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By Dan Maines

Hebrews 4

Hebrews 4:1

Therefore, let's fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

† The promise of rest was still open in the first century. The warning is that unbelief could cause some to miss it, just as Israel missed the land. Rest was not merely about Canaan, but about the kingdom fulfilled in Christ.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (CD 3.18-20) warned that those who

rebelled would be barred from entering the covenant rest, showing that this theme was alive in Jewish thought before Hebrews was written.

Hebrews 4:2

For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also did; but the word they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united with those who listened with faith.

† Israel heard good news but lacked faith. The same gospel was now preached, and only those who believed would enter the true rest.

† Josephus (Wars 5.19) explained how unbelief led to the ruin of Jerusalem, a living reminder of Hebrews' warning.

† Philo (On Abraham 168) wrote that hearing without faith produces no benefit, reflecting the same truth.

Hebrews 4:3

For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My anger, they certainly shall not enter My rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

† Believers were entering the true rest in Christ. God's rest was prepared from the beginning, but only faith gives access.

† Augustine (Confessions 13.36) saw God's creation rest as a shadow fulfilled when the believer rests in Christ.

Hebrews 4:4-5

For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this passage, "They certainly shall not enter My rest."

† The Sabbath rest pointed forward to Christ. God's rest on the seventh day was a shadow of the greater rest fulfilled in the Son.

† The Book of Jubilees (2.19-21) emphasized Sabbath

observance as eternal, but Hebrews shows that the true Sabbath was Christ Himself.

Hebrews 4:6-7

Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who previously had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again sets 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."

† The invitation was still open. David spoke of "today," long after Joshua, proving that the true rest was not Canaan but something greater.

† Rabbinic tradition (Midrash Tehillim 95) linked this psalm to the wilderness generation as a warning for every age.

Hebrews 4:8-9

For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. Consequently, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

† Joshua's conquest did not fulfill God's promise. A greater rest remained, fulfilled in Christ. The Sabbath found its reality in Him.

† Philo (On the Migration of Abraham 89) wrote about the Sabbath as the soul's rest in God, a Jewish anticipation of what Hebrews confirms in Christ.

† Justin Martyr (Dialogue with Trypho 18) argued that Christians no longer keep the old Sabbath, because the true rest was found in Christ.

Hebrews 4:10

For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, just as God did from His.

† Entering Christ's rest means ceasing from works of the Law as a means of righteousness. The believer rests in Christ's

finished work, just as God rested from creation.

† Tertullian (Against Marcion 4.12) argued that rest in Christ frees us from the works of the Law, showing early church agreement with Hebrews.

Hebrews 4:11

Therefore let's make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following the same example of disobedience.

† The warning continues. The promise is real, but perseverance is required. Disobedience leads to falling short.

† Seneca (Letters 107.11) warned that those who live in carelessness fall into ruin, echoing the truth that vigilance is required.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating 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.

† God's word is not passive but living, piercing, and discerning. Nothing escapes His judgment. It exposes unbelief and reveals true faith.

† Philo (On the Creation 129) described God's word as a sharp instrument that cuts to the heart, echoing the language Hebrews uses.

† The Wisdom of Solomon 18:15-16 speaks of God's all-powerful word leaping from heaven as a warrior with a sharp sword, paralleling Hebrews' imagery.

Hebrews 4:13

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must answer.

† God sees all. Nothing is hidden, and every heart is exposed before Him. This warns against unbelief and hypocrisy.

† Seneca (Letters 83.1) admitted that conscience makes all things visible, anticipating Hebrews' truth that nothing is hidden before God.

Hebrews 4:14

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let's hold firmly to our confession.

† Jesus is the great high priest, not entering an earthly tabernacle, but passing through the heavens. His priesthood is greater than anything in the Old Covenant.

† Josephus (Wars 5.212) described the earthly high priest passing through the veil once a year, but Christ surpassed this by entering God's presence permanently.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin.

† Christ is a sympathetic high priest. He faced temptation fully, yet without sin. This makes Him able to aid His people in their struggles.

† Ignatius (Letter to the Smyrnaeans 3) affirmed Christ's true humanity and temptation, strengthening this truth against early denials.

Hebrews 4:16

Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of our need.

† Because of Christ's priesthood, believers approach God's throne with boldness. Instead of fear, they find mercy and

grace. This is the privilege of the New Covenant fulfilled in Christ.

† Chrysostom (Homilies on Hebrews 7) emphasized that we approach with confidence not because of ourselves but because of Christ's priesthood.

Application For Us Today

† Hebrews 4 reminds us that the true rest is not about land or a weekly Sabbath, but Christ Himself. To seek another rest is to miss the fulfillment God provided.

† The danger of unbelief is still present. The Word of God exposes the heart, showing whether we truly trust in Christ's finished work.

† Christ as high priest means we no longer need an earthly temple or human mediator. We have direct access to God's throne of grace.

† The call to perseverance is clear. Rest is entered by faith, but that faith must endure. This warns us not to fall into futurist myths of another age to come, but to stand in the reality of the kingdom now.

† Futurism mirrors Israel's error of looking for another rest. To delay God's promise or project it into another age is to harden the heart and miss the rest already given in Christ.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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† Psalm 95:7-11 - Today if you hear His voice

† Genesis 2:2 - God rested on the seventh day

† Numbers 14:22-23 - Israel excluded from the land

† Book of Jubilees 2.19-21 - Sabbath observance as eternal

- † Dead Sea Scrolls, CD 3.18-20 - warning of exclusion from rest
- † Josephus, Wars 5.19 - unbelief leading to ruin
- † Josephus, Wars 5.212 - high priest entering the veil
- † Philo, On Abraham 168 - hearing without faith is useless
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- † Augustine, Confessions 13.36 - creation rest fulfilled in Christ
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