

the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. In the first two chapters, He is contrasted with angels, for it is His message that is superior to that spoken through angels. In this chapter, He is contrasted with Moses for, although Moses was faithful, the quality of Jesus' faithfulness is superior.

This superior faithfulness is the basis of the appeal for Christians to be true to Christ instead of failing as the Israelites did in the wilderness journey because of their unbelief. Those who accept Christ as Leader are urged to hold steadfastly to their convictions to the end of the journey of life, remembering the fate of those who came out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. They were refused entrance into the promised rest because of disobedience and unbelief.

C. *Warning and exhortation in respect to rest: promises under Moses and Christ.* 4:1-13.

1. *Danger of losing the heavenly rest through unbelief and rebellion.* 4:1-3.

Text

4:1-3

1 Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard. 3 For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as he hath said,

As I sware in My wrath,

They shall not enter into My rest:

although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Paraphrase

1 Wherefore, since the Israelites were excluded from Canaan for their unbelief and disobedience, let us be afraid, lest a promise of entrance into God's rest being left to all Abraham's seed in the covenant, any of you should actually fall short of obtaining it.

2 For we also who believe, being Abraham's seed, have in that promise received the good tidings of a rest in the heavenly

country, even as the Israelites in the wilderness received the good tidings of a rest in Canaan. But the good tidings which they heard had no influence on their conduct, because they did not believe what they heard.

3 Wherefore, according to God's promise, we, the seed of Abraham who believe, shall enter into the rest of God. But it is a rest different from the seventh day rest, seeing He said, concerning the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness, So I swear in My wrath, they shall not enter into My rest; notwithstanding the works of creation were finished, and the seventh day rest was instituted, from the formation of the world: consequently the Israelites had entered into that rest before the oath was sworn.

Let us fear

He must be talking to Christian people:

- a. I Peter 1:17: "— pass the time with fear."
- b. Christians must take heed to the dangers that confront all Christians.

fear therefore lest haply

A trail of bleaching bones and graves in the wilderness, and their wandering in the wilderness forty long years ought to startle us:

- a. Rom. 11:20: "— by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not high minded but fear."
- b. It is not a fear that shakes the confidence, but one that fills with concern and alerts one.

a promise being left

Milligan: "The participle 'being left' is in the present tense":

- a. This implies the promise is here now, but is made sure to only those who, like Joshua and Caleb, continue faithful to the end.
- b. We will be disappointed by failure unless we by fear work at our salvation.

should seem to have come short of it

Sin is "to miss the mark":

- a. "Come short" alludes to the Grecian games, and is applied to the loser, no matter how close he came to being the winner.
- b. At the end of the day, if you are not finished, you fall short.

- c. In the day of judgment, if you have failed to arrive and have never crossed Jordan, you will not be saved.

For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us even as also they

They had an earthly rest preached; we have a heavenly rest.

- a. Milligan says: "Literally it should read 'we are evangelized as well as they'."
 b. This ties in with Heb. 1:2: "— spoken to us in His Son."
 c. See Eph. 1:9: "— making known unto us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him."

The church is to preach these good tidings:

I Peter 4:10: "— steward of the manifold grace of God."

Eph. 3:10: "— that might be made known through the church."

but the word of hearing did not profit them

They would not go up.

- a. Deut.1:20-21: "— and I said unto you, ye are come unto the hill country— go up— take possession— fear not; be not dismayed." 1:26: "— yet ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of Jehovah, your God."
 b. Good tidings were rejected for the ten spies' evil reports.
 2. Jesus spoke of a similar people. Matt. 23:37: "Ye would not."
 a. The test of a sermon is, "what profit?"
 b. Some preaching is beautiful, but to no profit.

because it was not united by faith

Hearing is useless unless tied to or laid hold of:

- a. The word "united" is also translated "mixed."
 b. The place of faith is described in Heb. 11.
 "Mixed" is described by Milligan: "This is metaphorically used and seems to have reference to the mixing of food with digestive fluids in order to be appropriated to the wants of the body."
 Faith is to affect one's actions, character and destiny:
 a. Jesus likened the hearer who does not obey to the foolish man building upon the sand. Matt. 7:26-27,
 b. Of the spies, only Joshua and Caleb, "mixed faith".

with them that heard

Faith is the person's responsibility:

- a. God gives us grace, not faith.
- b. We do the uniting, the mixing.

We have been given ears to hear along with God's grace; now, as hearers we are to unite the message with faith.

- a. Grace saves, Eph. 2:8, but only by faith on man's part.
- b. Heaven is not a place for faithless people. If heaven were obtained by the grace of God only, everyone would be there.

For we who have believed

Is faith all that is necessary?

- a. Let James answer. James 2:17: "Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone." 2:24: "We see then how that by works, a man is justified and not by faith only."
- b. Faith discussed here is the active kind like Joshua's. He talks of faith, for it is the beginning of our experience.

do enter into that rest

What is our "rest"?

- a. Scriptures that show kinds of rest:

1. II Tim. 1:7: From fear — "not given us a spirit of fear." Rom. 8:15: "For we have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear."
2. Rom. 8:2: Bondage to sin — "For the law of the spirit of life made me free from the law of sin and death."
3. Gal. 5:1: Bondage from law — "Be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."
4. Rom. 8:1: From condemnation — "There is therefore now no condemnation."

- b. McKnight says that the rest here spoken of is all future rest. It is an inward rest on earth for us, although the final rest will be future.

- a) Peace of conscience.
- b) Joy in the Holy Spirit.
- c) Saved from the guilt and power of sin.

Rest is obtained by accepting the words of God:

- a. *Illustration of it:* II Chronicles 32:8 — Hezekiah spoke to his people when the Assyrians came against them. "With him is an arm of flesh: but with us is Jehovah our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested them-

selves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah."

- b. Sinners are restless, for sin does not satisfy.
Use of the word "rest" in the New Testament:

 - a. Jesus and rest:
Matt. 11:28-29: "I will give you rest."
 - b. Rest and persecution:
 - 1. Acts 9:31: "Then had the churches rest."
 - 2. II Thess. 1:7: "And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire."
 - c. Rest as a blessing on man by God.
I Peter 4:14: "Spirit of God resteth upon you."
II Cor. 12:9: "Power of Christ may dwell upon you."
The word "rest" should be understood in the same way as "salvation".
 - a. We are saved, but salvation includes now, as well as our experience of heaven.
 - b. We have rest now, but rest in heaven will be the greatest joy of us all.

even as he hath said, As I swear in My wrath

Psalm 95:11 is quoted here in rather a strange setting, it seems, on the first reading of it.

The author, like Jesus, quoted often from the Old Testament, which proves its accepted inspiration.

they shall not enter into My rest

King James version: "If they shall enter":

- a. Milligan: The word should not be rendered "if" but "not".
- b. This expression "if" seems not widely accepted.
Why this negative statement is to verify a positive one preceding it:
 - a. He argues that, since men are by the oath of God excluded from God's rest on account of unbelief, this implies that all who believe shall enter into His rest.
 - b. It is an argument from what is contrary.

although the works were finished from the foundation of the world

Some suggested explanations of this expression:

- a. It probably means the completion of the creation in six days, followed by a rest.

1. The rest of God was after the creation. God looked upon it and saw that it was good.
2. Sin broke the rest of God.
- b. McKnight says that this rest is mentioned to show it was not the seventh day, but a future rest which they could have had by believing.
- c. Calvin says: "To define what our rest is, he reminds us of what Moses relates, that God, having finished the creation of the world, immediately rested from His works; and he finally concludes that the true rest of the faithful will be when they shall rest as God did."
- d. Milligan feels that it is used to point out the sabbatical rest sanctified by God for His glory and all mankind.
Although there was a rest from the beginning, we can miss it by unbelief:
 - a. Reading it with the warning, we can see the danger of our not entering God's eternal rest, just as Israel missed their rest.
 - b. Man and God will have rest when sin and unbelief are ended.

Study Questions

528. The expression "let us" would include whom?
529. Who does he say should fear?
530. What kind of a fear is it?
531. What does I Peter 1:17 say about fear?
532. What have we seen from Chapter Three to cause fear?
533. What are we to fear?
534. Define "lest haply".
535. Does the expression, "being left", indicate a present promise?
536. If we should fear, then does it sound as though all will be saved — eternal security?
537. If a generation could be lost, is it not a serious warning to us?
538. What has he stated here that should cause us to fear?
539. What is the promise referred to here?
540. What is meant, "come short of the promise"?
541. How can you come short of a promise?
542. Why had good tidings been preached to them? Why did it fail?
543. How do our good tidings compare with theirs?
544. What would have been the profit to them?
545. Compare Deut. 1:20, 26 with our backsliding.

HELPS FROM HEBREWS

546. Is it inferred that faith alone is sufficient?
547. Give an exegesis of the expression, "not united by faith".
548. Compare Matt. 7:26-27 with the idea of mixing faith and obedience.
549. Does faith affect one's character and conduct?
550. Is faith our part, or God's part, in salvation?
551. How does the word of hearing profit us?
552. Does God give grace, or faith? cf. Eph. 2:8.
553. How does the hearer unite his faith?
554. If God gives faith, who might we expect to see in heaven? How many?
555. What good does food do if it is not mixed with the blood-stream?
556. Compare Jerusalem on the subject of hearing Christ.
557. Compare James 2:17-24.
558. "We who have believed" would refer to whom?
559. Is it persons who have believed the Old Testament example?
560. The word "rest" seems to have a prominent part here. What is involved? Of what are we free?
561. Is rest all future?
562. Read these verses to see what our rest might be. II Tim. 1:7; Rom. 8:2, 15; Gal. 5:1.
563. What kind of experiences are eliminated by the peace and rest of the Christian?
564. What use is made of the term "rest" in other places in the Bible? cf. Matt. 11:28-29; Acts 9:31; II Thess. 1:7; I Peter 4:14.
565. Read II Chronicles 32:8 for an example of a faith that "rests".
566. Does the word "rest" carry a similar idea as the word "saved"?
567. Discuss the King James translation, "if they shall enter."
568. What works are referred to in v. 3?
569. What opinions do commentators have on the "works" here referred to?
570. Does this make God's plan of salvation of long standing, if it refers to God's early plan of giving man rest from sin?
571. If God has always had provision for man's rest, and it was lost by unbelief, what should we conclude?
572. Does the scripture back up this logic?

573. What does the "seventh day" refer to? cf. Gen. 2:2-3 and Exodus 31:17.

2. *This heavenly rest in type.* 4:4-8.

a. *The seventh day.* 4:4-5.

Text

4:4-5

4 For He hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise,
And God rested on the seventh day from all his works; 5 and in
this place again,

They shall not enter into My rest.

Paraphrase

4 That the seventh day rest is God's rest, and that it was instituted at the creation, is evident, for Moses hath spoken somewhere concerning the seventh day rest thus: And God completely rested on the seventh day from all His works.

5 Moreover, in this ninety-fifth Psalm, the Holy Ghost said again to the unbelieving Israelites in David's time who were living in Canaan, They shall not enter into My rest. This shows, that another rest besides that in Canaan was promised to Abraham's seed, which would be forfeited by unbelief, but be obtained by believing.

Comment

For He hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise.

Moses spoke of the first day of rest.

a. Gen. 2:2-3.

b. Ex. 31:17: "For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

Why does the author mention it here?

a. Milligan says: "To amplify and illustrate further what he has spoken in the preceding verse."

b. Milligan feels that this rest cannot be identical with that from which a whole generation of the Israelites were forever excluded.

and God rested on the seventh day from all His works

This day of rest was instituted by God from the foundation of

the world. Twenty-five hundred years later God spoke of a future rest which the Israelites were to be denied.

What is God doing now? The scriptures indirectly answer for us.

Heb. 1:3: Christ is spoken of as "upholding all things by the word of his power". John 5:17: "My Father worketh until now and I work — ." John 6:29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." Acts 17:28: "In Him we live and move."

and in this place again

Ps. 95:11: Most authorities agree that "place" is to be in italics — not in the original manuscript.

They shall not enter into My rest

Clarke says that this was a second rest promised to the obedient seed of Abraham — spoken in the days of David, when the Jews actually possessed the land.

McKnight feels that it refers to the rest in Canaan, and was God's rest for two reasons:

- a. God rested from introducing them after their settlement.
- b. They were free to worship, free from the fear of their enemies.

Study Questions

574. When did God first speak of a rest for His people?
575. God's rest after six days of creation was what kind of a rest?
576. Why does Paul mention it here? What is the lesson?
577. Why the indefinite "somewhere"?
578. How many years after the first seventh day did God give man a seventh day?
579. Does God work today?
580. Are two different rests referred to here as seen by the word "again"?
581. In what ways could the Israelites' experience in Canaan be considered a rest?
 - b. *Canaan*. 4:6-8.

Text

4:6-8

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter there-into, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience, 7 He again defineth a certain day, To-day, saying in David so long a time afterward (even as hath been said before),

To-day if ye shall hear His voice,
Harden not your hearts.

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day.

Paraphrase

6 Seeing, then, after the Israelites were living in Canaan, it still remained for them to enter into God's rest through believing, and seeing they who first received in the wilderness the good tidings of the rest in Canaan did not enter in on account of their unbelief, it follows, that they who receive, or have received the good tidings of the rest in the heavenly country, shall not enter into it if they do not believe.

7 Moreover, seeing the Holy Ghost specifieth a particular time for entering in, saying to the people by David, To-day, so long a time after the nation had taken possession of Canaan; as it is written, To-day, when ye shall hear God's voice commanding you to enter into His rest, harden not your hearts against entering.

8 For if Joshua, by introducing the Israelites into Canaan, had caused them to rest according to the full meaning of God's promise, the Holy Ghost would not after that, in David's time, have spoken of another day for entering into God's rest.

Comment

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto

The King James version says "some must enter":

- a. This carries the idea of necessity.
- b. God did not forsake all men, but some did receive the promise, the faithful ones, Joshua and Caleb.
God's promise to Abraham must not fail, so God used the next generation to conquer the land.

and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in

Good news of freedom from bondage, news of prosperity, were all rejected for a discouraging report of ten spies:

- a. Read the good news in Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:5, and 33:3.
- b. How they could turn away from God's providential care seems a mystery to us.

Before we condemn that generation, look at the warnings for our generation:

- a. Acts 20:29-30: " — speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples."
- b. II Tim. 3:1-5: " — form of godliness."
- c. II Tim. 1:15.

because of disobedience

Faithlessness is an equivalent to disobedience.

Believers need to watch out today:

- a. They can fall away and be lost, or Israel's example means nothing.
- b. If a believer, a Christian, cannot be lost, then Paul wasted much time in this book.

he again

(Ps. 95:7-8 very likely).

The frequency of Old Testament quotations indicates why the gospel was to the Jew first:

- a. The Old Testament was the Word of God, much of it a type of the New Testament, and much of it a lesson.
- b. The Jew had a background which gave him an advantage.

defineth

It is also translated "limited":

- a. A certain time in which God's grace will work, for He limits man.
- b. See Gen. 6:3: "My spirit will not always strive with man." God is no weakling. He practices longsuffering, but there is a line man cannot cross.

a certain day To-day

When God decides on the day, it will not be tomorrow, but today:

- a. Parents in their weakness say "tomorrow," and then forget to discipline tomorrow.
- b. Parents do much threatening which means little but not so with God.
Some feel that this section was David's way of referring back to Moses' day for a lesson in David's day.

saying in David so long a time afterward

David by the Spirit is warning the people of his own day — living later by about 500 or 600 years, of the danger of unbelief:

- a. Such a warning is never out of date.
- b. Every generation needs to be warned, for men always err and disobey.

(even as hath been said before), To-day if ye shall hear His voice harden not your hearts

One generation can harden its heart as easily as another. The Christian dispensation is no different than any other, so we must heed this warning.

For if Joshua had given them rest

"Joshua" in the Greek is "Jesus". In Acts 7:45, it is translated "Jesus". Both names mean "saviour".

The people did enjoy comparative rest. Joshua 1:15: "... until the Lord have given your brethren rest." Joshua 22:4: "And now the Lord your God hath given rest." This was not the true rest. God has something better in store for His people.

They to whom David addressed the Psalm were in possession of that land, but they were reminded of the duty of seeking a better rest.

he would not have spoken afterward of another day

Who is "he"?

- a. If it is Joshua, when did he speak it?
 1. Newell feels it refers to Joshua's farewell address in Joshua 23:1-4, where he tells them to complete the conquest.
 2. It shows the incomplete work of Joshua; more rest was needed.
- b. "He" must refer to God, who spoke afterward through David, says Milligan.

1. This is not the best rendering.
2. The context has shown that Joshua failed, so he had to speak again in his farewell address of rest.
3. To clinch his argument, David was quoted in v. 7.

Study Questions

582. Is a second rest promised in the days of David correct according to Clarke?
583. What is implied by the expression, "some should enter"?
584. Would God's plan of salvation have failed if all had failed to enter?
585. What were the good tidings of God? of the ten spies? of Joshua?
586. What has been the main factor in man's failure in the past to enter into the rest of God?
587. What verses in the New Testament warn us against similar experiences?
588. If man, who had received the promise, lost out that day, should we not assume there is danger today?
589. What actually caused this disobedience?
590. If man can't be lost, what is the purpose of the teaching of this verse?
591. What other word may be used in place of the word "defineth" of verse 7?
592. Compare Gen. 6:3 for God's limitation.
593. What is the significance of this limitation?
594. Compare Gal. 4:4 with God's limitation of time.
595. If Moses and David found hardened hearts, is it likely that human nature has changed?
596. What hardens a heart?
597. Did Joshua ever promise another rest? Cf. Joshua 1:15 and 22:1-4.
598. Why is it likely not Jesus who is referred to here?
599. Why is "Joshua" also translated "Jesus" in the footnote?
600. Why is it likely Joshua is referred to and not David?
601. Who is referred to by "he would not have spoken afterward of another day"?
602. Was Joshua's rest complete? Is this why God declared it again through David in verse 7?

603. If the rest refers to Joshua's farewell words, then why is David quoted in verse 7?

3. *Conclusions from the above premises.* 4:9-10.

Text

4:9-10

9 There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into His rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

Paraphrase

9 Therefore, seeing the Israelites did not, in Canaan, enter fully into God's rest, the enjoyment of another rest remaineth to the people of God, in which they shall rest completely from all the troubles of this life.

10 For the believer who is entered into God's rest, hath himself also rested from his own works of trial and suffering, Rev. 14:13 like as God rested from His works of creation.

There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God

"There remaineth therefore" suggests that there is something better yet to follow:

- a. Sabbath is a symbol of the rest yet to come.
- b. This is the consummation of the new creature in Christ.
- c. Jesus, Matt. 11:28-29: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden —."
- d. Rest fulfilled in Rev. 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." cf. 21:1-5.

"Rest" here is sabbath rest, a state of rest:

- a. It is not a state of inactivity, but release from the body of sin.
- b. It is rest from this body of pain, sorrow and affliction.

for the people of God

There is the very opposite of comfort and rest for those who are not God's people. Luke 16:24: "For I am tormented in this flame." Rev. 14:11: "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and

night, they that worship the beast and his image and receiveth a mark . . .”

For he that is entered into His rest

Who is referred to here?

a. One view favors Christ:

1. For this view, we have only the idea that Christ is resting from his earthly mission.

2. Against it we have several factors:

a) First: Christ is not resting, since He is preparing mansions, making intercession for us, etc.

b) Second: Jesus is not mentioned here at all.

c) Third: We are exhorted by verse 11 to enter into the rest, as though it is the Christian's rest as referred to in verse 10.

b. A second view is that it is just a general statement of man entering into rest:

1. McKnight expresses it: "For the believer who is entered into God's rest, hath himself also rested from his works of trial and suffering."

2. Milligan says this view is most in harmony with the context.

hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

The Christian enters into a rest, just as did God when He rested:

a. Now every saint who, like Joshua and Caleb, is faithful enters into God's rest.

b. As certainly as God rested, so shall we rest.

"His works" may refer to several things:

1. His own works that have no part in his salvation:

a. The Jew must give up the works of the old law.

b. The moral man must give up thinking that a moral life is able to save.

2. "That work which the child of God does in being faithful":

a. The work of God was good, and no doubt the good work of Christian people is referred to here in the parallel.

b. The life of self-denial comes to an end, and one enters into a rest with God.

Study Questions

604. Is David reminding them of seeking a greater rest?

605. What is the significance of the words "a sabbath rest for the people of God"?

606. When is this period of rest?
 607. Is it a cessation of activity, or is another idea implied in our rest?
 608. If the people of God have rest, what will the others have? Cf. Luke 16:24; Rev. 14:10.
 609. Who is the "he" in verse 10?
 610. Why is it not Jesus?
 611. Is Jesus resting?
 612. What are the works referred to?
 4. *Exhortation and warnings.* 4:11-13.

Text

4:11-13

11 Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience. 12 For the Word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.

Paraphrase

11 Since there remaineth such a happy rest to the people of God, let us carefully strive to enter into that rest, by obeying Jesus, lest any of us should fall, after the example of the Israelites, through unbelief.

12 For the Word of God, the preached Gospel whereby we are now called to enter into God's rest, and are to be judged hereafter, is a living and powerful principle, and more cutting than any two-edged sword, piercing not into the body but into the mind, even to the separating between both soul and spirit; showing which of the passions are animal and which spiritual: and to the separating of the joints also and marrows, laying open the most concealed parts of the animal constitution; and discerning of the devices and purposes of the heart.

13 But, not to insist farther on the rule of judgment, consider the omniscience of the Judge himself: there is no creature unapparent in His sight, for all things, the most secret recesses

of the heart, and stripped of every covering, both outwardly and inwardly, before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

Comment

Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest

Here is an exhortation to labor:

- a. Exertion of mind and body is a requirement of salvation.
- b. This is a lawful work, in a world where men try other methods.
 1. II Tim. 2:5: "— strive lawfully."
 2. John 10:1: Some will be like thieves and robbers.

There is no room for predestination here, but there is an appeal to work,

that no man fall after the same example of disobedience

This does not sound like the position of some who say men are saved, not in spite of apostasy but from apostasy:

- a. A person may make shipwreck of his faith, for God leaves man free to choose.
- b. We are no different from the Israelites.
- c. There are some who put people on probation for church membership, but refuse God the privilege of allowing man to prove his worthiness for eternal life.

The example of disobedience is recorded in Numbers 26:65.

for the Word of God is living

"Living" is also translated "quick":

Some dispute whether the "word" is referring to Christ or the scripture:

- a. It is not the Old Testament law. See II Cor. 3:7. It was a ministration of death. Rom. 4:15: "— worketh wrath."
- b. "The word" is probably not the personal word, but the word of the Person — the Gospel.

The Word of God does not beat the air with emptiness:

- a. It leads some to triumph: II Cor. 2:14: "But thanks be to God Who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ."
- b. It has the power of binding and loosing. Matt. 18:18:
 1. Some, it draws to salvation; others, are driven to ruin.
 2. It promises salvation to some, but pronounces vengeance on others.
- c. It has the power of God in it. Rom. 1:16.

It is a living Word because it is backed by a living God and a living Christ.

and active

It is also translated "powerful":

- a. Rom. 1:16 — the power of God is the Gospel:
 1. A person uses dynamite to move obstacles. The Word is God's means of action.
 2. It is God's way to move man today.
- b. No power or action is equal to it.

God deals with men not by mere influences, but through His Word, whether written or preached.

and sharper than any two-edged sword

The "sword" is a metaphorical word, military expression used to illustrate the character of the Word:

- a. It is a part of the Christian's armor. Eph. 6:17.
- b. It goes out of the mouth of the Rider, with which He smites the nations. Rev. 19:15.

Two-edged sword:

- a. It does double duty with one preaching or writing the Word.
- b. This is simply to say that it is tremendously sharp.

and piercing

The meaning is that it examines a man thoroughly:

- a. It searches his thoughts and scrutinizes his will, with all of its desires.
- b. Calvin insists that its character is to be confined to the faithful only, as they alone are thus searched to the quick.

It is piercing for all, Christian and non-Christian:

Titus 1:9: " — to convict the gainsayers."

Jude 15: " — to convict all that are ungodly."

John 16:8: "He will convict the world."

even to the dividing of soul and spirit

Some claim only the Christian has a spirit, hence the word only deals with them.

The Word is for all, and is active toward all:

- a. John 16:8: " — when the Spirit is come He shall reprove the world of sin."
 - b. Rom. 1:16: "Jew and Gentile."
- What is the difference between the soul and spirit? Views differ.

- a. "Soul" means all the affection; spirit, the intellectual faculty, according to Calvin. He quotes two passages to prove it:
 1. I Thess. 5:23: "May your soul, body and spirit be preserved."
 2. Isaiah 26:9: "My soul desired Thee in the night; I sought Thee with my spirit."
- b. Soul is life, and spirit is personality, say others:
 1. "We do not know whether Paul was speaking of man as he really was or using a current phraseology," says Milligan.
 2. The inner man is emphasized to show how discerning the word is.
- c. Greek words involved:
 - Body — physical.
 - Soul — animal soul or life.
 - Spirit — immortal.

of both joints and marrow

Indicating that there is nothing so hard or strong in man that it can be hidden.

With a sword, man is content to pierce the heart, but God's word can delve into the inner man.

- a. A sword can glance off the bone of an enemy, but nothing can resist the power of God's word.
- b. Milligan thinks this is a proverbial saying indicative of the inmost parts of a person.

and quick to discern the thoughts

In the thick darkness of unbelief and hypocrisy is a horrible blindness, but God scatters this away.

Vices hidden under the false appearances of virtue are known by God:

- a. Men may have good reputations, yet harbor evil thoughts, and God knows it.
- b. God is all-wise, so we have no secrets.

and intents of the heart

Some people are evil, but lack the courage to act:

- a. Many "embryo" Hitlers exist in the world, but they lack his initiative.

Some people have evil intents, but appear to work from good motives:

1. Rom. 16:18: " — by fair speech deceive."
2. Gal. 6:12: " — make fair show in the flesh."

3. II Peter 2:13: “ — sporting while they feast.”

And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight

No creature can escape God:

- a. Some have tried:
 - 1. Adam and Eve hid.
 - 2. Cain said he wasn't his brother's keeper.
 - 3. Jonah ran away, but he wasn't away from God.
- b. Some will try again, says Rev. 6:16, when they want rocks and mountains to hide them from God's wrath.
God knows us as we really are.
“Manifest in His sight” means to be made known:
 - a. Evil is manifested. Gal. 5:19: “Works of the flesh are manifest.”
 - b. Good is manifested. I Tim. 5:25: The good words of some are manifest. I John 3:10: “Children of God are manifest.”

but all things are naked

There is no covering, camouflaging, or deceit before God.

“This may refer to a sacrificial term,” says Clarke:

- a. An animal prepared for sacrifice was slain, then cut open so that its intestines were exposed to view.
- b. It was carefully examined for imperfections.
- c. It was divided exactly in two, so that the spinal marrow was cloven down the center.

Adam and Eve were told by the serpent that when they ate of the tree they would be as God. Gen. 3:5:

- a. Note that when they ate they saw their nakedness.
- b. God has tried to cover man's sin since that time.

laid open before the eyes

It may mean as a criminal has his neck bent back so as to expose the face to full view so that every feature might be seen.

of Him with Whom we have to do

All men must give an account of themselves:

- a. The wicked cannot die and go without judgment.
Heb. 9:27; Rom. 2:6: “Render to every man according to his deeds.”
- b. Death does not end all; the skeptic cannot get by. We have to face God:

1. Vengeance is His. Rom. 12:19; Nah. 1:2.
2. Judgment is His. Heb. 10:27-31.
3. We must someday confess His Son. Phil. 2:10, 11.

Study Questions

613. What is meant by "give diligence"?
614. If man is saved regardless of what he does, would this exhortation to diligence be in order?
615. Compare the idea of diligence with II Tim. 2:15.
616. Does this eliminate the doctrine of predestination?
617. Is man saved in spite of his apostasy according to this verse?
618. Why should Baptists put people on probation if they believe "once saved, always saved"? Is it consistent?
619. If they can put people on probation, why not extend God the same right?
620. What example of disobedience is referred to in v. 11? Cf. Numbers 26:65.
621. Verse 12 speaks of the Word of God as "living". Is this a reference to Christ living?
622. Is the word referred to here an Old Testament word, or the Word of Christ?
623. What scripture would teach that it is not the Old Testament word? Cf. II Cor. 3:7; Rom. 4:15.
624. If it is not Christ, then how can it be spoken of as "living"?
625. Quote a verse that shows that the word makes "alive".
626. How can the Word be spoken of as being "active"? What other word could be used? Cf. Rom. 1:16.
627. On what does it act?
628. Explain the significance of the expression, "sharper than any two-edged sword".
629. Who wields this sword? Is it active without people to wield it?
630. Is it a part of a Christian's armor? Cf. Eph. 6:17.
631. Compare Rev. 19:15 for its use as judgment.
632. What other words could describe the idea of "piercing"?
633. How can the word of God be considered "piercing"? Cf. Titus 1:9; Jude 15; John 16:8.
634. Is the piercing of the spirit limited to the believers only, according to Jude 15; John 16:8?
635. Explain the expression, "dividing of soul and spirit".

636. Are "soul" and "spirit" different, or is this just a current phraseology of Paul's day?
637. Could the word "dividing" refer to a practice of the altar in dissecting the animals?
638. How can the word enter joints and marrow?
639. Is a real sword of man likely to pierce joints and marrow?
640. If not, what is meant?
641. How can the Bible discern man's thoughts and intents?
642. Does man always know his own intents?
643. Do we know the intent of others?
644. Do we ever misjudge intents?
645. Are there "embryo" Hitlers who lack the initiative to be tyrants?
646. Do false teachers have evil intents? Cf. Rom. 16:18; Gal. 6:2:4; II Pet. 2:1.
647. What is meant by "no creature that is not manifest in His sight"? What is meant by "manifest"?
648. Have some tried to escape His sight? Who?
649. Will they try it again, according to Rev. 6:16?
650. Does this word, "creature", include animals?
651. What is meant by, "all things are naked"?
652. Could this refer to the sacrifice being examined for flaws?
653. Who felt naked in God's presence because of sin?
654. "Laid open" would refer to what?
655. Who is the person with Whom we have to do — God — Christ? Cf. Heb. 9:24; Rom. 2:6; Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:27-31.

PART TWO

THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST AS HIGH PRIEST. 4:14-10:39.

- I. *Purpose of and His fitness for the priesthood.* 4:14-5:10.
- A. *The fact of Christ's priesthood stated, an appeal to the reader.* 4:14-16.
1. *Because of His greatness, "Let us hold fast our confession."* 4:14.

Text

4:14-16

14 Having then a great High Priest, Who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.
15 For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with

the feeling of our infirmities ; but One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.

Paraphrase

14 Now the unbelieving Jews, on pretence that the Gospel hath neither an high-priest nor any sacrifice for sin, urge you to return to Judaism: but as we have a great High Priest, who hath passed through the visible heavens into the true habitation of God, Chap. 9:11, 12 there to officiate for us, even Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our religion.

15 To this constancy we Christians are encouraged by the character of our High Priest: For, though He be the Son of God, we have not in Him an High Priest Who cannot sympathize with us in our weaknesses, but One most compassionate, Who, being made flesh, was tempted in all points as far as the likeness of His nature to ours would admit, yet never committed any sin.

16 Let us, therefore, through His mediation as our High Priest, approach with boldness to the throne of grace on which God is seated to hear our addresses, that we may receive pardon; and, when tempted or persecuted, obtain the gracious assistance of His Spirit to help us seasonably in such times of distress.

Comment

Having then a great High Priest

Christ has two relationships, enabling man to come to God through Him:

- a. An Apostle sent to teach. cf. Heb. 3:1.
- b. A Priest:
 1. This Priest has proven His character by His teaching.
 2. This Priest has proven His love by His death.
 3. This Priest has proven His superiority by passing through the heavens.

Christ's high priesthood met the argument of the critical Jew:

- a. They could not say, "You have no tabernacle, no sacrifice, no city, no high priest." We have indeed!
- b. The title "high priest" occurs first in Lev. 21:10:
 1. There it is used to designate Aaron and his successors.
 2. We have a High Priest in heaven itself, not in an earthly tabernacle.

Who hath passed through the heavens

Only Christ has done this:

- a. He lived in heaven, and passed through the heavens to earth.
 1. Phil. 2:5-11.
 2. I Cor. 10:4: " — they (the Israelites) drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the Rock was Christ."
- b. He lived on earth, and then passed through the heavens to heaven:
 1. Ascension: Acts 1:9.
 2. Stephen: Acts 7:56.
 3. Peter Acts 2:34-36: "seated."
- c. He now works in heaven, and will pass again from heaven:
 1. I Thess. 4:13-18.
 2. Acts 1:11: " — Jesus — shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven".

The Jewish high priest could pass only into the holy of holies on the great day of Atonement:

- a. We have one who passed through the veil of skies.
- b. Heb. 8:1-2 is very good: " — sanctuary which the Lord pitched."

Jesus the Son of God

This identifies our High Priest. He is not of the lineage of Aaron, but of the house of God.

let us hold fast our confession

Matt. 10:32; Our confession is in a Person: That confession gives us a profession.

- a. It is a work of evangelism:
 1. We are saved to serve.
 2. We are won to win.
 3. We were told to tell:
- b. It is a way of life:

To renounce Christ is to seal our condemnation:
Heb. 6:4-6; Acts 4:12: "In none other is there salvation."
2. *Because of His human experience, let us draw near.* 4:15, 16.

For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

He is a sympathetic, compassionate High Priest, who can be touched with our feelings. Heb. 2:17: "Wherefore it behooved

Him in all things to me made unto His brethren."

He is successful as a High Priest:

- a. Jesus stands by us in temptation. Rev. 3:10.
- b. His sacrifice is complete. Heb. 9:26: "But now once at the end of the ages hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

our infirmities

"Infirmities" is a word that may be taken in various senses:

- a. II Cor. 12:10 suggests what might be included.
- b. Probably the feeling of the soul should be included, such as fear, sorrow, dread of death.
Since He was made in the likeness of our sinful flesh, we know that he knows our feelings.

but one that hath been in all points tempted as we are

Christ's threefold temptation gives us the major threats of the devil:

- a. Food — satisfy the physical.
- b. Pinnacle of temple — to extend the mercy of God to selfishness.
- c. Kingdom — lust for power — rulership.

yet without sin

Describe your mother and her virtues, but you can't use this expression.

Other verses tell us that He was perfect:

- a. II Cor. 5:21: "Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."
- b. I John 3:5: "And ye know that He was manifested to take away sins; and in Him is no sin."
Jesus was tempted without falling into sin, but this is not true of any other.

Let us therefore draw near with boldness

Because of the kind of High Priest we have, we should have courage to approach Him:

- a. He is not a medicine man to Whom we have to bow and feel like a helpless creature.
- b. Because of His love, we should come without hesitation.

- c. His experience with this life gives us encouragement.
Boldness here is not brazen, but confident.

unto the throne of grace

The history of the throne of grace is interesting:

- a. The ark was a symbol of God's grace. Jeremiah 3:16.
1. The lid was sprinkled with blood once a year. Lev. 16:14-15.
2. Here was the mercy seat. Lev. 16:2; Num. 7:89; Ex. 25:22.
3. Now we approach God through Jesus Christ Who sits at His right hand.

The throne of mercy is God's, but Christ is our access to God.
Eph. 2:18.

that we may receive mercy

We have to make the approach, for God has done His share:

- a. We must not be cast down with a sense of misery.
 - b. Since all have sinned and fallen short of God's grace, we need grace and mercy. Only God gives mercy:
 - a. The devil gives death, not life, and beyond this, he makes people unmerciful.
 1. Hitler listened to no pleas of men.
 2. Men possessed of the devil are unkind, unforgiving.
- God has mercy only for those who merit it:
- a. Look at these verses:
 - 1) Heb. 10:27: "— fearful expectation of judgment."
Heb. 10:31: "— a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
 - b. If we fail to come to God for mercy, we should not expect it in the judgment.

and may find grace to help us

Observe why Christ can give us help which is superior to that of the priest of the old covenant:

- a. The priest under the old system had to make atonement for his own sins. Heb. 5:2-3; Heb. 7:26-28; Heb. 9:7.
- b. They were after the order of Aaron. Heb. 7:11; 7:11-17; 8:4-5.
- c. The old was made without an oath. Heb. 7:20-22.
- d. Theirs was temporary. Heb. 7:23-24.
- e. They offered oftentimes the same kind of sacrifices. Heb. 9:25-26.
Heb. 9:28; Heb. 10:11-12. Heb. 10:14.

- f. They entered into the holy of holies every year. Heb. 9:7-12.
- g. Christ lives to make intercession. Heb. 7:25.

in time of need

Three great needs of man in the spiritual realm:

- a. We are in need when saddened. John 14:1-4,
- b. We are in need when tempted. I Cor. 10:13; Heb. 2:18,
- c. We are in need at death. Ps. 23.

Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount said God would also care for our physical needs.

Summary — Exhortation

- 1. There is a throne of grace where God and man may meet.
- 2. The mercy place has the atoning blood of the Lamb of God.
- 3. We must come by faith. Faith and action must be mixed.
- 4. We may approach in boldness, confidence.
- 5. God still dwells with His people.

Summary - Warning

- 1. Faithfulness forfeited is a forfeit of eternal rest.
- 2. We cannot trifle with God's words. We must act *today*.
- 3. The great aim of life is to labor for the rest.

Study Questions

- 656. Christ is earlier described as an apostle. Where is He here?
- 657. What is the difference between the two works?
- 658. What has Christ done to prove that He is a great high priest?
- 659. When was the title of "high priest" first used? See Lev. 21:10.
- 660. What has Christ done that no other priest could do as far as the heavens are concerned?
- 661. What time of passing through is referred to here?
- 662. When will He pass through again?
- 663. What would the heavens be in type in relationship to the old system?
- 664. With what term does Paul identify our High Priest?
- 665. Since this is all true, what exhortation does he have for us?
- 666. What is our confession?
- 667. What do we confess concerning this Person?

HELPS FROM HEBREWS

668. Does this confession amount to a profession?
669. What can be said of our High Priest as far as sympathy is concerned?
670. How does this verse compare with 2:17?
671. What does the word "infirmity" mean?
672. Discuss Paul's bearing of infirmities, II Cor. 12:10.
673. What is meant by "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"?
674. Do pain, sorrow, suffering help one to be understanding of others?
675. Is God able to be more sympathetic since Christ lived in the flesh?
676. What three categories of temptation did Jesus face?
677. How were the three so all-inclusive?
678. Was He tempted at other times?
679. Can you describe the most beautiful character whom you know with the expression "without sin"?
680. Is this a teaching limited to this verse? Cf. II Cor. 5:21; I John 3:5.
681. Have you noticed that with the great exaltation of Christ there is an exhortation to man? What is it in verse 16?
682. Do heathen people come boldly to their priests?
683. Does boldness allow brazenness and presumption?
684. What is meant by "boldness"?
685. What was the place of mercy in times past? Cf. Jer. 3:16; Lev. 16:2, 14, 15.
686. What is our throne of grace? Cf. Eph. 2:18.
687. What do we receive when we approach the mercy seat?
688. For whom does God have mercy?
689. Is God always merciful? Cf. Heb. 10:27, 31.
690. If we do not come to His mercy seat now, should we expect it at the judgment?
691. What is the purpose of grace which we may find there?
692. Could the Old Testament priest help?
693. When is man in need? What are his problems?
694. Is Christ able to help?

Questions on Chapter Four

True or False

- 1. Fear of God is an Old Testament doctrine and has no place in New Testament times.

HELPS FROM HEBREWS

- 2. Jesus is surely qualified to understand our needs, for He has suffered and has been tempted.
- 3. The sharpness of the Word of God is compared to a fine-grained, single-edged sword.
- 4. "Give diligence to enter into the rest" indicates that man has a responsibility.
- 5. The great High Priest of the Christian has yet to pass through the heavens.
- 6. The Word of God teaches humility; therefore, we ought not to approach the throne of grace with boldness.
- 7. The temptation of Jesus was in no respect like ours.
- 8. Unbelief has kept people who had received the promise of rest from receiving it.
- 9. The Word of God does not deal with the intents of the heart, but the thoughts of the heart.
- 10. This chapter warns lest we *go past* the rest of God.
- 11. The author speaks of a hearing that did not profit.
- 12. This chapter exhorts man as a creature who has no need.
- 13. This chapter seems to use soul and spirit interchangeably.
- 14. "The same example of disobedience" is an expression of this chapter.
- 15. Hearing needs to be united, or mixed, with faith.
- 16. The failure of Joshua's rest is a teaching in Chapter Four.
- 17. God completed His work on the seventh day, giving a few finishing touches, then rested.
- 18. A sabbath rest for the people of God remains.
- 19. "Good tidings were preached to Israel even as unto us" is an idea expressed in Chapter Four.
- 20. The Word is able to lay naked all things.
- 21. A description of Jesus includes, "yet without sin".
- 22. God is spoken of as one who has sworn.
- 23. The names "Joshua" and "Jesus" sometimes are used interchangeably.
- 24. We have been taught that God is a God of love, and yet this chapter pictures a different side — a God of wrath.
- 25. The Word of God is able to pierce both joints and marrow.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR

Chapter Four consists of a series of exhortations based on the discussion in Chapter Three about the faithfulness of Christ and the failure of Israel because of lack of faith in the journey from Egypt to Canaan.

The first exhortation is in verse 1; "Let us fear." The second is in verse 11, "Let us enter the rest." The third is in verse 14, "Let us hold our confession." The last one is in verse 16, "Let us draw near with boldness to the throne of grace."

The first exhortation urges the Christian to remember that there is a rest for God's people in heaven. Evidence is presented to show why that rest could not have been either the sabbath that the Jews kept or the Promised Land into which Joshua led the Israelites. So there must be a heavenly rest for those who are faithful to Christ.

The second exhortation urges the Christian to be diligent and to strive eagerly to enter that rest, rather than follow the example of disobedience that proved fatal to Israel.

The third word of encouragement has to do with the necessity of holding fast the acknowledgment that Jesus, the Son of God, is High Priest, with sympathetic concern for the weaknesses of His people.

The closing word urges us to come boldly to the throne of grace for help in time of need.

B. *The office of the priesthood.* 5:1-4.

Text

5:1-4

1 For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: 2 who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity; 3 and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. 4 And no man taketh the honor unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron.

Paraphrase

1 Now, to show that Christ is a real High Priest, I will describe the designation, the duties, and the qualifications of an high priest.