Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Hebrews (Chapter 4)

Hebrews 4 (NKJV)

"Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. 3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: 'So I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest,"' although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works'; 5 and again in this place: 'They shall not enter My rest.' 6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, 7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, 'Today,' after such a long time, as it has been said: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.' 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

It is not possible to fully understand this chapter without keeping it in context with chapter 3. This might be one of the occasions where the chapter break is both unnecessary and worse—problematic. Therefore, I would suggest a review of chapter three in keeping with our proper understanding as we move forward.

Rest

In the concluding comments of the last study, I mentioned the need for a fuller evaluation and explanation of *"the rest"* the author is addressing. This *"rest"* was promised by God but forfeited by the Hebrews (as referenced in this chapter) beginning at Kadesh Barnea and continuing to this day. In effect, all who have not embraced the *"gospel"* (vs. 2) have failed to enter into the *"rest"* God provides. This *"rest"* has been promised and is still available today—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

The Promised Land

It might be appropriate to suggest that *"the rest"* forfeited by those at Kadesh Barnea was related (typologically) to the Promised Land—and the position has merit. Israel's exit from Egypt and

entrance into a land of promise would have certainly been restful in comparison to the time spent in Egypt (and/or the sojourn from Egypt to Canaan). However, more is in view, *"For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day"* (vs. 8). By referencing *"another day,"* the author put a focus on something beyond Joshua and the events related to the Promised Land. Furthermore, several years later the Land was entered and has been inhabited by the Jews (off and on) ever since. History tells us that Israel has experienced little or no rest—even *in* the land. It is therefore certain that the *"rest"* (typologically) displayed as the "Promised Land" is still available and needed.

There is a future day in which Israel will fully inhabit the Promised Land and experience the *"rest"* promised. At that time Jesus will reign as King over Israel—and the whole world. This will be a time of rest not only for Israel but for the whole of the earth. This period of future history is referred to as the Millennium (1000 years). The Millennium will be preceded by Jesus' Second Coming and the battle of Armageddon (see Revelation 19:11–21, and the Dispensational Graphic).

At the time of Jesus' Second Coming, "all Israel will be saved" (see Romans 11:26, Zechariah 12:10–13:2), the Lord will establish His throne in Jerusalem, and will reign as King over the whole world (Zechariah 14, Psalm 2, Daniel 7:13–14, Zechariah 8:3, Revelation 20:1–6). For this reason, the 1000-year reign is referred to as the Kingdom Age. During this period of time, Israel will fully inhabit the Promised Land (Genesis 12:1–3, Genesis 15:18–21, Daniel 2:44–45, Ezekiel 36).

More than the Promised Land

"Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (vss. 2–3).

The author makes the *"rest"* present and attainable. Furthermore, he cautioned the Hebrews (and the rest of us) not to neglect obtaining this *"rest"* and to *"fear"* coming short of it. Therefore, we must understand what that *"rest"* is.

It is quite clear that the "rest" in focus is the salvation provided in Jesus the Messiah. It is the "rest" proclaimed through the Gospel of Grace. Paul communicated this Gospel to the Corinthians when he said, "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1–4). Therefore, the propitiatory work of Jesus has secured a "rest" for "the people of God" (vs. 9), and the Hebrews must not neglect it! The same must be said for you and me, "for we who have believed do enter that rest" (vs. 3a).

It is clear that God has provided all man needs—in Christ—for salvation, and that He "desires [for] all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Therefore, "whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:15). Men are simply required to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved. This is the Gospel of Grace!

Salvation is not by human merit or capability. Salvation is offered by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone—not by works. Therefore, the man or woman who trusts Christ for salvation has entered His *"rest." "For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did*

from His" (vs. 10). "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9). **Let us Fear**

The Hebrews who reject the "gospel," desiring to be justified by the Law, are provided no rescue from the Law's curse (see Galatians 3:10–13). However, they (and we) are given hope in the Gospel. The Law was not nor ever could be salvific. Therefore, the Hebrews who trusted in the law to save, and "worked" diligently in order to obtain the salvation they thought it could provide, are given hope in the *"rest"* available *"today"* through the *"gospel."* On the other hand, what was true of the unbelieving at Kadesh Barnea is true today: all who refuse to trust the Lord for salvation will hear, *"They shall not enter My rest"* (vs. 5). They failed to enter in, and those who reject the Gospel do the same.

Note: The *"rest"* provided in the *"gospel"* was available to the Hebrews in history—by faith. It should be well known that all who placed their trust in the Lord were justified—even before the annulling of the Old Covenant and the propitiatory work of Christ on the cross (see Romans 4:1–3). Therefore, we can see that the *"rest"* referred to in the text has more to do with the Gospel of Grace than it does for the Promised Land.

The Sabbath

The author assigns and aligns the Sabbath Day with the *"rest"* God provides. *"For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works'"* (vs. 4), and *"the works were finished from the foundation of the world"* (vs. 3b). To this, we must give careful attention.

The Sabbath Day is a "type" of "rest." It is pictured in similar typology to the Promised Land. This is not to say that there is no literal Sabbath Day any more than to suggest that there is no literal Promised Land. However, it should cause us to recognize that entering into His "rest" demonstrates a cessation from our works as he did from His, "For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (vs. 10). Therefore, we must cease from laboring to please the Lord by human effort. This explains the typological meaning and purpose of the Sabbath, and should clear up the matter of present day "Sabbath keeping." Those who have entered into His "rest" understand why Paul would suggest that the "keeping" of a certain day is of no more consequence to those who have entered into God's "rest." He said, "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). Therefore, we are "keeping the Sabbath Day" by entering into His "rest" as provided in the Gospel. "For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (vs. 10). Moreover, Paul wrote, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16–17). Jesus Christ is the very "substance" that cast the typological "shadow." The Sabbath Day is simply a type pointing us to the "rest" found only in Jesus.

From the Foundation of the World

As noted above, "the 'rest' provided in the 'gospel' was available to the Hebrews in history—by faith. It should be well known that all who placed their trust in the Lord were justified—even before the annulling of the Old Covenant and the propitiatory work of Christ on the cross (see Romans 4:1–3).

Therefore, we can see that the *'rest'* referred to in the text has more to do with the Gospel of Grace than it does for the Promised Land." For this reason, the author showed that the *"rest"* was available even "before the annulling of the Old Covenant and the propitiatory work of Christ on the cross." Moreover, even further back, *"the works were finished from the foundation of the world"* (vs. 3b).

The emphasis in the New Testament on the timing of Jesus' crucifixion does not support the idea that He was crucified before time, but does support the fact that He was "foreordained" to crucifixion before time began. Peter wrote, "...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:18–20). Please notice that "foreordained" refers to the plan and "manifested in these last times for you" refers to the timing of the actual event.

Noted Distinction between the Gospel of Grace and the Gospel of the Kingdom

As mentioned above, the Millennial Reign of Jesus does and will involve Israel and the Promised Land. However, as we have seen, more is involved: The Gospel of Grace.

The Gospel of Grace provides salvation from sin, eternal life, and entrance into the "Kingdom Age," where Israel will be fully restored and the Promised Land will be fully inhabited. All who respond in faith to the Gospel of Grace are therefore—as a result—recipients of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

However, there is a noted distinction between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is the good news about the coming Millennial Age. This message was primary in the preaching of Jesus during His earthly ministry in and around Israel. This Gospel of the Kingdom related specifically to the Kingdom Age where Jesus would reign as King of Israel—and the whole world. The Hebrews in and around Israel during that time (including the disciples) were anticipating that Kingdom's beginning. Most of the Jews rejected Jesus when it didn't come to fruition at the time they had expected. Even the disciples asked (in a post-resurrection dialog), *"Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (Acts 1:6). However, the Kingdom Age is still an event in the future. It is nonetheless good news and therefore The Gospel of the Kingdom. Therefore, we, like the disciples, will pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (see Matthew 6:9–13).

The Gospel of Grace is the good news about the "rest" available to all men, by grace, through faith, in the person and propitiatory work of Jesus. It is the message of hope proclaimed to the Hebrews at Kadesh Barnea—as referenced by the author. "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (vs. 2). It is the message of hope to all of Israel. It is the message of hope to the nations. It is the message that has been proclaimed since the beginning. This "gospel" has always provided—by faith alone—salvation and deliverance from sin. In no dispensation was salvation ("rest") offered any other way.

This being said, we should understand that the Gospel of Grace provides entrance into the Kingdom, and therefore the Gospel of Grace includes the Gospel of the Kingdom. However, the Gospel

of the Kingdom, although distinct, requires faith in the propitiatory work of Christ and therefore requires the Gospel of Grace. To many this may seem insignificant! However, to Israel, for Israel, and therefore to the Hebrews being address herein, it is quite significant! The message should be clarified. If not, one might lean toward Replacement Theology and suggest that God is not going to fulfill what He promised to Israel, that there is no literal future Millennial Kingdom—where Israel will be restored, and bring to pass what the Hebrews were anticipating in the early Old Covenant and throughout the life and times of Jesus' earthly ministry in Israel.

God did say, "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it" (Ezekiel 37:14a).

Don't Miss Out

The Hebrews who may have been tempted to either return to the Law as salvific, or continue therein, needed encouragement.

From the introduction we read, "A stern warning is provided within the letter. By showing the value *and necessity* of moving from the administration of the Old Covenant to the New, the author points out the certain and dire consequences suffered by those who are tempted to turn back and/or refuse to 'go on to perfection,' 'for the law made nothing perfect...' (see Hebrews 6:1 and 19). He said, 'Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God' (Hebrews 3:12)."

"Severe persecution provided the Hebrew people a temptation to return to or maintain the 'status quo' of the Old Covenant and its administration. However, the author warned that '... it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame' (Hebrews 6:4–6)."

"During the Old Covenant Dispensation, the Jews were enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, were partakers of the Holy Spirit, and likewise tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. However, they were now in need of embracing the finished work of the Messiah and moving forward so they might *'continue in the grace of God'* (Acts 13:43)."

"The Parable of the 10 Virgins aptly illustrates this. All 10 virgins (Israel) were enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, were partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come during the Old Covenant Dispensation. However, the 5 foolish virgins illustrate those who refused to obtain the additional 'oil' of the New Covenant—therefore forfeiting its blessings."

"The covenant people, who had earlier (under the Old Covenant) partaken of all God provided them, must now move forward and embrace Jesus as Messiah—therefore partaking of the blessings and provisions of the 'New' and 'Better Covenant' (see Hebrews 7:22 and 8:6)."

"The author included himself with his fellow brethren when he said, 'For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?' (Hebrews 10:26–29). 'For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins' (Hebrews 10:4). Therefore, rejection of the New Covenant and/or turning back to the 'so-called comforts' of the Old Covenant was not an option."

Therefore, the author wrote, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience" (vs. 11). Anyone who rejects this "gospel" is in grave danger. There is salvation in no other. Moreover, "...the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (vs. 12).

With these words the author explains that God knows the heart of man, and that the "word of God" is a revealer in the decision process. The "word of God" brings distinction to those who believe and to those who don't. It reveals what is "soulish" and emotional, and that which is truly spiritual. Furthermore, "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (vs. 13).

All men will give an accounting to God for what they believe. Those who reject the Lord will know nothing of the *"rest"* He alone provides. They will be *"tormented day and night forever and ever"* (Revelation 20:10b).

A Note on Legalism and Performance-Driven Christianity

When the author says, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest" (vs. 11a), we should take note. Although the true believer in Christ Jesus has "enter[ed] that rest," and will ultimately experience it, the enemy of our souls—and those who preach a performance-driven Christianity—have worked diligently to cause those who have "enter[ed] that rest" to fall short of fully experiencing it—here and now. Legalism produces fear, and fear gives no rest. The true believer has been, by faith alone, perfected; "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14), and moreover "you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10). Therefore, the rest I am addressing is not salvation. It is the present enjoying of it.

This fact does not suggest a lifestyle of licentiousness, but it should, in all ways, make the believer know and understand that he or she is not in need of performing their way into the favor of God. That work was done for the believer by grace alone, in Christ alone. Therefore, simply grow in love. "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:14–19). "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." (vs. 14)

A Note on Wilderness Wanderings

On the other hand, when the author says, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest" (vs. 11a), we should also consider another possible application. Although the true believer in Christ Jesus has "enter[ed] that [salvific] rest" and will ultimately experience salvation in its fullness, those who wander around the "wilderness of sin" and follow the propensities of the flesh will fail to fully enjoy their salvation in the here and now. Sinful activities inspire what I call "the blessed misery": a lack of peace and rest, designed by God, to create a lack of comfort within a sinful lifestyle. In this "misery," the believer comes short of experiencing the fullness of the "rest" provided in Jesus. Therefore (as noted above), the rest I am addressing here is not eternal salvation—it is the present enjoying of it.

Therefore, let us understand that a performance-driven Christianity, and/or sinful living, will rob the believer (in the here and now) of the fullness of the *"rest"* we are provided in the Lord.

Regarding the above two sections ("A Note on Legalism and Performance Driven Christianity" and "A Note on Wilderness Wanderings"), the typology has problems if taken too far. We know that Moses did not enter the Promised Land but is in heaven. Therefore, he did in fact enter into the salvific *"rest"* the author is addressing. So, if we demand that the Promised Land is the *"rest"* and that the *"rest"* is heaven, then we must suggest that Moses is not in heaven. However, we know otherwise (see Matthew 17:1–3).

Faithful to the End

The temptation the Hebrews were experiencing was addressed by way of reminder: "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (vs. 15). Jesus, our Great High Priest understands all that men experience in this life. He subjected Himself to all we experience—on our behalf—and is able to sympathize, strengthen, and deliver us. Jesus suffered these temptations victoriously and has therefore provided us victory—in Him.

Inasmuch as Jesus was tempted *"in all points"* as translated here in the New King James and King James Versions of the Bible, it is of note that the word *"points"* was added by the translators. What the author is communicating is that Jesus was tempted as we are —and *"yet without sin."* However, Jesus was not tempted *"in every way"* as is communicated by many modern translations. For example, Jesus was not tempted to rob a 7-11 grocery store or to view a filthy movie, etc. We know this because there were no motion pictures or 7-11 grocery stores in first century Israel. However, Jesus was tempted by the Devil, in all the *"points"* wherein sin may be identified: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These points were described by John: *"For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world"* (1 John 2:16).

The recorded temptations Jesus suffered were referenced during Jesus' trial in the wilderness: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"' (this is the lust of the flesh). Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone."' Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God"' (this is the pride of life).

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me' (this is the lust of the eyes). Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve."' Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him" (Matthew 4:1–11).

We know that Jesus suffered temptation on other occasions, for we read in Luke's gospel, "Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13).

Jesus' victory over temptation is the perfect antitype to the temptations and fall of man in the garden. In Genesis we read, *"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food* (this is the lust of the flesh), *that it was pleasant to the eyes* (this is the lust of the eyes), *and a tree desirable to make one wise* (this is the pride of Life), *she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate"* (Genesis 3:6). There in the garden man fell. However, in the wilderness Jesus overcame, and is therefore able to *"sympathize with our weaknesses...yet without sin"* (vs. 15), and is able to secure us when tempted—giving us the power to overcome. *"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted"* (Hebrews 2:18).

When the author wrote that Jesus was tempted "as we are, yet without sin" (vs. 15b), it should also be noted that we are not tempted "in every way." For example, it is not likely that any of us have ever been tempted to turn stone into bread. Once again, the point the author is trying to make is that we too will be tempted in "in all points" as Jesus was—not "in every way." This may seem insignificant to many, but it isn't. Jesus was not tempted "in every way." He was tempted "in all points."

Come Boldly for Help in the Time of Need

When temptations arise, we have been promised help. Therefore, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (vs. 16). "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses" (vs. 15a).

We are not to feel ashamed about coming to the Lord with our weaknesses and struggles. *"For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust"* (Psalm 103:14). We are to come boldly to Him, knowing that He desires to grant us His amazing Grace—all we need in Him. Therefore, may the Lord strengthen our faith and cause us to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18).

More will be said of our God-given access to the "throne of grace" in the next study.

Addendum:

Church Age Attributes of the New Covenant – Benefiting the Jew and Gentile Believer

- 1) Relationship with God
- 2) A permanent cleansing and the forgiveness of sin and iniquities.
- 3) The Law of God written into the mind.
- 4) A new heart: motivation to walk in the statutes of the Lord.
- 5) A new spirit and the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Millennial Age Attributes of the New Covenant – Benefiting the Jew and Gentile Believer

- 1) Relationship with God.
- 2) A permanent cleansing and the forgiveness of sin and iniquities.
- 3) The Law of God written into the mind.
- 4) A new heart: motivation to walk in the statutes of the Lord.
- 5) A new spirit and the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- 6) Israel (and all the redeemed) occupy the Promised Land.
- 7) All mankind will have knowledge of the Lord.

Questions:

- 1) **True or False:** The *"rest"* mentioned in this chapter is available to men and women today.
- 2) **True or False:** There is a future fulfillment of God's promise to Israel related to a literal promised land.
- 3) **True or False:** The Sabbath Day is a type of *"the rest"* God provides the believer in Jesus.
- 4) **True or False:** Moses did not make it to heaven.
- 5) **True or False:** Both legalism and licentiousness will rob the believer of peace in the Lord.
- 6) **True or False:** We must be careful when studying typology not to read too far into what is not directly communicated in Scripture.

Notes