The Supremacy of The Son of God

Studies in Hebrews

18)Superior to Moses (part 4) Heb. 4:3b-10

**Hebrews 4:** Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. 3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: “So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; 5 and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.”

6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, 7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said:

“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.”

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

Outlines:

A. Christ is **Superior to the Prophets** (1:1-3)

B. Christ is **Superior to the Angels** (1:4–2:18)

C. Christ is **Superior to Moses** (3:1–4:13)

Second Warning: Don’t Defect (3:6b–4:13)

a. The quotation of Psalm 95:7-11  (3:7-11)

b. The application of the psalm (3:12-15)

c. The Exhortation from the psalm (3:16-4:13)

1) Negatively let us not be like them (3:16-19)

2) Positively let us strive to enter God’s rest (4:1-13)

- Since the promise remains v 1-3a

- Since the rest remains v 3b-10

- For the word of God is living v 11-13

- For our high priest can sympathize v 14-16

**My rest: 3b-5**

The new development in 4:1–11 is the enrichment of the interpretation of Ps 95 by the use of Gen 2:2 to clarify the character of the rest from which the generation in the desert was excluded. The argument turns on the fact that in Gen 2:2 LXX the verb used to state that God “took rest” (κατέπαυσεν) is cognate to the term for “rest” in Ps 95(LXX 94):11 (κατάπαυσις). The use of cognate terms permitted the inference that “my rest” in Ps 95:11 is properly interpreted in terms of God’s primordial rest following the works of creation in Gen 2:1–3. The fact that the writer and those whom he addressed read the biblical text in Greek was crucial in this instance, since the MT used different Hebrew roots to describe God’s rest in the two passages492.

**By connecting the rest of Genesis 2:2 with “my rest” of Psalm 95, the author of Hebrews is telling us that “my rest” Psalm 95 isn’t a reference to the rest God bestow but rather to the rest God enjoys493**.

**V 3c-d “So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”**

Notice how the author of Hebrews define rest. He didn’t say “although God prepared the rest from the foundation of the world” But rather “although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”

The writer carefully follows Gen 2:1–3 in distinguishing God’s rest from his works. God’s rest consists in the completion of his works, and consequently his rest has been in existence since the foundation of the world. The force of the final clause is to emphasize that the promised rest does not refer in the first instance (3:11) to some future reality prepared for humanity, but has primary reference to God’s own repose, which precedes and stands outside human history. A proper understanding of the relationship between the works of creation and the promised rest prepares for the parallel drawn between God and the believing community in v 10.489

**From the foundation of the world:**

The author of Hebrews is telling us that the works of creation and the rest was established since the foundation of the world, Yet is also implying the rest of eternal salvation, that was rejected by the exodus generation, and is available “today” to his readers was also established since the foundation of the world490:

**Mat 13:35** This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

“I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.”

**Eph 1:4** just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

**1Pe 1:20** For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you

**v 5 and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.”**

The repetition of Ps 95:11*b* in v 5 links the rest following creation with the promise of rest that was the goal of redemption. The writer’s intention is to define the character of the promise extended for the encouragement of the community. For that reason, perhaps, the reference to God’s anger in Ps 95:11*a* is suppressed when Ps 95:11 is quoted for the second time494.

**Today v6-10:**

**v 6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience**, **7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.”**

The shift in focus from Ps 95:11, which was cited in vv 3 and 5, to Ps 95:7*b*–8*a* in vv 6–8 introduces another factor to be considered by the readers. The writer seizes upon the term σήμερον, “today,” as having fundamental significance for a deeper understanding of the concept of rest. Approximately four centuries after the exclusion of the desert generation from his rest, God announced prophetically through the psalmist a new day of opportunity, “today,” in which his voice would be heard and the promise of entrance into his rest would be actualized. It is Ps 95 that calls for an eschatological understanding of κατάπαυσις, “rest.” The admonition in Ps 95:7*b*–8*a* is both an urgent call to the people of God and an announcement of the eschatological time of salvation. That time has come. It is the final period of redemptive history, which has begun with the speaking of God through his Son (1:1–2*a*). It is the present time of salvation for the Christian community, for whom the issue of entrance into God’s rest remains alive.496

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

In the Hexateuch the content of the promise was associated with the settlement of Canaan (cf. Deut 3:20; 12:9; 25:19; Josh 1:13). After the conquest the promise of rest is said to have been fulfilled (Josh 21:44; 22:4). In v 8 the writer addresses the intramural tension between that tradition and the different perspective expressed in Ps 95. The settlement of Canaan did not mark the fulfillment of the divine promise but pointed to another, more fundamental reality. If in fact Joshua had achieved the promised rest, there would have been no need for the renewal of the promise in Ps 95. Accordingly, the experience of rest in Canaan was only a type or symbol of the complete rest that God intended for his people, which was prefigured in the Sabbath rest of God, according to Gen 2:2497.

**9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.**

The preceding lines of argument are summed up in the conclusion drawn in v 9. The statement is structurally parallel in form to v 6*a498*:

v 6*a*: “The fact remains that some are to enter it [= the rest].”

v 9: “There remains a Sabbath celebration for the people of God.”

The author of Hebrews deliberately changed the word rest 6a (Gen. 2:2, Psalm 95:11) to Sabbath rest (1st introduced in v4). The formal parallelism suggests that the substitution is meant to define more precisely the character of the future rest promised to the people of God.

The term σαββατισμός sabbath stresses the special aspect of festivity and joy, expressed in the adoration and praise of God. In v 9 this nuance defines the character of the promised rest awaiting the people of God in the consummation499.

**10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.**

The assertion in v 10 stands in a causal relationship to v 9 and clarifies why in the eschatologial rest a σαββατισμός will be possible. Whoever has entered the consummation-rest will experience the completion of his work, as did God after the creation (vv 3*c*–4), and will enjoy the rest that is necessary for the festivity and praise of a Sabbath celebration. In conjunction, vv 9–10 anticipate the festival of the priestly people of God in the heavenly sanctuary, celebrating in the presence of God the eternal Sabbath with unceasing praise and adoration500.

The “works” of verse 10 are not to be interpreted as something bad. They parallel the works of God and must therefore be good. The implied message to these discouraged Jewish Christians is this: Now is no time to let down your guard. It is a time for endurance. This is the time for labor on the part of Christians. The time of “rest” awaits us.501

**Rev 14:13** And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.”

There is a sense in which to enter Christian salvation means to cease from one's works and rest securely on what Christ has done. And there is a sense in which the works of the believer, works done in Christ, will come to completeness and the believer himself will come to rest in the eternal presence of God.502