

Hebrews: A Bridge from the Old to the New

Hebrews – Chapter 4

Jesus Christ: Superior to Joshua (Verses 1-13)

Enter the Better Rest through Faith in Jesus Christ (Verses 1-11)

The “Therefore” indicates a transition in the analysis of Psalm 95 ^{Psalm 95:7-11 quoted in Hebrews 3:7-11} from the discussion of unbelief and its consequences to a description of the rest forfeited by the disobedient ^{v.1-11}.

1 There is nothing more sure than a “promise” from God ^{Joshua 21:45}, and no earthly rest can compare to His rest.

As mentioned in the last chapter, the original promise of rest in Psalm 95 referred to His people entering the Promised Land, which was a foreshadowing of the peace that members of His church experience when resting in Jesus ^{Matthew 11:28-29}, as well as the eternal rest experienced by believers ^{Luke 19:38, Revelation 14:13}.

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to “examine” and “test” their faith ^{2 Corinthians 13:5}. The irony of urging people to not fall short is that no one can live up to that mark on their own ^{Romans 3:23}, but this call can only be accomplished in the strength of God ^{2 Corinthians 1:20-22, Philippians 4:13}.

2 The word “gospel” is not found in OT and rarely applied to people of that time ^{v.6}, but here it refers to God’s plan to redeem mankind through the Savior, and can be applied forward (OT) or backward-looking (NT). Hearing the gospel is critical to faith ^{Romans 10:17}, but as the Israelites who were saved out of Egypt found out ^{Romans 10:16-21}, knowledge plus disobedience does not equal faith. Redemption results from combining the knowledge of God’s plan with a faith leading to a changed life resulting in obedience ^{James 2:26}.

3 This verse contrasts the first century Jews who gained God’s rest by placing their trust in Jesus, to the disobedient Jews (1500 years earlier) who forfeited His rest ^{Deuteronomy 1:34-35, Psalm 95:11, Hebrews 3:11, v.5} by trusting more in their human wisdom than in God’s past help and future promises. God’s “work” refers to His plan, which was completed before time began (the creation of the world) ^{Matthew 25:34, Revelation 13:8, 17:8}.

4-5 Again ^{Hebrews 2:6}, the author of Hebrews put no importance upon mentioning Moses or his book (Genesis), but his emphasis was on God’s model of work followed by rest ^{Genesis 2:2-3, Exodus 20:11, 31:17} for mankind. The last part of Psalm 95:11 is repeated ^{Hebrews 3:11b, v.3} to emphasize God’s words: “never enter my rest”

6-7 God offered His rest in the time of Moses, as well as in the present time, but a life of disobedience leads a person away from God and His rest ^{Hebrews 3:18, v.3}. God desires obedience ^{John 14:23-24} from His followers, and His message for unbelievers is for them to make a decision to follow Him “Today” ^{2 Corinthians 6:2b}.

- 8** While Joshua did lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land, where they would find rest ^{Exodus 33:14}, the victories were provided by the Lord ^{Joshua 6:2, 21:43-45}. Furthermore, the rest that was received in the PL was only a shadow of the heavenly rest to come ^{Revelation 21:3-4}, which was provided by Jesus ^{Revelation 21:6-7}.
- 9-10** This is the only NT use of the Greek word meaning “Sabbath-rest” ^{Leviticus 23:3}, which is God’s temporary earthly rest. The author continued to compare this rest with the complete spiritual rest to come ^{Ephesians 1:3}.
- 11** A supreme effort is called for, because not only will the type of effort determine whether the individual will receive the rest, but Biblical stories of disobedience (like the Israelites in the wilderness ^{1 Corinthians 10:5-13}), immorality (like in Sodom and Gomorrah ^{2 Peter 2:6}) and even sinful actions of believers ^{1 Corinthians 10:31-33}, teach that these behaviors could have a negative effect on the conduct of others.

The Sovereignty of God and the Power of His Word (Verses 12-13)

- 12** Neither God ^{Numbers 23:19} nor His Word changes/evolves ^{Isaiah 40:8}, but they are “living and active” ^{1 Peter 1:23}, by being helpful to people of all physical and spiritual ages, as well as applicable to any circumstance or time in history. The Word is simply a finite way of describing the infinite character of God (remember, Jesus IS the Word ^{John 1:1,14}), and, as a result, the Word acts as a double-edged sword ^{Revelation 1:16} directed by the Spirit ^{Ephesians 6:17} to judge and cleanse ^{Ephesians 5:25-27} the thoughts, motivations and actions of man.
- 13** God is omniscient: He knows everything that everyone does and thinks ^{Psalms 33:13-15, Proverbs 5:21, Jeremiah 16:17}. The amazing thing is He still loves mankind ^{Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:9-10}, in spite of all He knows. However, God expects man to accept His gift of Grace ^{Ephesians 2:8-9}, otherwise there is accountability ^{Revelation 20:11-15}.

Jesus Christ: Superior to Aaron (Verses 14-16)

These verses begin a lengthy section of Scripture on the ultimate priesthood of Jesus ^{Hebrews 4:14-7:28}.

Jesus the Son of God is the Great High Priest (Verses 14-16)

- 14** Just as the OT high priests would pass through three areas (the outer court, Holy Place and Holy of Holies) to make the atoning sacrifice, Jesus passed through three heavens ^{2 Corinthians 12:2-4} (the atmospheric heaven, stellar heaven & God’s home) after making the perfect sacrifice. Belief in “Jesus the Son of God” is key to salvation ^{1 John 4:15, 5:5} & perseverance reveals genuine faith ^{James 1:12, Revelation 2:2-3}. As a “great high priest”, Jesus serves in heaven ^{Hebrews 8:1-2} and appears before the Father on behalf of all saints ^{Hebrews 6:19-20, 9:24}.
- 15** Stressing the humanity of Jesus and His being tempted ^{Matthew 4:1-11, Hebrews 2:17-18}, similar to man, the author wanted to emphasize a basis for developing a personal relationship with Jesus : He truly understands.
- 16** Queen Esther knew if she approached King Xerxes without being invited, she could be killed ^{Esther 4:11}; however, because of the sacrifice of Jesus ^{Matthew 27:51}, Christians can be confident to come before the heavenly throne ^{Ephesians 3:12} of the God of all kingdoms ^{2 Kings 19:15}. And when believers humbly approach His throne, they can also be sure they will receive mercy ^{Luke 23:34, 1 John 1:9} and grace ^{Ephesians 1:7-8, 2:6-7}.

Please forward questions/concerns about these notes to ron price, ron@hopeinchristnm.com, 505-294-4743.

Joshua 6:2 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men."

Joshua 21:45 Not one of the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

Jeremiah 16:17 My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes.

John 14:23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church – even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

2 Corinthians 6:2b I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test?.

Ephesians 1:7-8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 3:12 In [Jesus] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Philippians 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Hebrews 9:24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

1 Peter 1:23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 4:15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.

Revelation 13:8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

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