

When God redeemed Israel out of slavery in Egypt, He promised them rest, but through unbelief (3:19) they missed that rest. There is a divine rest that is still open, for all who in their hearts hold on to Christ. The author's charge is not to miss that divine, eternal rest because of unbelief (4:1 and 11). In Christ and Him alone there will be eternal rest.

**I. *Fear a false understanding of entering God's rest (4:1–10).*****1. *God's rest is truly available by faith in Christ (1–3a).*****a. God's rest was proclaimed and is received by faith in Christ (1–3a).**

Be fearful of thinking that you missed out on God's rest. Israel heard and did not believe, and so they missed God's rest. If you have heard and believe, you will enter His rest. Not experiencing full rest now does not mean it has been missed or that something must be added to Christ. Don't follow that line of thinking at all.

**b. God's own rest continues (3b–5).**

God began His rest on the seventh day after creation and it has not ended; His Sabbath continues. The oath He swore against Israel shows that it continues. And both Psalm 95 and Hebrews shows that His rest is not merely what He gives, but what He Himself enjoys and invites people to join.

**c. God has kept open His offer of rest (6–8).**

Though hundreds of years after Joshua, the Psalmist still spoke of a future rest, showing that it was not fulfilled in entering Canaan. Calling the offer of rest "today" shows that it is a current invitation to enter.

**2. *God's rest will be enjoyed by His people (9–10).***

God's Sabbath-rest will be enjoyed by His people. They are those who have not hardened their hearts to His voice, but who today have placed their trust fully and solely in the Lord Jesus Christ. They show it by their obedience and perseverance in the faith.

Believers will put behind their "work" on earth and enter God's rest (either at death or at the resurrection). But verse 11 may refer to Jesus Christ, who have completed His redemptive work, entered heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father. (His superiority and complete redemptive work is a theme of Hebrews.)

**II. *Pursue a right course to enter God's rest (4:11–13).***

To fear that you might have missed God's rest, could lead you in the wrong path.

**1. *Truly believe God, as shown in your obedience (11).***

Be diligent in holding to Christ, obeying God's Word, that you may show yourself truly as belonging to Him and heading for God's rest, unlike a generation of Israel refused to believe.

**2. *God's word will reveal your true heart condition (12–13).***

God had spoken to Israel and their response showed their heart more than their words. God's Word works God's intentions. His words speed to do what He wants. His word pierces to the innermost parts of a person. It discerns what we cannot see and reveals the true condition of the heart (v.12).

God's power is behind His words, and nothing nor anyone can be hidden from Him. Be thankful for the opportunity to get things right now, to grow and affirm right motives. Know that an account must be given.

Believers should live a Christ-centered life, knowing that only through Him can we enter God's eternal rest. We work and struggle now, knowing that one day that will be set aside for His rest. Invite God's Word to do its work in your heart to equip and prepare you, by exposing yourself to it consistently. Enjoy the encouragement as well as the correction which it provides.

***Questions further thought and discussion:***

- Why is even a godly fear not a popular concept today and what is the danger of avoiding it?
- To what extent and how might a believer experience divine rest now (if at all)? How would it differ from the divine rest promised here?
- How have you experienced the piercing, discerning activity of God's Word in your life? How might you take greater advantage of its power? What will you determine to do about it?