

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 182

Hebrews 4:1-13

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Hebrews 4:1-13 continues an important theme introduced in Hebrews 3—holding fast to faith so as to enter into God’s rest (i.e., inherit the promise of eternal life). The writer strikes an analogy between the rest of God, earlier related to entrance (or not) into the Promised Land (Numbers 14), and God’s rest at the end of his creation work. God’s Sabbath rest is therefore identified with eternal life—a rest that is the result of God’s efforts, not ours. Since Christ is the one who provided eternal life through his work on the cross, Christ is our Sabbath.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 182: Hebrews 4:1-13. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing?

**MH:** Pretty good, pretty good. It’s been a busy week... you know, about that time of year when the normal chaos starts to veer into the vortex of “Why do I do all this stuff?” [laughter] But October and November are always like that, so we kind of expect it.

**TS:** Yeah, did you do some recording for Fringepop, as well? How did that go?

**MH:** Yeah, a week or so ago we recorded 13 episodes. I think that’s going to be starting probably late in the fall, they’ll start putting up the channel and populating that. We had a good week. We didn’t have nearly the glitches we had the first time. We ironed all those out, so it was pretty smooth.

**TS:** Alright, we’ll be looking forward to it!

**MH:** Yeah, well, we’re in Hebrews chapter 4 now. We’re only going to do the first 13 verses because whoever wrote the book of Hebrews has a—I don’t want to say an irritating habit—of jumping between subjects, and then returning to the same subject later on. We’re getting a lot of that as we head into chapter 4 all the way through chapter 10. A lot of that stuff’s going to be about the high

priesthood of Jesus, but there's going to be other things mixed in, so we're going to try to tailor the episodes to sections that are coherent, that don't really take more than one subject at a time. We'll try to work our way through Hebrews that way. So today, it's Hebrews 4:1-13. And I'm just going to start by reading chapter 4. We'll read through the whole thing at least until the point where we're going to stop. Well, maybe, I'll just add on the other, the last few verses, because when we get to that point anyway I'll be telegraphing what the next episode will be jumping into. But here in Hebrews 4:1, let's start out. It says:

**Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. <sup>2</sup> For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. <sup>3</sup> For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,**

**“As I swore in my wrath,  
‘They shall not enter my rest,’”**

**although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. <sup>4</sup> For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.”<sup>5</sup> And again in this passage he said,**

**“They shall not enter my rest.”**

**<sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,**

**“Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts.”**

**<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. <sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.**

**<sup>11</sup> Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. <sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. <sup>13</sup> And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.**

Chapter 4 closes with these three verses, and you can see right away how the subject matter changes, which is why we're going to be considering them in the next episode. Verse 14 says:

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**<sup>14</sup>Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Now for this episode, we're just going to do the first 13 verses. Look at the way it starts. If you're following the series up until this point, the beginning of this should really sound familiar.

**Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. <sup>2</sup>For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. <sup>3</sup>For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,  
"As I swore in my wrath,  
'They shall not enter my rest,'"**

We'll stop there, toward the end of verse 3. That material sounds a lot like some of the things in chapter 3, I mean, it really takes us back to Hebrews 3:6-8. And I'll just read those real quickly here.

**<sup>6</sup>but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.**

**<sup>7</sup>Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,  
"Today, if you hear his voice,  
<sup>8</sup>do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
on the day of testing in the wilderness,**

So you get this theme of entering the promised land. We talked about the rest of God and how this idea of refusing to let people enter into the rest of God—enter into the land, that sort of thing—how that started back in the book of Numbers. We talked about this in the last episode. And what kept them from going in was not a specific violation of the Torah, of the Law; what kept them from going in was a lack of faith—in other words, unbelief. And here in Hebrews 4:1-3, we get the same thought. The promise of entering his rest still stands.

Now think about that. One of the questions we raised in the last episode after we were talking about the relationship of belief to all this language was how disobedience in Chapter 3 was defined as unbelief—again, not some specific violation of Torah. We got into the whole subject of “losing your salvation,” and I made a couple statements. “That which cannot be obtained by moral perfection cannot be lost by moral imperfection.” And “You are eternally secure if you believe; if you don’t, you’re not.” This is really what Hebrews is oriented around, this idea of maintaining your faith, holding fast to your confession, staying in belief. You have to believe. This is the lone requirement—the lone thing that God is interested in. The writer of Hebrews uses the analogy of this episode way back in Numbers, and it’s not the only time we’re going to see... In chapter 4 he’s hearkening back to some other things as well. But this whole theme begins with this failure of faith, this giving way to unbelief. Another way to say that is that they didn’t believe in the promises. They just didn’t believe them. And God punished them with 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and said that whoever didn’t believe is just not going into the land—they’re just not going to do this. The land was where the temple was. The temple was where God would rest, where God would place his name.

For those of you who have read John Walton’s book about Genesis 1, this is the basis of the Sabbath. Genesis 1 is describing the creation of the heavens and earth in the same mode as the building and sanctifying of a temple, because that’s what God’s temple is. It’s on Earth; it’s in Eden. This is where the creation episode ends, because God has now taken up his residence on Earth in his temple, which is Eden—the Cosmic Mountain, the dwelling place, the Divine Council, Yahweh’s abode... These are familiar themes to anybody who listens to this podcast. And that became the template idea for rest, for temple, for God’s dwelling, for the place where God runs his affairs. It’s tied in to creation, and it’s tied in to this establishment of the temple—the re-establishment of the place where God will come to Earth and dwell with man. As the people of God, the ones he wants in his family and that he has promised family membership to—he has promised *eternal* family membership to... What he wants from you is not moral perfection, because you’re not going to give him that. You can’t by definition. You can’t even do mostly perfect, as though “mostly holy” is good enough. No, you have to be made fit for dwelling in the presence of God. The way that you do that (in New Testament theology, anyway) is you are united to Christ, you are made members of his body. He became incarnate (Hebrews 1 and 2) so that he could effect redemption—not for angels, not for anybody else, but the children of Abraham. If you go back to Paul’s language in Galatians 3, the children of Abraham are all who believe, whether they’re Jew or Gentile. All these themes in biblical theology are intertwined. They are not separate parts that operate independently of the other ones. They are all intertwined. When we take all that to Hebrews 3 and 4 (and we’re going to hit it again later on), the issue is, if you want to be in the family of God—if you want to have eternal life there, you want to enter into his rest (his rest occurs where his house is, his

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temple is, his dwelling place, his abode), you must believe. That is the only requirement: you must believe. You can't forsake your belief. You can't turn your loyalty to another god or no god at all. This is why the people in the wilderness account—the people of Israel—are used as a template to illustrate the idea. Look at the language he uses here in Hebrews 4.

**. <sup>2</sup> For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.**

Look at the division. There were people who didn't listen and people who did. And listening isn't just, "Oh, well, that's interesting." No, listening implies they heard it, they embraced it, and they believed it. Those were the ones who got to enter the rest. You go back to the wilderness wanderings, who gets to go into the land? Well, not a whole lot of people. For the first generation, nobody except Joshua and Caleb. Aaron has died, Moses is going to die before he gets into the land. So of the first generation, not many—very, very few. There are others besides Joshua and Caleb. We don't need to go back to the book of Joshua and read all that. But most of them are second generation—those who did not commit the sin of unbelief. That is the issue: unbelief. Belief versus unbelief. And look at verse 3, here in chapter 4.

**<sup>3</sup> For we who have believed enter that rest...**

It doesn't say, "we who have been mostly morally perfect, we who have less sins accrued to our account than somebody else." It doesn't say that. This is not about behavioral perfection—even behavior at all. Your status as a member of the family of God is based upon your belief in the Gospel. In the Old Testament... If you've read *Unseen Realm*, we talked about the relationship of salvation, and it's consistent across the Testaments. How is an Israelite saved? He believed that God—Yahweh—was the God of gods, and that for some reason, this God of gods had entered into a covenant relationship with the children of Abraham. We have to believe that. And if we believe that, then what we do in life will reflect the fact that we believe that, and it will show that we're grateful for God condescending when he had no reason in particular to do this. Deuteronomy 7:7-8 is basically saying, "The Lord loved you because he loved you." It doesn't say he loved you because of anything you did. It's very consistent. Salvation in Israel was loyalty—believing loyalty—to the God of Israel. Loyalty is not about performance. Believing loyalty means you don't change teams—you don't shift your faith to another god or no god at all. It's very consistent in the New Testament. The object of our faith is Christ, who is the God of Israel incarnate and who died on the cross for our sins. Believing loyalty to Him means that this is the exclusive object of faith. This is the lone means of salvation. There is no other. We believe that and we cling to that. We keep

believing in that, or we don't. So the theology of Hebrews is very consistent with the need—this being the only litmus test—the need for belief, so you're eternally secure if you believe, and if you don't believe, you're not. It's very consistent across the board.

15:00 Now we get down into these verses here and we've got (hearkening back to Hebrews 3:6, 8, 15, 19, which I read)... I didn't tack on verses 15-19. Let's just go back to chapter 3 real quickly and notice the same themes:

**"Today, if you hear his voice,  
8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion..."**

In other words, don't fall into unbelief. You get down to verse 18:

**18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?**

Well what's disobedience? Is that a violation of the Torah? No. Verse 19 of chapter 3:

**19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.**

The "disobedience" here in Hebrews 3 and 4 is another way of referring to unbelief. It is not a specific Torah violation. Now if you remember in the last episode, we got into all this. I just repeated this little bit here from chapter 3, and we asked questions like, "What about doubt?" Questions are not unbelief. Wondering what God is doing isn't unbelief. Wondering why God did or didn't do something isn't unbelief. Unbelief is refusing to believe God's promise of eternal life. That's what unbelief is: rejecting the Gospel in favor of some other god or nothing at all.

Now you'll notice, I said last time, what if somebody does that? What if somebody lapses into unbelief? Is it over for them? Can they come back? Are they just completely undone? And I said, "No." Because I use the analogy of Israel. Those who had that happen to them... God still offered them, through the prophets, the chance to repent—the chance to believe again, the chance to come back. Look at how Hebrews 4 opens. First line:

**Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.**

It still stands. We have an offer that's extended and it has not been withdrawn. It raises the question of, "What does it mean by, 'lest any of you should seem to

have failed to reach it?” I’m going to read a little section from Guthrie here to get us into this issue. Guthrie in his little Hebrews commentary writes:

Although the men of the wilderness failed to obtain the ‘rest’, the promise of it still remained for their children. Indeed the assumption is made that the promise is timeless and is available still to the writer and his readers, hence the further exhortation. It is important to note that the first words according to the Greek text are ‘Let us fear, therefore’ (*Phobēthōmen oun*). The position of the verb gives it special emphasis. It would be salutary for Christians seriously to consider the failure of the Israelites and their incurring the displeasure of God, and to fear lest a similar calamity should befall members of the new community, the spiritual Israel [the Church]. The writer accepts without question that *the promise of entering his rest remains*, presumably because his doctrine of God is such that no word of his can be conceived to fail.

Now, this whole idea of “lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it”... the writer of Hebrews is saying, “Look, don’t let this happen to you. Don’t slip off into unbelief. Don’t let that happen to you.” Now, the word translated “seem” in ESV is *dokeō* in Greek. It can mean “to seem” or “to appear,” or it means “to think.” Now, ESV goes with “seem”:

**...let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.**

It sounds like it’s saying “lest any of you are seemingly failing to reach the rest of God” or “lest any of you are seemingly failing to be saved.” If you translate it the way the ESV has it, it’s sort of directed at those among the writer’s readership that his readers might presume to not be true believers. Let me restate that in a way that might be better. If you go with the ESV translation, which is what I read:

**Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.**

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If you’re someone in the original community listening to that or reading it, you might think, “Well, that comment’s directed at maybe some of the people that we wonder if they’re true believers. There’s uncertainty about whether this or that person that we know believes.” Other translations, though, opt for “think,” and then their wording changes a little bit, and I think the nuance changes as well: “Lest any of you think you have failed to reach the rest of God,” or to reach salvation. If you look at it that way, then the focus here would be readers who are thinking of *themselves* when they hear this (including themselves in the group). Perhaps they’re wondering about some sin or some doubt. They have some failure that has made them question their own salvation. Perhaps they’ve fallen into unbelief and are now wondering if they’re cut off from salvation because their faith lapsed. If that’s the case (and that’s as just as good of an interpretation as

what the ESV has), then if you look at Hebrews 4:1, they can come back. The promise of entering his rest still stands. And I think that's really the way we need to look at this, because he's writing to an audience that's still living. He's not writing to an audience that's dead back in the days of Joshua. He uses Joshua and the Israelites for his point of analogy, but he's writing to people in a current time. And basically, when he writes to them, they might be thinking about someone in their community that might seem to not really be a believer that they wonder about. Or they might be wondering about themselves, for whatever reason. And then the statement of verse one really becomes important—"the promise of entering his rest still stands." You who are reading this letter, you who are hearing this read to you in the first century, who are under persecution... And you maybe somebody that lapsed in their faith, or maybe you lapsed in your faith. "Well, I've got news for you: don't let that happen to you. Don't go off and not believe and then suffer the consequences of it." The writer wants you to know that the promise of entering his rest still stands. It's still there. It's still good. You can still partake of it. Don't be like that long ago generation where you had people that just, "Hey, let's go back to Egypt. This idiot Moses brought us out here to die." Very clearly rejecting the hand of God, the words of God, the promises of God through Moses. If you remember in the last episode.... In part of that episode in the book of Numbers, they picked up stones and they were ready to stone Moses—their decision, they had cast their lot with unbelief. They had made their decision, and God punished them for it.

Now, in this case we don't have quite the same scenario. We have a warning that if this happens to you, there's going to be consequences. But even if you were wondering... even if you're thinking, "Am I there? Is my buddy over there, is my sister, my wife, my husband over there?" He wants you to know in verse one that even if you think that somebody might be here, even if seems like someone has gone down this trail, the promise of entering his rest still stands. It's serious. You don't want this to be the case. You don't want yourself or anybody else to turn their backs on the gospel, to reject the gospel. Because as we'll see in chapter six, there is no other plan for salvation. There is no other means for salvation. There is nothing else God can do to save. This is the only way of salvation. So this needs to be something that's embraced and not surrendered. He's warning them, "Don't reach that final point of rejection." But if it seems like this is the case, he wants you to know that the promise of entering his rest still stands. So I think it's kind of important to note the wording there and the context. If you go back to verse 3 in chapter 4 (because we're working our way through the chapter) it has:

**<sup>3</sup> For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,  
"As I swore in my wrath,  
'They shall not enter my rest,'"  
although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.**



This is a reference to the creation week and the author is going to elaborate on the “rest” language in verse 4.

**<sup>4</sup> For he [God or Moses] has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.”<sup>5</sup> And again in this passage he said,  
“They shall not enter my rest.”**

Now to take a look at Guthrie a little bit, Guthrie has some comments here that I think are worth point out. He writes:

What believers can now enter is none other than the same kind of rest which the Creator enjoyed when he had completed his works, which means that the rest idea is of completion and not of inactivity... It is important to note that the ‘rest’ is not something new which has not been known in experience until Christ came. It has been available throughout the whole of man’s history. This reference back to the creation places the idea on the broadest possible basis and would seem to suggest that it was part of God’s intention for man. ‘Rest’ is a quality which has eluded man’s quest, and in fact cannot be attained except through Christ. Jesus himself invited men to come to him to find rest (Matt. 11:28–30).

**<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

The idea of rest there, both in Jesus’ term and here in Hebrews 4, hearkens back to this notion of God resting from creation—his work. Where does he rest? At home. He’s in his house. Where is his house? Back then it was in Eden. We come back to the Edenic theme: the home of God, the abode of God. This is also the Cosmic Mountain, where the Divine Council is. These are our brothers. We’re going to be grafted in as family members with God’s divine family. Hebrews 2 says there will come a point when Jesus introduces us to God, and God to us, in the “congregation,” in the council—Hebrews 2. So all those ideas are connected to this idea, this idea of rest. And the point to retain is that this is about eternal life with God. Eden is the culmination of the creation week. God’s done now. He’s at home, he wants his family to be at home, he’s going to enjoy his family. This is something prepared by God for humanity. It is not the result of our efforts; it’s the result of his acts of power—his efforts, not ours. We need to think about what we’re looking at theologically, and it’s very consistent. None of this is about us attaining a certain level of perfection through our own efforts or merit. It’s just not in the picture at all. Back to Hebrews 4:6

**<sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> again he**

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**appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,**

**“Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts.”**

This whole idea—this salvation, the promise of salvation—is still open, it’s still out there. This unbelief problem that we’re drawing in from chapter 3... again, he appoints a certain day. Even if there’s been a lapse, do not stay in the status of unbelief. You can still believe.

**“Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts.”**

Back to Hebrews 4:1. There might seem to be some among you that are going down this path that the Israelites went. Or you might think it’s yourself. This might be an introspective... It’s doesn’t matter. Regardless of if you’re thinking about somebody else or thinking about yourself: “Today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts.” Why? Because verse 6:

**...therefore it remains for some to enter it...**

And verse 1:

**...the promise of entering his rest still stands...**

Take it seriously, because you can go off into unbelief. You can. If you do that, it’s your choice to stay there, and some people do. But you should know, that’s it’s not a *fait accompli*. It’s not like a done deal. It’s not the Law of the Medes and the Persians. “Today if you hear his voice don’t harden your hearts.” Verse 8:

**<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. <sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God’s rest...**

When you look at rest, think of “I’m coming home> I’m entering the home of God, where there is eternal life with him and the rest of his family. It’s where I belong if I’m united with Christ, because Christ is my brother” (Hebrews 2). All of these thoughts are interconnected. So then, back to verse 9:

**<sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.**

Hagner has a nice thought here:

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The theme of "not entering into my rest" is brought up again. This time the referent is one of the psalms.

As we saw in the last episode, the first time this idea is introduced (launching the wilderness wandering for 40 years) was in Numbers 14. The theme of not entering into the land (the place where the presence of God would abide, and God's people would abide with that presence) because of unbelief—turning from God to one's own efforts or the aid of another god. This is a repeated theme. It's not just Numbers 14. We have it in other places. It's a repeated theme. The cycling theme begins in Numbers 14, but occurs elsewhere. Here in Hebrews 4, Hagner has alerted to us that we're dealing with the Psalm here, the writer specifically jumps into Psalm 95:7b-8.

Back to Hagner here. He refers to "midrash," which is just a term for interpretation.

Again our author continues his midrash on the psalm, applying the words "*entering his rest*" to the reality offered to the church [every believer]. Following the pattern of exodus typology, the promised rest in the land of Canaan becomes a figure or foreshadowing of the spiritual rest available to the Christian. The reason why the author speaks of this rest as continuing to be available is not given until verses 7–9. To interpret this rest in terms of a national-political restoration [MH: Think about some eschatological schemes that you're familiar with] is to miss the author's dramatic shift away from earlier limited perspectives toward an understanding of Christ as the fulfillment of the promises and the inauguration of eschatology.

Basically, Hagner's saying, "It's just bigger than that. It's not about some eschatological focus; it's much wider." Now what Hagner means by eschatology here is the fact that Christ's ascension, which, of course, is the inauguration of the kingdom of God, as his ascension in the coming of the Spirit—in other words, the presence of God back to Earth in a new temple, which are believers (I Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, II Corinthians 6). Way back in our Ezekiel series, in the second episode of Ezekiel 40-48 (episode #157), we talked about the fact that believers are the new temple. This is what they're called. Jesus' body is the temple. We are the body of Christ. This is familiar New Testament theology, or at least it ought to be. But all of that is legit, in terms of... We can think of the rest of the people of God in some sense in terms of eschatology, because if we think of it in terms of the kingdom in a spiritual sense—the kingdom that was begun in the first century because of the work of Christ and the coming of the Spirit and all that—that makes sense. But Hagner's point is that if you're thinking of this as all in the future—it's only future—this millennium, this new temple... If you're thinking of the rest only that way, you're really missing the impact. It's really referring to *now*. This whole rest idea, which is associated with where God lives,

which is associated with temple—all these themes intertwined together—that’s not just something out there in the remote future; it’s something that’s a present reality. That is his point. Our family communities, our faith communities, our churches are (or should be) a foreshadowing of the rest—the family time we will have when the family of God is reunited in his presence in a global temple, a global abode of God.

35:00

Notice, since I brought up the global Eden—the global abode of God—when that gets described at the end of Revelation, in Revelation 21-22, there is no temple. The earth is the temple. All of these themes are consistent. When you think of rest here in Hebrews 4, think of being at home with God. Think of salvation. Think of the family of God, the Church, the assembly of believers—whatever terminology helps you here. That’s what the rest is about; it’s not just inactivity. It’s not just, “Whew, I had a rough day, I can kind of sit here now.” No, it’s life with God and the family of God, the original Edenic plan, the original Edenic template. You’re part of God’s family, and there’s stuff to do. If you’ve read *Unseen Realm*, if you’re familiar with the content here—familiar with the Divine Council worldview—we are put over the nations. There’s lots of things to do to maintain the global Eden—the creation that God originally planned. The whole Earth is now Eden. We have relationships with each other, there’s hierarchy, there’s stuff to do, there’s the creation to enjoy. It is what should have been had the Fall never happened. We’re not just in a stupor in which we don’t have anything to do, where we just sit around the throne of God and sing “Just As I Am” for the ten millionth time. Okay, that is *not* what the picture is here. It’s family life, it’s community, it’s relationships, it’s enjoying the fullness of the Earth made like Eden, it’s carrying out the Edenic mandate to maintain the creation, to be steward kings of it and over it. We’re not given details of what that means. Honestly, to an ancient culture, they would have conceived of those ideas in a particular way. We might conceive of them differently. We don’t have specific ideas, because the people who wrote this thing gave it a certain wording and had a certain perspective. No matter that, Revelation 2:3 (familiar *Unseen Realm* content) says, “To him that overcomes, I will put him over the nations. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron.” Jesus is quoting a messianic Psalm about you, about us. Revelation 3 tells us, “I will let him that overcomes sit with me on my throne.” Whatever the rulership entails, that’s what we’re going to be doing. But it’s not going to be a passive, stupor-like existence. It’s life in Eden with all that that entails, both in terms of its enjoyment and any tasks that we would have to do to maintain that.

Now, the implications here... just think about the wording. We go back into Hebrews 4. This whole thing about how all of that—all that was described in verses 7-9—all of that was...I’ll just read verse 10

**<sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.**

It's not the idea that we have now totally passive existence. There will be plenty of things to do. But the notion that God worked and rested, and he extends the opportunity through belief—through faith—to be part of that rest, to be part of his family... That idea is linked here to the cessation from our own works, which I think is kind of interesting. The implication is that our rest that we have now... If we believe, we in some sense have it now, because the kingdom, the rest of God has been inaugurated, because the rest is connected to the kingdom. It is connected to the family of God, the home of God, and the presence of God. Our rest that we have now (if we believe) and that we will have eventually in its fullness (if we believe—if we continue in our faith, if we hold fast our confession—using some of these phrases that the writer of Hebrews does)... All that is eternal life with God as a part of his family and it's made possible by Christ, not our own efforts.

Second implication: if the work of Christ is connected to us—in other words, this is how we get into the family of God, this is how we get into the kingdom, this is how we enter God's rest. That means that Christ is our Sabbath. Christ is our rest, because we are joined to his body, his body is the temple, we are united to him through the incarnation and our belief in his work. Hebrews 2: "We are members of his family, he is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters." That means that Jesus is our Sabbath, which by definition means other stuff. Even the Old Testament Sabbath is not our Sabbath. Jesus is our real Sabbath.

Third implication: This rest is because of God's work and activity, not ours. Eden was God's answer to questions like, "What is the destiny of humankind? Where should humankind live forever?" It was a decision of finality. God rested in the temple house—Earth, Eden—that he had built for himself and his family. There wouldn't be any additions to it, there's no revamping of it, it never gets remodeled. This is why the plan never changed after the Fall. Our residence is going to be Earth, made like Eden. It's just taken a while after the Fall. The destination doesn't change. God doesn't wipe out humanity. He made a way of redemption and started with that a long time ago—began the long effort to bring humanity back into his family and renew Eden. It takes a long time because he's committed to doing all that with the participation of fallible human beings, who can act freely because God made them like himself. God didn't just hit the reset button and cancel human freedom or wipe humanity off the face of the table—face of the Earth. No, it takes a while to restore what was lost, because God is committed to doing it with people as he made them.

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Fourth, if Christ (and the salvation he brings) is our Sabbath, then we don't need Sabbath observance—as though that would contribute to God loving us as his children more or to maintain God's loving disposition toward us. Sabbath-keeping was not about merit in the Old Testament, and it certainly isn't about merit now. Sabbath observance doesn't contribute anything to our standing before God. If you want to observe Sabbath, do so. If you want to remember the Edenic rest

and the new Edenic rest brought about by Christ, do so. Saying that Sabbath observance or any act of Torah-keeping at all—period, anything else... Saying that Sabbath observance defines our relationship to God as his children fails to recognize that Christ is our Sabbath. And it was Jesus who said, “Take my yoke upon you, and I will give you rest.” There’s no additional rest, or a supplement to the rest. We don’t add Torah stuff to enter into the rest. That is law-keeping, that is works salvation, it is merit-based thinking. If you want to do some of those things—and I have many friends who do... They do particular things or don’t do particular things on the Sabbath. They observe the Jewish calendar. Wonderful! Do it! It’s going to be fun! Enjoy it, it gets you back into your Old Testament a little bit. But if you think all of that contributes something to the way God looks at you or the way God defines your salvation, your status, your membership in his family, you’re wrong. This is why I said, for the extreme Hebrew Roots movers, that I don’t know what you do with the book of Hebrews other than just dislike it, because this just steps on that thinking in very overt ways.

Now the writer’s reference to Joshua here in Hebrews 4:8, “...for if Joshua had given them rest”... this is kind of interesting. The writer of Hebrews makes reference to Joshua. If we pay attention to that name, it sort of makes the whole point. If Joshua had given them rest... Of course Old Testament Joshua couldn’t and didn’t give them all rest, because he couldn’t do that. Some of them rebelled, some of them didn’t do what they were supposed to do. They went off and they worshipped other gods. The earthly Joshua in the Old Testament couldn’t do what the new Joshua did. Here’s what Hagner notes:

In the Septuagint, the Hebrew name Yehoshua (Joshua) was translated in Greek as “Jesus.” While Joshua, the “Jesus” of the Old Testament, was unable to bring the Israelites fully into the realization of the promises made by God, the Jesus of the New Testament did accomplish this. The analogy must have occurred to the minds of the Hellenistic Jewish Christians as they read their Septuagint. Our author must consciously be thinking of this analogy when he goes out of his way to refer to Joshua, an otherwise unnecessary reference.

I think he makes a good point. Incidentally, this is yet another reason why saying that Jesus (*Yesus* in Greek) is a variant of a pagan name, like Zeus, is total nonsense. Was the writer really trying to say that Old Testament Joshua was Zeus? The translator of the Septuagint... is that what they were saying, that Old Testament Joshua—OT *Yesus*—was Zeus? It’s utterly absurd. This is the kind of madness that needs to stop. There’s no linguistic relationship between *Yesus* and Zeus. Might sound like it to our ear, but they’re actually completely... The *zeta* of Zeus is not the *sigma* of *Yesus*. They’re actually completely different letters. This is just nonsense. Let’s go back to Hebrews 4. Let’s finish our section here. In verse 11, the writer writes:

**<sup>11</sup> Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.**

Again, the disobedience here (as we've said many times in the last episode and this episode) is about unbelief. That's what the disobedience is—failure to believe. It's not works salvation. It's not doing good things or abstaining from what we shouldn't be doing. The striving to enter rest (back to Hebrews 3:6)—the holding fast of our confidence—means tenaciously believing in God's promises and believing in his promised rest, not our own merits to earn our rest. How do we know? Because he says here in verse 11, "by the same sort of disobedience." He's hearkening back to this episode in the Old Testament, which we talked about last time (and of course some this time) that they didn't enter the land, they didn't enter the rest, because of unbelief. Then you get to verse 12:

**<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. <sup>13</sup> And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.**

Now I like what Hagner says here:

That these verses are closely related to the material immediately preceding is clear from the strong logical connective "for." These verses provide the reason or grounds for the exhortation in verse 11, and thereby strengthen it.

The "word of God" is the convicting word that God speaks to individuals. Our author has been calling the readers to heed the voice of God through his exposition of Scripture. It is that "living and active" voice that he has in mind rather than the written word as such, although, of course, that voice is often heard through Scripture. The reference here to the "division of soul and spirit" should not be taken as teaching about separate components of the human being, leading to, for example, a trichotomistic view of human beings. The author is not teaching about that subject, but is using analogies to point to the penetrating character of God's word. The word of God in this sense pierces through to the inner being of a person, down to the very "thoughts and intentions of the heart." It thereby calls for authentic response.

If you want to get into that subject, I have a whole series on my website that I blogged about. "Biblical Anthropology" is sort of the label for it—what's the nature of humanity. I'm not going to spend any time on it here because it's there on the website.

So in terms of these two verses, what does the living Word help us discern? Whether we're good enough to have eternal life? Is that what Hebrews 4 is about? All this stuff we've been talking about—entering into the rest, the rest is still available, don't be like the Old Testament people who didn't enter the rest, they failed because of disobedience, they didn't believe—all that talk, everything we've been talking about, we get to verses 12-13, "...for the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword." Everybody knows this verse. What is that verse in context supposed to teach us? It's not teaching us that we need to look at the word of God or hear the voice of God in our minds to discern whether we're *good enough* to have eternal life. It's not about discerning whether we're keeping Torah enough. It's not about discerning whether we've sinned one too many times to have eternal life. That's not what it's about at all. It's about discerning whether we believe or not. It reminds us of what we need to believe and encourages us to believe, and it provokes us. The word of God provokes us to trust the Gospel. Honestly, to say anything else—to say otherwise—is to divorce these verses from their context, and that's just not what we do here.

So our section ends not with a prescription to take a look in scripture and see if you're good enough to be saved. Go back and rehearse what the writer of Hebrews has said to this point. He says, "Go look at the scriptures, go test the scriptures, go back there and look and see if you're good enough to enter the rest." If you're thinking that, you've missed not only the point of today's episode, but lots of points in other episodes here in the book of Hebrews. None of it—the failure to enter into the rest—none of it was about a precise, particular violation, moral violation of Torah. They didn't enter the rest because of their unbelief, and you've got to keep this in mind consistently in Hebrews.

We're going to stop here with verse 13. Verses 14-16 are going to shift into this whole subject of Christ's priesthood, and so we'll cover that in the next episode. Frankly, the priesthood of Christ is a theme from Hebrews 5 all the way into Hebrews 10. It's going to look at it from different angles. It's going to go back and forth with other subjects. We're going to try to navigate that in future episodes. But for here at this point, everything that has been leading up to this point is about, "Do you believe or not?" Well, you say, "What should we believe?" We believe in the incarnation, the salvation provided through Christ, who is our great high priest. He is our representative. He is our mediator. All these things. It's very understandable, since he's talking about belief, that he's going to lead to this notion that the one who not only provides this for us, but the one who runs interference for us with God is the same person—it's Christ. So we have Christ incarnate, Savior, the radiance of God—all the stuff we talked about in Hebrews 1-2. All this extends from it, and now we're going to get to Christ as the great high priest. So next time on the podcast, we'll jump into that material and get it started, but we're going to come back to this stuff. He's going to keep going back and forth between this "look at what Jesus has done, look at how much better this is than Torah," but "you have to believe it, you just have to believe it."



**TS:** OK, Mike, well, we'll be looking forward to next week when we wrap up chapter 4 and begin chapter 5. And if you haven't done so, please go rate us. Review us on iTunes or wherever you consume our podcast. Let us know how we're doing. And at that, Mike, just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.