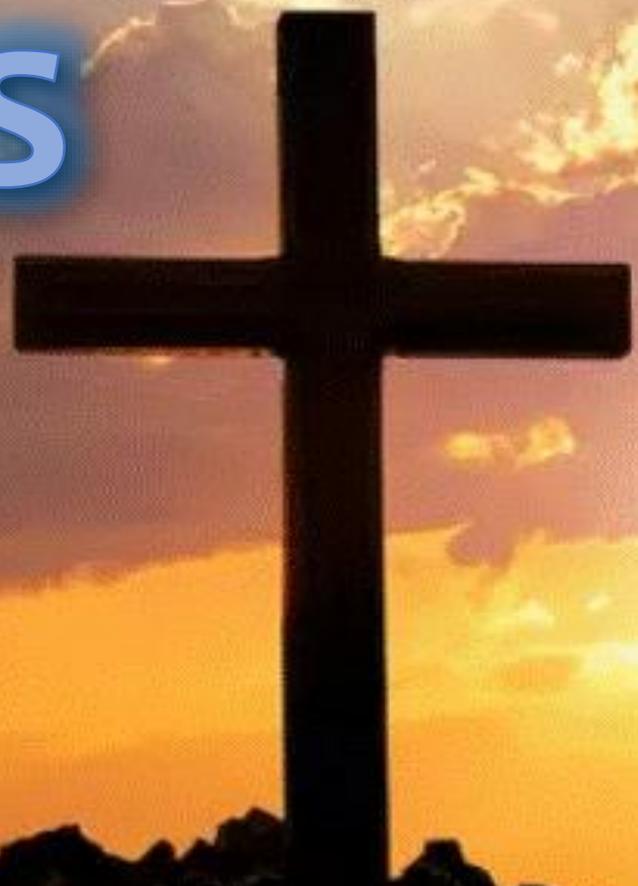
יְהִיוּ־לִי לְעָם: וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד אִישׁ

אֶת־רַעְתּוֹ וְאִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו לֵאמֹר דַּעוּ

אֶת־יְהוָה כִּי־כֹלָם יֵדְעוּ אוֹתִי לְמַקְטָנִם

וְעַד־גְּדוֹלָם נְאֻם יְהוָה כִּי אֶסְלַח לְעוֹנֵיכֶם

וְלֹחֲטָתֶם לֹא אֶזְכֹּר־עוֹד: ס



Outline of Hebrews

“Jesus is Better”

- I. We Have a Final Revelation in Jesus (1:1-4)**
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)**
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)**
 - A. The Faithful Son is Greater than the Servant Moses (3:1-6)**
 - B. The Argument from Psalm 95 (3:7-4:13)**
 - 1. The Text of Psalm 95 (3:7b-11)**
 - 2. The Immediate Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)**
 - 3. The Painful Example the OT Text Provides (3:16–19)**
 - 4. The Prospect the Psalm Holds Out. (4:1-13)**

The Prospect Psalm 95 Holds Out (4:1-13)

- Today's text is one of the most fascinating, enigmatic, and tightly argued sections of the book of Hebrews.
- **4:1-2** – The author transitions the discussion from consideration of those who failed to enter God's rest (3:7–19) to an analysis of the continuing promise of rest for the new people of God discussed in the next section (4:3–11).
- **4:3–11** – The author follows the “rest” theme in Psalm 95 back to its source in Genesis 2:2 and demonstrates, among other things, that the “rest” spoken of in Psalm 95 was not limited to the physical entrance into Canaan by the people of Israel. He concludes this section by explaining what the ultimate rest is for the people of God today and warns that we must not fall short of it.
- **4:12–13** – Having presented his exegetical work on the relationship between Psalm 95 and Genesis 2:2, the author then closes the section with a stark warning concerning the power of God's inescapable word.

The Prospect Psalm 95 Holds Out (4:1-13)

¹ *Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ² For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.*

The Prospect Psalm 95 Holds Out (4:1-13)

³ For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,

“As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’” [Ps 95:11]

although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way:

“And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” [Gen 2:2]

⁵ And again in this passage he said,

“They shall not enter my rest.” [Ps 95:11b]

The Prospect Psalm 95 Holds Out (4:1-13)

⁶ *Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,⁷ again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,*

*"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."
[Ps 95:7-8]*

⁸ *For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*

The Prospect Psalm 95 Holds Out (4:1-13)

¹² *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* ¹³ *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

¹ *Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.*

- Having introduced Psalm 95 in the previous section the author begins to explore the theological implications of this psalm.
- God had ***promised*** that the Israelite people of the Exodus would experience *his rest* by entering into the Promised Land. But, in ***vast numbers***, they did ***not***.
- And yet, four centuries after those events, in the time of David, God is still saying, “***Today***, if you don’t harden your heart, you may enter into my rest.”
- In saying this, Psalm 95 ***presupposes*** is that there is a ***rest*** to enter into ***beyond*** entrance into the Promised Land.
- Which shows that entering into the Promised Land was not exhaustive of God’s promised rest. Otherwise it makes no sense for Psalm 95 to still be admonishing its readers 400 years later not to harden their hearts so as to enter God’s rest.

¹ *Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.*

- “*Therefore*” the author argues, if “*the promise of entering his rest **still stands***” in the present day (and it does): “*...let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.*”
- In other words, if some people fell away from the promise of entering into God’s rest **then**, and **now** the promise of entering into rest is **still with us**, make sure that we don’t make the same mistakes **that** generation made.
- That’s the author’s argument.

² For *good news came to us just as to them*, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. [or as the NET puts it: *since they did not join in with those who heard it in faith.*]

- When the author says here that “*good news came to us just as to them*”, he does not mean that the Old Testament believers understood all that **we** understand by *good news* (i.e., *gospel*).
- His point is that they had *good news* preached to them. The *good news* that God had come to:
 - Redeem his covenant people
 - Bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey
 - Save them from slavery, give them freedom and a place for corporate worship
 - Be his son

² For *good news* came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. [or as the NET puts it: since they did not join in with those who heard it **in faith**.]

- The “*good news*” that has come to **us** (and the readers of this letter) is, of course, a much **fuller** gospel message that includes a historical understanding of a **crucified** Messiah, who **died and rose again and is seated at the right hand of God**.
- Nevertheless, the Israelites who failed to enter the Promised Land had “*good news*” preached to **them**, and we have had “*good news*” preached to **us**.
- The important point being made here is that the “*good news*” they heard was of **no value** to them, because at the end of the day they didn’t respond to it in “*faith*”.

² *For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by **faith** with those who listened. [or as the NET puts it: since they did not join in with those who heard it in **faith**.]*

- Now this introduces us, once again, to the *faith* theme in this letter. We saw it in 3:19 where they were not able to enter the promised land because of their *unbelief*.
- Here it says that they did not respond to the gospel message in *faith*, and eventually, as you may recall, in Hebrews 11, you have the famous *faith* chapter.
- In the book of Hebrews, faith, by definition, **perseveres**. That's the whole point of the faith chapter.
- When you work through the faith chapter, which we will eventually do, you discover that in person after person, whether in blessing or under terrible persecution, what distinguishes their faith is they perceive what is coming, and because they trust God and his Word, they persevere.

² *For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. [or as the NET puts it: since they did not join in with those who heard it in faith.]*

- So we see here once again that those who ***didn't*** enter the Promised Land didn't enter because of their ***unbelief*** (3:19), because they did not respond to the gospel in faith; faith which by definition, perseveres to the end.
- So therefore, it follows that now that ***we've*** had the gospel preached to ***us***, what we must do is respond with a faith that perseveres.

^{3a} *For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter **my** rest,'"*

- What the author does next is he focuses on the pronoun "*my*".
- God declared on oath in his anger, "*They shall not enter **my** rest.*"
- It's almost as if you can see the wheels turning in the author's head: "**My** rest? God needs a rest? Where does the Bible speak of **God** resting?"
- Then the penny drops. Why, at the **very beginning** God rested. That's the first mention in Scripture of God's rest.

^{3b} ...although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God **rested** on the seventh day from all his works.” [Gen 2:2] ⁵ And again in this passage he said, “They shall not enter my **rest**.” [Ps 95:11b]

- So the author is going back to the beginning of Scripture, to the **source** of a biblical theme that runs all the way through the Bible to the book of Revelation.
- When you start looking for the tendons that hold the Bible together, you discover there are about 20 main ones and quite a few subordinate ones, but one of the main ones is this “rest” theme that starts very early on, and shows up in place after place in Scripture.
- As the author has hit one of these tendons that link everything together in Psalm 95, he jumps all the way back to where it **begins**, in Genesis, because the text itself demands it.

^{3b} ...although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” ⁵ And again in this passage he said, “They shall not enter **my rest.**” [Ps 95:11b]

- In Psalm 95, God speaks of “**my rest.**” How does **God** rest? Well, he rests by ending his creation. He finishes his work. He stops, and he therefore, rests.
- Out of that, then, in Scripture comes a whole lot of things.
- In fact, as you well know, when you get to the Ten Commandments, the **Sabbath** command is based on the model of what God did at **creation**:
 - *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy ... For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth... and **rested** on the seventh day.* (Exo 20:8,11)

^{3b} ...although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God **rested** on the seventh day from all his works.” ⁵ And again in this passage he said, “They shall not enter my **rest**.” [Ps 95:11b]

- You see, what the author has done is put down a **pillar** marking God’s rest in Psalm 95.
- He’s put down **another pillar** in connection with **entering the Promised Land** back in Numbers 13-14.
- Then he’s put down a **pillar** way back there at **creation**.
- Now he is going to start **linking** them.

⁶ *Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,* ⁷ *again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." [Ps 95:7-8]*

- Here he begins by reviewing his argument up to this point: *Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience*
- Then he focuses on this “*today*” word in the Psalm 95 quotation: “... *again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.*”

⁶ *Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,* ⁷ *again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David **so long afterward**, in the words already quoted, "**Today**, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." [Ps 95:7-8]*

- In other words, the argument depends on a **historical** reading of Scripture, reading it **in sequence**.
- The whole thrust of his argument depends on seeing that the Exodus accounts were written and understood **before** you get to David, four centuries later.
- And now he says, in effect, if God, through David, **centuries** later, or "**long afterward**" as he puts it, speaks of **another "today"**, then the entrance into the Promised Land **couldn't** have been the final rest.

⁸ *For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.* ⁹ *So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God...*

- “Ah,” someone says. “That first generation **did** fall away; but then, people did finally enter in 40 years later under Joshua, didn’t they?”
- Well, he’s thought of that. Verse 8: “*For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on...*”
- There’s the historical reading again: “... *God would not have spoken of another day later on.*” Again, the whole force of his argument depends on reading the Old Testament passages in their **historical sequence**.

⁸ *For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.* ⁹ ***So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God...***

- *“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God...”* Now he’s speaking of **Sabbath-rest** because he understands that the **creation rest** of God becomes the model for our **Sabbath**, but he’s now linked them all together.
- It’s one long stream of rest, and the Sabbath-rest that he has in mind **now** is **not** found in Exodus 20 (where a Sabbath rest is given in the Ten Commandments) but is **promised** in Psalm 95 and **fulfilled** in what was coming in Jesus.

⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ *for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.* ¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

- So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, and if you want to know the **ultimate** significance of that text in Genesis that says God rested from his works, then here it is.
- Here is the **ultimate** significance: “...*for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.*”
- After all, the issue is whether or not you will enter “**my rest**”: Anyone who enters **God's** rest must cease from his work, just as God did from his.

⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

- There is **typological significance** to the fact that God ceased from his work.
- That's what it meant for God to enter his rest, and under the Sabbath regulations, people ceased from their work, and then when the people entered the Promised Land, there was a sense in which they were going to work, yes, but no longer under the conditions of slavery, now in a land flowing with milk and honey.
- But all of this points **ultimately**, the author is saying, to a **deeper** principle.

⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

- If you enter into God's rest, it will be to follow the **ultimate** example of God himself: **You cease from your works.**
- All of this is worked out for us by the author of Hebrews simply reading the biblical texts that speak of the "rest" theme in their biblical historical sequence.
- He then draws this conclusion: "*Let us therefore **strive** to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*"
- Here we have a bit of a **paradox**: we must **strive** to cease from our works! Because our natural tendency is to **not** to rest in God's work but to depend on our own efforts.

¹² *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* ¹³ *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

- So far we've had:
 - The argument from Psalm 95,
 - The argument from God's rest at creation,
 - The argument from salvation-historical linkage,
 - And now we have the argument from the Word of God. (Verses 12–13).
- *“For...”* This is meant to connect verse 12-13 with what was said previously.
- At first sight we may ask how verses 12–13 fit into the flow of the argument. They are often quoted simply out of context, as they're a nice passage about the Bible.

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

- But there is a very tight connection here with verse 11:
 - We are not to follow the Exodus generation's example of disobedience (verse 11).
 - They fell back. They fell by the **sword** of the Amalekites, which was God's own pronouncement because they disregarded Moses' warning, the Word of God. (Numbers 14:43–45).
 - So don't play around with the Word of God. God's Word is powerful, and if you fall back into disobedience and unbelief as they did, then you stand under this Word which brings its own judgment.

¹² *For the word of God is **living** and **active**, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* ¹³ *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

- The word of God is “*living*” – rather than being outdated, or a “dead” word of a bygone era, it still exists as a dynamic force with which we must reckon.
- The word of God is “*active*” meaning that it is effective in carrying out God’s intentions. The same word that at creation set the elements of the cosmos to their appointed tasks and still governs the universe toward God’s desired intentions (1:2–3) and has the ability to effect change in people.

¹² *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* ¹³ *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

- The “*sword*” imagery emphasizes that while God’s word is a word of promise to those who would enter God’s rest, it is also a discerning word of ***judgment***.
- Like a sword that cuts and thrusts, the word penetrates and divides, being able to reach into the depths of a person’s inner life.
- In listing the parts of a person on which the word acts—“*soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow*”—the author simply proclaims the word’s ability to break past our ***external behavior*** to an inner, spiritual reality. The penetrating Word of God discerns “*the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*”

¹² *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* ¹³ *And **no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.***

- In case we are tempted to think carelessly about the extent of God's discernment, the author assures us that "*no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*"
- Those who have not responded to God's word in obedience are spiritually naked, vulnerable before his awesome gaze.

Some Final Reflections on Heb 4:1-13

- The *ultimate* antitype of Sabbath rest is the salvation we have in Christ Jesus. Regardless of your theology, if you are to be in line with Scripture you must say, at least, this.
- The argument in this text is based on the Old Testament alone. So much so, that the author is saying that the Old Testament *itself* tells us that *neither* the Sabbath rest in the Ten Commandments nor entrance into the Promised Land constituted the *ultimate* rest.
- They pointed *beyond themselves* as we can see by reading the Old Testament texts themselves. In the view of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, failure to see that is failure to understand the Old Testament.

Some Final Reflections on Heb 4:1-13

- You can imagine how strong this background is, then, in understanding Jesus himself when he turns to people in his day and says, “*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” (Mat 11:28)
- Matthew understands, because the very next paragraph introduces the Sabbath controversies (Mat 12:1ff).
- So while they are arguing on whether it’s right or not to pluck some heads of grain, Jesus gives them the **true** rest – the rest which our author has explained to us in our text today.

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- There are some theologians today who believe that we should observe a Sabbath day of rest in the same way that the Jews did under the Old Covenant (though most would have us observe it on Sunday rather than Saturday).
- In the passage we looked at today, the author of Hebrews does not describe the *Sabbath rest for the people of God* in terms of ceasing from work on a **particular day**, but instead sees the fulfillment of the Sabbath command in the New Covenant as ceasing from our own works as we trust in Christ's work on our behalf. This kind of outlook seems to fit with other statements made in the NT by the Apostle Paul:
 - *Let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a **Sabbath**. These are a **shadow** of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.* (Col 2:16-17)
 - *One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* (Rom 14:5)
- What are your thoughts on this issue?

*Class Discussion Time

- Because in day to day life, we are only held accountable by others for the things that we do externally, it might be tempting not be concerned about our private thoughts – as long as we keep them to ourselves.
- Hebrews 4:12-13 warns us that God sees all of our private thoughts, and will hold us accountable for them.
- Did you find this to be a good reminder? Do you find this to be scary?
- Does you think this passage have implications as to how we should *listen* to the Word of God as we read it or hear it preached? If so, what?