

INTRODUCTION

Christ Jesus our Lord is

- the great apostle
- the once-and-for-all high priest
- the one worthy of more honor even than Moses

We who are His disciples are in the blessed state of being

- those who are holy
- the brethren of Christ and of each other
- partakers of the heavenly calling
- those who profess Christ
- the very house or household of Christ

That all who have started well may also finish well, we are exhorted

- to hold fast our hope in Christ all the way to the end

God has a blessed rest, like the rest He gave to the children of Israel, in the promised land of Canaan, after their labor in slavery in the land of Egypt, but infinitely better.

- We are warned that those who do not believe in Him through Jesus Christ will not enter that rest, as the unbelieving generation of Israelites were not allowed to enter the promised land
- We are assured that those who do believe in Him through Jesus Christ do enter that rest, as Joshua and Caleb, who trusted in God, were allowed to enter the promised land

You may recognize those as the truths we heard together the past two weeks from Hebrews chapter 3 and the beginning of chapter 4. Today we go on in Hebrews chapter 4, observing from the apostle's discourse about God's rest from creation, and God's rest in the promised land, more that points us to the gospel rest for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

TEXT

Hebrews 4:3-8 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. 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. 5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. 6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: 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. 8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

BODY

I. God's Rest for Mankind from Creation

A. That God created the world in six days is a foundational doctrine

1. the scriptures bring up creation many times in the OT and the NT
2. I have a friend who testifies that a big part of his conversion to faith in Christ is that his mother told him, when he was a boy, "God made you."
3. the apostle Paul, when speaking to people who did not already know about the one true God, began their gospel preaching with reference to God creating everything
4. it is no small matter for the education establishment to have thrown off the truth of God creating everything, to embrace the ridiculous theory that everything just evolved into its present form
5. it should be no surprise that antichrist, the pope in Rome, teaches his people that God's creation may have been by a long process of evolution

B. God's creation of the world in six days is the starting point for understanding the doctrine of sabbath-keeping

1. you already know how it is referenced in the fourth commandment
2. here you find it referenced in the doctrine of God's rest considered more broadly

C. Man was to trust in God

1. knowing Him to be good
2. believing in His promises
3. heeding His threatenings
4. considering His laws to be beneficial

D. The rest of seventh-day sabbath keeping was to represent that trust

1. to be an exercise of it
2. to teach it
3. to demonstrate it

E. The rest of God instituted in creation, of one day in seven for sabbath-keeping, was not the fulfillment of the rest that God has for us

F. And the seventh-day sabbath keeping is not the rest referenced in Psalm 95

II. God's Rest for Israel in the Promised Land

- A. God promised that He would take Israel into the promised land of Canaan
- B. By God's mighty work, the children of Israel were brought out of cruel bondage in the land of Egypt, through the hungry and thirsty desert
- C. But most of that generation did not trust God, did not believe His promises, did not have true faith in Him
- D. Israel was to trust in God; the rest of entering the promised land of Canaan was to represent that trust
 1. to test Israel, showing who had faith in God, and who did not
- E. An example of the relationship between logical reasoning and the scriptures
 1. evidence of logical reasoning is many places in the scriptures
 2. we must have logical reasoning to make any use of the scriptures
 3. see in 4:3
 - a) we who believe do enter into rest
 - b) proof: those who do not believe do not enter
 - c) Owen: "unto immediate contraries, contrary principles may be certainly ascribed"
 - d) e.g. Mom: you may not drive at night Alvin: my mom said I may only drive in the daytime
 4. it is a common misconception that the Bible or the Christian faith doesn't make sense, so we just have to take it by faith
- F. The rest of God promised to Israel in the land of Canaan was not the fulfillment of the rest that God has for us
- G. And the rest in the promised land of Canaan is not the rest referenced in Psalm 95

III. God's Rest for Us Today

- A. As long as it is today, God has a rest for us to enter
- B. When, by the Holy Spirit, David wrote Psalm 95, it had been a long time since God had brought the children of Israel out of slavery to the promised land, and the succeeding generations had been in the land for about 500 years!
- C. Yet he spoke of hearing God's voice "today" and entering God's rest
- D. So there clearly was some greater rest than that of the promised land
 - 1. a rest where freedom from slavery is freedom from the power of sin
 - 2. a rest where the milk is understanding of the word of God
 - 3. a rest where the honey is sweet communion between yourself and God in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit
 - 4. a rest where the river cleanses not from leprosy, but from the guilt of sin
 - 5. a rest where you don't visit the temple made by Solomon, but where you are a living stone in the temple made by Jesus Christ
 - 6. a rest where the abundant wool and linen clothe you with the righteousness of Jesus Christ
- E. Then, another 1,000 years later, the apostle writing Hebrews recognized that the same warning and promise about God's rest was appropriate to give people in His time, when Christ had come
- F. It is just as much "today" now as when Psalm 95 was written, and when Hebrews was written.
 - 1. the promise of the gospel about entering rest is still there
 - 2. the door is still open

CONCLUSION

Let us fear coming short of that rest.

-in the case of any who think of yourself as believing, but do not take it seriously

-in the case of any who are here in this congregation, hearing the gospel, hearing the works of God, yet not believing

Fear! Be afraid!

-how many times could the Israelites refuse to believe God, and yet live? it had been several times; so maybe they thought they could go on in unbelief and be okay; but one more time was too many; that was the end of God's forbearance toward them; they wanted to enter the promised land after that, but could not

-how many times can you refuse to believe in God, and yet live? it has been several times; so maybe you think you can go on in unbelief and be okay; but one of these days it will be one time too many

-one day the silver cord will break

-one day the trumpet will sound

then the believing will enter finally into the fulfillment of the rest God has promised for so long; but you, if you remain in unbelief, will be sent off into the desert to die? no, that was just a picture! you will be sent to an unending dying, an eternal torment

-be afraid of what God the righteous judge will do to those who refuse all His kindness

-Harden not your heart; have the confidence in God that Joshua and Caleb had:

“He has promised me rest in Jesus Christ. Then I shall indeed have rest in Him.”

-“The devil, the wickedness of the world, the sinfulness of my own flesh, they all oppose me.

But what do I care about giants in the land if the Lord has promised, and the Lord is with me?”

-Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved; enter His rest.

Roel - Call to Worship and Opening Prayer - Psalm 40:1-3

Stephen - Scripture Reading - Genesis 1:1-2:3

Alex - Congregational Prayer

Angie - Prelude

Rita - Trinity 672 - “He Lifted Me” - Andrew lead

-see sheet in key of F

Journey - Trinity 587 “Like a River Glorious” - Alvin lead

Haven - Trinity 435 “Jesus Christ the Crucified”

Hebrews 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.

Hebrews 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.

Hebrews 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.

Owen: This rest, then, we say, firstly and principally, is that spiritual rest of God, which believers obtain an entrance into by Jesus Christ, in the faith and worship of the gospel, and is not to be restrained unto their eternal rest in heaven
the express words here used do assign a present entrance into rest unto them that do believe
It is here, then, plainly affirmed that believers do here, in this world, enter into rest in their gospel-state.

The apostle is not primarily in this place exhorting sincere believers unto perseverance, that so at last they may be saved, or enter into eternal rest; but professors, and all to whom the word did come, that they would be sincere and sound in believing. He considers them in the same state with the people in the wilderness when the promise was proposed unto them.

This, therefore, is the sense and importance of the apostle's assertion in this verse, 'We who have believed in Jesus Christ, through the gospel, have thereby an admittance and entrance given unto us into that blessed state of rest in the worship of God which of old was promised,'

God created man in a state of present rest. This belonged unto that goodness and perfection of all the works of his hands which God saw in them, and blessed them thereon. And as a token of this rest did God institute the rest of the seventh day; that man, by his example and command, might use and improve the state of rest wherein he was made, as we shall see afterwards. Now, this rest consisted in three things:

- peace with God
- satisfaction and acquiescency in God
- means of communion with God

All these were lost by the entrance of sin, and all mankind were brought thereby into an estate of trouble and disquietment. In the restoration of these, and that in a better and more secure way and manner, doth this gospel-state of believers consist.

the apostle's argument depends upon a known rule, namely, that unto immediate contraries...contrary attributes may be certainly ascribed

Hebrews 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.

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

Hebrews 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:

Hebrews 4:7 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.

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

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

JFB: This verse indirectly establishes the obligation of the Sabbath still; for the type continues until the antitype supersedes it: so legal sacrifices continued till the great antitypical Sacrifice superseded it, As then the antitypical heavenly Sabbath-rest will not be till Christ, our Gospel Joshua, comes, to usher us into it, the typical earthly Sabbath must continue till then.

Pink: The purpose of the Holy Spirit in employing this term here is not difficult to discover. He was writing to Hebrews, Jews who had professed to become Christians, to have trusted in the Lord Jesus. Their profession of faith involved them in sore trials at the hands of their unbelieving brethren. They denounced them as apostates from the faith of their fathers. They disowned them as the "people of God." But as we have said the apostle here reassures them that now only believers in Christ had any title to be numbered among "the people of God." Having renounced Judaism for Christ the question of the "Sabbath" must also have exercised them deeply. Here the apostle sets their minds at rest. A suitable point in his epistle had now been reached when this could be brought in: he was speaking of "rest," so he informs them that under Christianity also, "there remaineth therefore a Sabbath-keeping for the people of God." The specific reference in the "therefore" is to what he had said in verse 4: God did rest on the seventh day from all His works, there]ore as believers in Christ are the "people of God" they must rest too.

"There remaineth therefore a Sabbath-keeping for the people of God." The reference is not to something future, but to what is present. The Greek verb (in its passive form) is never rendered by any other English equivalent than "remaineth." It occurs again in Hebrews 10:26. The word "remain" signifies "to be left after others have withdrawn, to continue unchanged." Here then is a plain, positive, unequivocal declaration by the Spirit of God: "There remaineth therefore a Sabbath-keeping." Nothing could be simpler, nothing less ambiguous. The striking thing is that this statement occurs in the very epistle whose theme is the superiority of Christianity over Judaism; written to those addressed as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." Therefore, it cannot be gainsaid that Hebrews 4:9 refers directly to the Christian Sabbath. Hence we solemnly and emphatically declare that any man who says there is no Christian Sabbath takes direct issue with the New Testament scriptures.

"For he that is entered into his rest he also hath ceased from his own works, as God from His" (verse 10). In this verse the apostle expressly defines the nature of that excellent rest of which he had been speaking: it is a cessation from our works, as God from His. The object in thus describing our rest is to show that it is not to be found in this world, but is reserved for the world to come. The argument of this verse—its opening "for" denotes that further proof is being supplied to confirm what has been said—is taken from the self-evident principle that rest is not enjoyed till work is ceased from. This world is full of toil, travail and trouble, but in the world to come there is full freedom from all these. "Thy commandment is exceedingly broad" (Ps. 119:96). There is a breadth and fullness to the words of God which no single interpretation can exhaust. Just as verse 9 has at least a double application, containing both a general conclusion from the whole preceding argument, and also a specific

inference from what is said in verse 4, so is it here. Not only does verse 9 state a general principle which serves to corroborate the apostle's inference in verse 9, but it also has a specific reference and application. The change in number of the pronoun here is not without meaning. In verse 1 he had used a plural, "us," so in verse 3 "we," and again in verse 11 he uses "us," but here in verse 10 it is "he and his." "It appears to me that it is the rest of Christ from His works, which is compared with the rest of God from His works in creation." (Dr. John Owen).

The reference to Christ in verse 10 (remember the section begins at Hebrews 3:1 and concludes with Hebrews 4:14-16) completes the positive side of the apostle's proof of His superiority over Joshua. In verse 8 he had pointed out that Joshua did not lead Israel into the perfect rest of God; now he affirms that Christ, our Apostle, has entered it, and His entrance is the pledge and proof that His people shall—"whither the Forerunner is for us entered" (Heb. 6:20). But more: what is said of Christ in verse 10 clinches our interpretation of verse 9 and gives beautiful completeness to what is there said: "There remaineth therefore a Sabbath-keeping to the people of God. For He that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from his own works, as God from His."

Thus, the Holy Spirit here teaches us to view Christ's rest from his work of Redemption as parallel with God's work in creation. They are spoken of as parallel in this respect: the relation which each "work" has to the keeping of a Sabbath! The opening "for" of verse 10 shows that what follows furnishes a reason why God's people, now, must keep the Sabbath. That reason invests the Sabbath with a fuller meaning than it had in Old Testament times. It is now not only a memorial of God's work of creation, and a recognition of the Creator as our Proprietor, but it is also an emblem of the rest which Christ entered as an eternal memorial of His finished work; and inasmuch as Christ ended His work and entered upon His "rest" by rising again on the first day of the week, we are thereby notified that the Christian's six work-days must run from Monday to Saturday, and that his Sabbath must be observed on Sunday. This is confirmed by the additional fact that the New Testament shows that after the crucifixion of Christ the first day of the week was the one set apart for Divine worship. May the Lord bless what has been before us.

Carroll: The interpretation is confessedly difficult, and the best of scholars differ widely as to the import. The reader will understand that the views now presented are not urged dogmatically, but are offered for fair consideration along with variant views. Take them at their intrinsic value and form your own judgment. First of all, read the whole passage carefully and particularly, and note the following words in the original:

1. The word "rest" – Greek, *katapausis*, (Heb_3:11; Heb_3:18; Heb_4:1; Heb_4:3; Heb_4:8; Heb_4:10-11).
2. "The seventh day" – Greek, *hebdome*, (Heb_4:4).
3. "Another day" – Greek, *alla hemera*, (Heb_4:8).
4. "Sabbath-keeping" – Greek, *sabbatismos*, (Heb_4:9).

The difficulty of interpretation has resulted from three causes:

1. A failure to note the contrast between the "seventh day" in Heb_4:4, and "another day" in Heb_4:8.

2. In translating sabbatismos in Heb_4:9 as if it were kaiapausis. Uniformly in all the context when the apostle means "the rest" in any sense he uses the katapausis. The change to sabbatismos is inexplicable if he means the same thing. But sabbatismos is a verbal noun, and means "the keeping of a sabbath," and so explains the contrast between "the seventh day," as appointed of old, and "another day" foretold in the prophetic psalm.

3. In arbitrarily referring to the pronouns, "O," autou and autos in Heb_4:10 to the Christian, instead of to Christ as the true antecedent.

In the deliberate judgment of the author there is no Justification for any one of those three things. The idea of the context is:

1. God rested after creating the world, and appointed the seventh day to be kept in commemoration.

2. The prophets foretold "another day" instead of the seventh, to commemorate a greater rest, following a greater work than creation.

3. Into this greater rest Joshua never led the Jewish people.

4. But our Lord, having finished the work of redemption on the cross, he himself rested from the work on the first day of the week, as God had done from his own on the seventh.

5. To this cross he nailed the whole typical sabbatic cycle, taking it away (Hos_2:11; Col_2:14-17).

6. Therefore, in commemoration of the glorious rest following the greater work of redemption there remaineth a sabbath-keeping to the people of God. The reader is urged to reread the last sermon in my first book of sermons for full discussion of this point.

7. It was necessary for the argument, to show the Jew who was glorying in his sabbath day, that the Christian had a great sabbath day.

Carroll (sermon - <http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/carroll.sabbath.for.man.html>):

I will read from Murdock's translation of the old Syriac Peshito text, the oldest version in the world:

"But we who have believed do enter into rest - (Greek word for rest, katapausin.) But as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, that they shall not enter into my rest (Greek, katapausin): for lo, the works of God existed from the foundation of the world. And he said of the Sabbath (Greek, seventh day), God rested on the seventh day from all his works. And here again, he said, they shall not enter into my rest (Greek, katapausin). Therefore, because there was a place, whither one and another might enter; and those earlier persons, to whom the announcement was made, entered not, because they believed not: again he established another day, a long time afterward; as above written, that David said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Joshua, the son of Nun, had given them rest (Greek verb, katepausen), he would not have spoken afterward of another day. Therefore it is established that the people of God are to have a Sabbath (Greek, Sabbatismos, literally Sabbath-keeping). For he who had entered into his rest, hath also rested from his works, as God did from his. Let us, therefore, strive to enter into this rest."

Yes, it is established that the people of God are to have a Sabbath. Not katepausen this time, but Sabbatismos, which literally means Sabbath-keeping, as no scholar will deny, however he may interpret its import. I stand on the literal meaning - Sabbath-keeping. This harmonizes with the general design and scope of the whole letter to the Hebrews. It was written to prevent Jewish Christians from apostasy to Old Testament Judaism. The un-Christian Jews would

[p. 442]

entice them thus: We have Moses; we have Aaron, the high priest; we have Joshua, who led the people into Canaan; we have a Sabbath, pointing to Canaan as the promised land; we have the ministry of angels.

Now, to furnish the Christian with an argument to meet all these weighty claims this letter was written. The Christian can say: Jesus is greater than angels, greater than Moses, a greater priest than Aaron, greater than Joshua, redemption is greater than creation, and as God rested from the works of creation, sanctifying the seventh day for a Sabbath, so as Jesus rested from the works of redemption on the first day of the week, they too have a Sabbath. So it is established that the people of God are to have a Sabbath-keeping. If the reference be exclusively to the heavenly rest, the argument is not weakened, since the type must abide until the antitype fulfills it.

The sole argument of the book, from one end to the other, is to answer those who want to drag Christians back into Judaism and to show them that it was established that there was a Sabbath-keeping for the people of God.

Now, the last point. You know I am no hypocrite. You know I would not sell out my religion for earthly advantage. And with me, before God to-day, religion is the only real thing in this world. I have tried it, men and brethren, I have put my own guilty heart on it, and God has made it happy. I have lived by it for near thirty years, and it has been my chief joy. I have preached it, as I had a commission from God to preach it, and I would not vacate one inch of its sacred ground if a mob that reached from the Brazos to the Sabine stood before me, nor from any pressure would I yield one jot or tittle of its sanctity. Lord God, rather let me die. What is before you Christians?

There is a rest that remaineth to the people of God. Have you never read Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest," that glorious rest of heaven, that Sabbath, Sabbath of heaven? That is the antitype. Where is your permission to knock down the type before the antitype comes? Never can it be destroyed until it is fulfilled. The rest that remaineth to the people of God must come before the antitype perishes. And as heaven is not yet - would to God it were; oh, that even that paradise, that water, clear, sparkling, that tree of

[p. 443]

life, that painless and sorrowless shore were now at hand! Oh, the rest, the everlasting rest, that remains for the people of God! Lord, God, let not me pull down the monument whose silent finger points to it as the hope of the lost world!

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

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

