

## HEBREWS 3—4 THE SON PROVIDES THE FINAL REST

II. The Son is the Leader of Israel to their rest as the fullness of the Old Testament rest given in Moses and Joshua (3:1-10:39).

A. The Old Testament rest offered in Moses was a picture of the full rest offered in Christ (3:1--4:16).

1. Christ is the fullness of the leadership shown by Moses in the Old Testament (3:1-6).

a. Christ was faithful to His appointment as was Moses (3:1-2).

Some choices of words here point out the message of the author more clearly. He first, calls them “holy brethren” indicating that they are the ones whom Christ calls brothers. When he says “partakers of a heavenly calling” he is referring to the suffering referred to in the previous verse, a suffering called for by God as He also called for it in Christ. Now he continues with the question of Christ as the Provider of redemption for Israel. (Recall that Israel is denying Christ as their leader, and that the readers are reconsidering the relationship of Christ to Israel, and thus considering returning to Israel and abandoning Christ.)

The author now proceeds back into the partials, and symbols (types) of the O.T. to indicate to the readers how this very thing, the rejection of the Righteous Leader by Israel was foretold. Jesus is the ultimate Moses. As Moses was faithful as a prophet (priest here being administrative mediator for God to the people), so also Jesus was the One who brought the message of redemption to Israel. God’s house here is Israel as testified by God in Numbers 12:7.

3:1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. 2 He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.

b. Christ was the builder of the house, Moses was a servant (a type of later things). New Covenant Jews belong in the house if they hold fast their hope (3:3-6).

As the author moves into the fullness of times, clearly Christ is the fullness of the Moses' type. He is worthier since He is the One who represents God in bringing many sons to glory, and thus is the builder of the house<sup>15</sup> (the One who places people into the house). Thus, also He is greater than the ones (Israel) whom He delivers. This point is that He, as the Mediator (High Priest), is greater than they. Since the reader considers the Abrahamic Covenant to be the greatest, and thus he should return to Israel and bless them, the author has pointed out that the Deliverer (High Priest) is greater than those He delivers. Thus, they should not move Israel higher than Jesus.

The exhortation then is to endure to the end. This clearly is an exhortation to believers to continue in their initial belief. His point is that they become partakers as Christ's house if they continue in belief. The contrast is that if they do not continue and return to Israel they are a partaker of a house not belonging to Christ, even though it is named Israel. Also recall that to be a partaker was to obediently suffer.

3 For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. 4 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. 5 Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; 6 but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.<sup>16</sup>

2. The reader is warned not to disobey after the fashion of the rejection of Moses' leadership (3:7-4:16).
  - a. Israel disobeys God through Moses and is prevented from entering the Canaan rest (3:7-11).

The author now reverts to Psalm 95 to exegete this passage for his Jewish believers. Psalm 95 is chosen since it is written during the O.T. economy and calls on the believers there to listen to the voice

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<sup>15</sup> The "house" here is the "house" of Israel, not the whole nation, but the true believers in the Seed, which makes them true members of the house.

<sup>16</sup> If they abandon this house then they will not be of this house, but be of Israel's house, an apostate nation, not the Godly nation. Thus, it is declared that they will not be in God's will but will be under a curse.

of God in revelation. The point is that the opportunity to come and listen to God was still open during the height of the O.T.

The point of this comparison historically is that Moses led the children of Israel to the land, yet they rejected it at the precise opportunity to enjoy what they had been delivered to enjoy. The entry into the land however was not the cessation of battles with the enemy but only the beginning of the conquering under Joshua and into the Book of Judges and continuing until David, for only the guarantee had been given of victory. Yet Israel rejected and that generation did not enter the land, or the rest.<sup>17</sup>

7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, 8 DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, 9 WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. 10 "THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART; AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS'; 11 AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.' " 12 Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God.

- b. They are warned not to fall after the same disobedience, that is, not enter fully into the spiritual rest brought by the New Covenant. (3:12-19).
  - 1) They are warned against the same manner of unbelief (3:12).

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<sup>17</sup> The “rest” needs to be defined in this book. Rest does not mean sitting in an easy chair. As always there is a delay between the provision and the implementation. Thus the believer has as part of his inheritance, the rest from enemies. Yet it is not seen as yet, and needs to be implemented in faithful endurance until Christ returns, and as the new David, brings in the kingdom and the visible rest. The rest is rest from the enemies as it is defined in Deuteronomy. Clearly the believers here felt they were not in the rest since the persecutions continued. Israel, on the other hand, claimed it was at rest (even though they like the Pharisees ignored the Roman domination).

The “rest” has really be an issue since early in the book. Psalm 110 really describes the rest which is present. The work has been completed by Christ on the cross and now He awaits the domination of the enemies at His second coming. So, the work has been completed (Phase 1) and one now awaits the physical appearance of the rest from enemies.

Addressing them as brethren (2:11) he warns them, having already been delivered (as the nation was from Egypt, so now is the nation in Christ), that they would demonstrate an unbelieving heart in appropriating in a real basis the deliverance in God. As Israel had been delivered and was promised deliverance through the suffering of the enemies' attacks, the nation refused to enjoy that deliverance. So now also the nation has been offered the deliverance in Christ, and has rejected deliverance from their enemies. If the Jewish believer returns to Israel for his deliverance he will demonstrate a rejection of God's revelation of deliverance through suffering in Christ and thus will not participate with Christ in the true house (the church).

12 Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God.

- 2) The readers are encouraged to support each other away from the sin of apostasy (3:13).

The alternative to the choice of unbelief is to encourage one another in the promises of God as they are suffering. Sin here is the rejection of the revelation. They are in danger of listening to what seems to make sense, since sin always makes sense to the deceived by Satan.

13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

- 3) Partakers of Christ are those who continue on in a belief in His revelation enduring the required suffering as in Christ's example, not returning back (3:14-15).

Again, the alternative is to return back to Israel, and thus avoid the suffering. However, they will not be 'partakers of Christ', that is, not following His revelation and His example. The point is that Christ was delivered through His sufferings, and they also are delivered (in God's will) through their sufferings. They will be out of God's will if they avoid the suffering.

Note that Christ held fast through suffering until the end and so is the believer to do that also. His relationship with

God, dependent on His belief in Christ, will continue only if he continues in belief.<sup>18</sup>

14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end; 15 while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

- 4) The ones who were prevented from the rest were the ones under the Old Covenant (Mosaic), yet did not believe when it came to the rest (3:16-19).

The literal translation is somewhat different from that of the standard translations. It should read "For some hearing provoked when they heard, but not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses . . ." This indicates that while the nation provoked God by rejecting their deliverance (they desired to go back to Egypt, and regretted their decision to leave), not all did. That is, Caleb and Joshua did not reject but encouraged others to enter into the fight. Thus, while the nation itself was rejected from the rest, Caleb and Joshua entered in and were victorious in the fight. The point in application is that the present-day Israel will not enter the rest of God, while the Hebrew believer has entered the rest by contrast.

16 For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, yet not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

- c. The readers are encouraged to be careful to believe (4:1-13).
- 1) Readers are encouraged to be careful to believe (4:1-2).

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<sup>18</sup> A reminder is necessary at this point to divulge that this is not loss of salvation as the believer cannot do that. What is at stake is a present tense relationship with God and eschatological rewards.

The reader is now encouraged to not abandon his hope in Christ and return to Israel since the option continues, and will until the fullness of the Kingdom in the Second Coming.

They will “seem” to come short of entering the rest by returning to Israel, who will not enter the rest. In other words, Israel has come short of the rest by remaining in the partials of the O.T. Now if one returns to the nation, he will be considered, or seem, or have the reputation of also coming short, being inferior to the fullness of the revelation of rest.

In verse 2 it is Israel that has not united the good news (of Christ) with faith.

4:1 Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

2) God's rest defined (4:3-10).

a) The believer enters that rest (4:3a).

The church, made up of believers (here Jewish), has entered the rest as opposed to Israel, who has not. The former nation (Num. 13—14) did not enter the rest either, and thus waited for another generation to do so.

For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, " AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,"

b) God completed His works at creation, yet the believers are in the process of entering it, while some may fail to enter because of disobedience (4:3-6).

God completed His works at creation, and thus is resting. The point is that man had not completed his work (that of imitating God) and thus has not

entered into the rest of God. In the Old Testament, it was clear that man had to endure in faith before he could rest from his enemies (and God's).

although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS"; 5 and again in this passage, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST." 6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,

- c) The rest was not completed in the occupation of the land under Joshua, as David still spoke of another day (4:7-9).

Since David spoke the Psalm at the height of the Old Covenant Kingdom, and spoke of entering the rest, and this followed Joshua and the first successful entry into the land, it must be that there is a greater rest which was to come, that in Christ. That rest is here for the believer (victory is assured over enemies) but will not be fully realized until the return of the Son (Ps. 110).

4:7 He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. 9 There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

- d) The One who entered the rest (Christ) is sitting at the right hand of the Father as an example to the believer (4:10)

There are two parts to rest as there are to "works". The Old Testament believer kept the works of the Law, which primarily here was the performance of

sacrifices on his own behalf. Thus, the period of the Law was the period of “works”. Those now have been completed in the fullness of the sacrifice of Christ, and the believer is to rest from the “dead” works of the Law (6:1, 9:14). However, his work continues, not the performance of sacrifices under the Law, but the endurance of faith based on the full sacrifice. Thus, the “dead works” of the Law are completed in the sacrifice (completed provision in the heavenlies, unseen), but the endurance of suffering works (6:10,10:24) on behalf of the full sacrifice is continuing (physical realization) until the rest in the Kingdom.<sup>19</sup>

“. . . the One who . . . here is Christ.<sup>20</sup> He is in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father, thus resting from His works (that of His obedient suffering).

4:10 For the One who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

3) The Reader is encouraged to be careful to believe (4:11).

Based on the example of Kadesh-Barnea, the author encourages them to continue to pursue belief as opposed to those who would join the nation in its error. The verb here is strong as in ‘spare no effort’, for the author is afraid that

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<sup>19</sup> Note here “the one who has entered His rest” is somewhat undefined. There are two possibilities. Since the participle is in the aorist tense (“the one who entered His rest”) and the verb is in the aorist (“rested from His works”) it would indicate that these actions are contemporaneous, occurring in the past. This would indicate that it is Christ here who is spoken of, and the believer is to follow the principle of Christ, as the author and pattern to follow. This is more likely since the believer is exhorted to follow the pattern of Christ in the next verse.

<sup>20</sup> In 6:10, 10:24 the believer is still doing “good works”, that is obedient suffering and encouragement to those who are suffering. Thus, the believer is engaged, not in the “dead works” (6:1) of the Law but in the good works of obedient endurance. However, Christ’s work is completed (seated at the right hand of the Father). The ‘One who has entered (aorist ptcp.) . . . has rested from His works (aorist verb) indicates a past activity, with no indication of present action. In other words, the sentence seems to indicate a past action completed, thus of Christ, not the believer who “enters” (pres. Ind.) or has a part in that rest. In other words Christ has completed His obedient suffering and we yet have to follow that example.



some will join Israel and not enjoy the rest present only in Christ, and that in obedient endurance.

4:11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience.

- 4) God's revelation in His word (through Jesus Christ) is discerning, and will determine their intentions (4:12-13).

These believers who think that they will return to Israel, and that this is the proper move, will not escape God's evaluation as guilty men. This is assured since God's word can judge accurately everything including their heart. So, while they might escape the judgment in an external observation, they will not escape God's judgment, who sees in their heart. This is addressed to the one who is in the assembly, yet is pondering unbelief. The author encourages them to believe the revelation from the heart.

4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

- d. The reader is encouraged to draw near to the great high priest, Christ, who can give mercy (4:14-16).

Again, as he did in chapter 2, the author continues with the reason why they would not want to return to Israel. Israel is presently not the priestly mediator, but is subject to the mediation of the Great High Priest who provides salvation to Israel.

He urges them to hold fast their confession (that they already possess). Since their High Priest before God is able to sympathize since He also suffered and was tempted to forego the suffering, yet He did not. The urging is to continue to approach God through the High Priest, Christ, so that they might receive mercy and grace at the right moment. This does not indicate that they will receive a miraculous deliverance in the temporal realm, for they may have to endure until the end. This is the promise that the opportune time is at the judgment of the Second Coming and they will receive the

mercy and grace given to them in Christ Jesus, and enter into the visible rest.

4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens<sup>21</sup>, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession<sup>22</sup>. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted<sup>23</sup> in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Access to the Father is insured by this access to the heavens, something no one else has ever done.

<sup>22</sup> Note that the confession is already made. The exhortation is to continue.

<sup>23</sup> All this says is that Satan tempted Christ. It does not say that He considered the temptation at all. Even if the prayer in the garden was for the cup of judgment to be avoided, it is simply a statement of verifying that this is the only path of deliverance for others, and a decision to go always with the will of the Father. There is never a time that Jesus considered avoiding the suffering for the sake of His own preservation.

<sup>24</sup> The translation indicates “grace and mercy at just the opportune time”. This is at the Second Coming judgment. It does not indicate that “grace and mercy” (escape) will be given now, but at the right moment. It will not be given to Israel presently.