



**METRO NEW YORK WORLD MINISTRY**  
**COMMENTARY on HEBREWS: VERSE by VERSE**  
Study Notes on Chapter Four *by Pastor Jeff Wehr*

## Hebrews Chapter Four

**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.**

These opening words indicated that many in the early church were in danger of making the same mistake as ancient Israel. A whole generation did not enter into Canaan. The next generation did, but failed to enter into spiritual rest. Now the early church faced a spiritual dilemma. The ultimate promise is that God will save us from our sins. Note that the gospel is more than the forgiveness of sins. God desires to free us from sin. We are not free from temptation, but we do not need to consent to sin. This is the rest that God desired of ancient Israel. This is the spiritual rest that He desired for the early church and for us.

The idea that we can “come short” of spiritual rest implies that there is a part we play. While it is God’s power that gives us the victory over our inherited and cultivated tendencies to sin, it ever remains the choice of the believer to seek deliverance from sin.

**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.**

Those in the early church heard the gospel preached as well as ancient Israel before them. Paul tells his audience that while Israel of old heard the precious words of the gospel, it did not profit him because they lacked true faith. It is not enough to hear or read truth. The Words of God must be received by faith before they can bear fruit of a Christlike character.

It is a tragedy that many have not heard the precious gospel because of false shepherds who preach smooth words. But there is a part the listener plays in his own search for truth. We are to hear and obey. We are to trust and obey. But all obedience to God’s commands depends upon faith in His ability to mold and transform us.

**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.**

While ancient Israel did not enter that rest (Hebrews 3:19), many in Paul’s days did enter that rest. This shows that the ultimate rest that God has for His people was not the literal land of Palestine. God’s ultimate rest is that spiritual rest which prepares us to live in the heavenly Canaan.

It is quite obvious that we must be speaking about spiritual rest because those that did enter His rest in Paul’s day did not possess the land of Israel. In fact, the early church found it near impossible to even own a church building. They met mostly in homes. Yet, they had entered into that rest because the rest that God desires for His people is spiritual rest.



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If new believers in Paul's day were entering into this spiritual rest, then that rest is still available for all who would believe. That spiritual rest is available to us today.

In the second part of this verse we have a reference to the Creation week, which states, "although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." It is obvious from our reading of Genesis chapters one and two that God had intended that men and women would enjoy God's rest. Man was created on the sixth day and then enjoyed the Sabbath hours on the next day, the seventh day. So in man's first two days of existence, he experienced both labor (the sixth day) and rest (the seventh day).

The first rest was a Sabbath rest. On this Sabbath day, Adam and Eve enjoyed the presence of God and the worship of God. In their original innocent, they were in agreement with God. This is what spiritual rest is all about. God wants us to get us back to that original rest.

When it says that God's "works were finished," it means more than simply a material creation. There was a purpose for everything that God created. He did not just create a man; He created man with a particular purpose in mind. When the Creation week was finished, everything was perfect. The finishing touch of that Creation week was the Sabbath rest. Adam and Eve could rest assured of God's love, of His sustaining power, of His close fellowship with them, and His purpose for their lives.

Let us consider a couple verses that speak about our rest in Him. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." Jeremiah 6:16. Notice that "rest" has to do with walking in the good path. Sin is the bad path, not the good path. Rest then has to do with walking with God. Creation rest is enjoying the presence of God. In fact, we prefer our fellowship with God over our fellowship with one another. But because of our fellowship with God we choose to love our fellowman as our self.

Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:28, 29. Spiritual rest is to have the burden of guilt lifted from your shoulders. It has to do with taking upon the yoke of Jesus in helping our fellowman. It has to do with humility and meekness. There is a death to selfishness and pride. We have come to see others as better than ourselves. Spiritual rest has to do with learning of Jesus. It is becoming one with Him. It is found in a growing faith that leads to a closer and closer relationship with our Creator and Redeemer.

**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.**

Paul was inspired to connect the Sabbath with spiritual rest. So what do we know about the Sabbath?

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Genesis 2:1-3



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Here we find that God sanctified the Sabbath. In other words, He made the Sabbath holy and set it apart for a holy use.

“Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.” Ezekiel 20:12

The Sabbath is a sign that God wants to sanctify us. God wants to make us holy and also set us apart for a holy work.

“And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God.” Ezekiel 20:20

The Sabbath is a sign that we wholly belong to God.

“Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.” Isaiah 56:2

We are not to pollute the Sabbath nor are we to pollute ourselves. As the Sabbath was sanctified we are to be sanctified.

By keeping the Sabbath we are agreeing with God’s original purpose. On the sixth day, after God had created everything, He said it was “very good.” In fact, it was perfect. By keeping the Sabbath we show our faith in the original perfection of our world. We are also saying that we are in agreement with that perfection. More than that, we are agreeing to cooperate with God to be brought back to that original perfection. This can only be done by becoming perfect in Christ.

The Sabbath could never represent imperfection, nor could it represent a lack of faith in God’s ability to make us perfect in Him. The Sabbath has to represent perfection. And since the rest that God desires for us is connected to the Sabbath, therefore the rest that God desires is nothing less than bringing us back to that original perfection.

God did rest from His work because it was perfect. There was nothing more for Him to do. There is nothing more to add. It was finished; it was perfect. By resting on the Sabbath we are expressing our desire to rest in God’s original perfection of our world. And if we cooperate with Him now in the perfection of character, then we shall live in the perfect New Earth.

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

As Paul was writing this verse, it is evident that men and women still had an opportunity to “enter into” this rest. “If they shall enter into my rest,” means that the invitation to enter into that rest was still available. It is available to us today as long as probation lingers. But when probation closes, that opportunity to enter His rest is closed.

The time will come when the door will be shut, as Jesus said in His parable of the ten virgins, “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was



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shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” Matthew 25:10-12

**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:**

Ancient Israel did not enter into the Promised Land because of unbelief. However, Israel’s unbelief did not nullify the promise. The promise of rest is still good. In Paul’s day there “remaineth” a rest for the people of God. And there remains a rest for us too. It is not a physical rest in Palestine, but that spiritual rest in Christ Jesus our Lord. Not only does that spiritual rest remain, but the Sabbath which points to that spiritual rest also remains.

We can be assured that “some” will enter that spiritual rest and will dwell in the New Earth. God’s promise is sure. His original plan for man will succeed and be fulfilled. There will be a holy people upon this Earth when it is created a second time with a people who have been re-created in Christ.

**4:7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

Ancient Israel did not enter the Promised Land. That generation died in the wilderness. The next generation entered the land with Joshua but did not enter into that spiritual rest. Centuries went by until the time of David. It was then hoped that Israel would now enter that spiritual rest, but they did not. Therefore, there still remains a rest for the people of God. And Paul says to his generation, “Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” The same Word is calling us to enter into that rest. Here we are two thousand years after the writing of this book, and we still have not entered that rest. But there will be a last generation, because they have entered that rest. Praise God!

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

The translators should have written, “For if Joshua (not Jesus) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.” You can see this correction made in the margin of your Bible.

Here again is Paul’s argument. If Joshua had led them into the rest by simply bringing them into the land of Canaan, then God would not have afterward spoken of another day for His people to enter that rest. Therefore, it is quite obvious that the rest that God speaks of is not the literally occupation of Palestine. Even in David’s day when they controlled the land of Palestine, they still had not entered that rest. Now in Paul’s day, many but not all, entered that rest. It is clear that the rest spoken of is not the occupation of Palestine.

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

The word for “rest” in this passage is “sabbatismos,” which means Sabbath, and may be translated as “keeping the Sabbath.” The verse would literally read, “There remaineth therefore still a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.”



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The word “remaineth” clearly refers back to the original and only Sabbath for the people of God. Therefore, the people of God are not to be looking for a new Sabbath. No other day would point back to the creative works of God from which He rested. It is the same Sabbath that Adam and Eve, Moses, Joshua, David, and Jesus kept. It is the one and only Sabbath that could point to the spiritual rest that God desires of us.

As the Sabbath is higher than any other day, the rest that God speaks of is higher than any other kind of rest. The seventh-day Sabbath points back to perfection, therefore the spiritual rest that we are to seek is perfection in Christ.

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

This verse has clear reference to God’s creative works and the first Sabbath. God did indeed cease from His works of creation to rest on the seventh-day Sabbath. Since God is perfect, and His works of creation were perfect, then He perfectly rested on the seventh day. If we enter into that spiritual rest that brings us closer and closer to that original perfection in Him, then we will truly rest on the Sabbath day as He did. He who would keep the Sabbath holy, must himself be holy. The early church, which kept the seventh-day Sabbath was in danger of living in sin while trying to keep the Sabbath as a holy day of rest. But we cannot truly keep the Sabbath while knowingly living in sin.

We could fall into the same trap as did ancient Israel. They thought they had entered into God’s rest because they now occupied the Promised Land. We may believe that we have entered into God’s Sabbath rest because we go to church on the seventh-day. In the same way that the seventh-day is no ordinary day, but a holy day set apart from every other day, we are to live no ordinary life. We are to live a holy life set apart to serve God with our whole heart.

While we are not asked of God to return to the land of Palestine, we are commanded of God to keep His Sabbath holy. True Sabbath-keeping is but an outward sign of an inward work. The believer now has a new heart, a renewed mind, whereby he chooses to glorify God in all things. Resting on the Sabbath is the outward sign that we are now resting in Him.

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

Let us be diligent and earnest to enter into that spiritual rest. Do not follow in the steps of ancient Israel who lacked faith. Learn from their failure.

Ancient Israel left Egypt for the Promised Land but failed. Today, we can fail or fall too. The fact that a man can “fall” shows that he has at some point confessed Christ. However, if we do not commit ourselves fully to Christ we will fall as did ancient Israel.



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**4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged 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.**

The Word of God is powerful and full of energy. The same power that created our world is found in the Word of God. Not only is the Word full of life and power but it cuts far better and deeper than any two-edged sword. As a sharp sword can cut through joints and marrow, the Word can cut through the thoughts and intents of the heart. As a “discerner,” the Word judges our thoughts and motives. Nothing is hidden from the Word; it exposes all.

It is true that God’s Word is an accurate historical record of the past, but it is quick and powerful. If we would receive the power in God’s Word then we would enter into that spiritual rest.

**4:13 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.**

There is no man that can escape the discernment of God’s Word. All who fail to comply with the Words of God are without excuse. God sees all and will judge all. Nothing can be hid from God.

Those who live by faith rejoice that God sees all. Only he who remains in sin is fearful of an all-seeing God.

**4:14 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.**

Because we have such a great High Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary, who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin, let us hold on to every true doctrine, every covenant promise, and the faith that we have in Him. Do not give up now. Jesus intercedes on our behalf.

Jesus is our great High Priest, who is greater than Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David, and the angels. He is the Son of God.

**4:15 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.**

Though He is so great, yet He became a man. He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. He knows what it is like to be fully man. He experienced hunger, pain, and insult. Yet never did He sin even by a thought.

**4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace in the heavenly sanctuary. There we will find the mercy seat and the Ten Commandments. More than that, we shall find Jesus our great High Priest. If we shall pray for grace we will have it. With our great High Priest in heaven, we are more than conquerors. We shall conquer gloriously over sin. We shall enter into that rest because of Him.