

EXPLANATION OF 58TH BIBLEBOOK

HEBREWS 4 (A.D. 64)

OUTLINE

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| 4:1-10. | A warning that ‘the true home or Rest of God’ may be forfeited | 1 |
| 4:11-13. | An exhortation to persevere and make every effort to enter into the true Rest of God | 5 |
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| 4:14-16. | Christians have a great High Priest. They should approach him with bold confidence | 6. |

Hebrews 4 teaches that the promise to enter God’s Rest still stands.

During the Old Testament period the Israelites had the gospel preached to them, but the message was of no value to them, because they did not combine their hearing with faith and obedience (4:1-6). Long after the days of Joshua (when Israel entered the Promised Land) God spoke through David and said: “Do not harden your hearts!”

The Sabbath-Rest (living in the presence of God) for the people of God remains and believing Israelites will enter that Rest. Because God’s Word is living and effective, everyone must make every effort to enter God’s Rest by faith and obedience (4:7-13).

Believers in the New Testament period have a great High Priest who is able to sympathize with human weaknesses. He is without sin and had gone through the heavens (to make atonement for sins). Therefore believers must approach the throne of grace with confidence and receive mercy, grace and help just when they need it (4:14-16).

4:1-10. A warning that ‘the true home or Rest of God’ may be forfeited.

4:1. Let us fear, therefore, that as long as the promise to enter into his Rest is left open, someone from among you appears to have fallen *permanently* short.¹

The promise of entering God’s Rest still ‘stands’ in the sense of ‘is left open’. The ‘Rest’ (cf. 3:11) was not exhausted by entering ‘the earthly Canaan’. During the Old Testament period the goal of the people of God was to enter the earthly Promised Land, Canaan. *During the New Testament period the goal of the people of God is to enter the spiritual counterpart of the earthly Canaan, namely the Heavenly Jerusalem (after death) or the New Jerusalem on the new earth (after the resurrection)* (cf. 4:9-10)². Believers are urged to press on, not to miss that goal, but to attain that goal!

4:2. For we also have had the gospel preached (evangelised) (to us) just as also to them, but the message that was heard was of no value (profit) to them, because it was not mixed with faith with those who heard (it).³

a. The Hebrew and other believers today have had the gospel preached to them just as the Israelites in the past.

The first perfect tense in ‘evangelised’ *emphasises the completeness of the evangelization that had taken place*, leaving no room for any excuse to the effect that evangelisation had been inadequate or deficient⁴.

The second perfect tense in ‘mixed’ *emphasises the fact that the message had not been combined with faith*. The Israelites continued to hear, but persisted in unbelief! The Israelites had the gospel preached to them⁵. The good news consisted of Exodus 19:3-6 and Exodus 23:20-33. It told the Israelites that the God of their fathers, who had delivered them from slavery in Egypt, would bring them safely to the Promised Land and give them possession of it. He would make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to himself.

¹ **4:1.** Let us fear (be careful) (φοβηθωμεν>φοβεω)(vsao--xp)(*cohortative subjunctive*), therefore (ουν)(ch=conjunction hyper/superordinating), that as long as (μηποτε)(cc=conjunction coordinating) the promise (η επαγγελια)(n-gf-s) to enter (εισελθειν)(vnaa) into his (αυτου-η-ον)(npgmzs =noun *pronoun* genitive masculine 3rd person singular) Rest (η καταπαυσις)(n-af-s) is left open (behind) (is left unfulfilled) (καταλειπομενης>καταλειπομαι)(vppgf-s’=verb participle present passive genitive feminine singular), someone (τις)(apinm-s= adjective pronominal *indefinite* nominative masculine singular) from among (εξ)(pg=preposition genitive) you (υμων)(npg-yp=noun *pronoun* genitive 2nd person plural) appears (δοκη>δοκειω)(vsps--zs) to have fallen *permanently* short (to fall behind) (υστερηκεναι>υστερεω)(vnra)

² There will not be a future new earthly Israel as the future Promised Land in the so-called Millennium Kingdom, as dispensationalists (futurists) believe.

³ **4:2.** For (γαρ)(cs=conjunction subordinating) we also (και) have had (εσμεν>ειμι)(vipa--xp+) the gospel preached (ευηγγελισμενοι>ευαγγελιζομαι)(+vprnmxp=verb participle perfect passive nominative masculine 1st person plural) (the perfect tense emphasises the completeness of the evangelisation that had taken place) (to us) just as (καταπερ)(cs) also (κακεινοι = και+)(ab=adverb) to those/them (+εκεινος-η-ον)(apdnm-p=adjective pronominal *demonstrative* nominative masculine plural), but (αλλα)(cc) the message (ο λογος)(n-nm-s) that was heard (η ακοη)(n-gf-s) (descriptive genitive emphasising that the message is associated with hearing, implying that the message is intended to be heard and therefore must be preached) was of no value (profit) (ωφελησεν>ωφελεω)(viaa--zs) to them (εκεινος-η-ον)(apdam-p *demonstrative*), because it was not (μη)(ab) mixed (blended, combined, united) (συγκερασμενου>συκεραννυμι)(vprpam-p *perfect tense*) with faith (η πιστις)(n-df-s) with those who heard (ακουσασιν>ακουω)(vpaadm-p) (it)

⁴ Romans 10:18

⁵ cf. Galatians 2:8

b. But they did not combine 'hearing' with 'faith'⁶!

The condition was that the Israelites would believe and obey God's covenant. However, the good news did them no good, because they did not believe God's voice and did not keep/obey God's covenant.

The practical implication is: *Not the hearing of the gospel, but the appropriation of the gospel by faith and obedience brings salvation! Such faith is genuine faith, will be persistent faith and is the kind of faith that saves!*

The Rest about which God speaks is

- through faith in and obedience to the gospel to be saved
- through salvation to enter heaven/the presence of God

Twice God spoke of a rest:

a. The 'rest' on the seventh day of creation after he had completed his creation (4:4).

4:3. We, the believers, enter (that) Rest, just as he (God) has said, "So I swore in my anger. Never shall they enter into my Rest." And yet (his) works have been completed since/from the creation of the world.⁸

4:4. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh (day) in this manner: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his work."⁹

The Hebrew text uses the verb 'shabat' (to rest, to stop doing something, e.g. here 'to stop creating') and the Greek text uses the verb 'katapaúō' (to rest). *The seventh creation day has no end formula* (like the other 6 creation days: "It was evening and it was morning, the day"). Therefore *God's Rest began on the seventh creation day, but has since then never ended! It has been available throughout the Old Testament period and is still available during the New Testament period.* His Rest continues and may be shared by anyone who responds with faith and obedience.

Jesus repeats this truth: "My Father works until now, and I work". God's Rest began after the work of creation was finished and is still continuing on. Nevertheless, God continues to work! Therefore Christ continues to work¹⁰! Thus 'God's Rest' does not mean that God ceased to work! The Sabbath day celebrates God's Rest, that is, *celebrates the completion of God's creation, but it never celebrates stopping to work or doing nothing.* Jesus asked the Jews, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"¹¹! It is lawful to do good work and save lives on the Sabbath.

Another interpretation of Hebrews 4:3-4 comes from *The Epistle of Barnabas* (15:4f,8) (an early dispensational view)¹².

b. The 'Rest', not of entering the Promised Land, Canaan, but of entering the heavenly Jerusalem.

4:5. And in this (above mentioned passage) again: "Never shall they enter into my Rest."¹³

In Psalm 95:11 the LORD in his anger against Israel declared on oath: "They (Israel) shall never enter my Rest" (4:5). The Hebrew text uses the substantive 'menuchah'¹⁴ and the Greek text uses the substantive 'katapausis'. Verse 5 follows immediately on verse 4 and shows that they speak of the same 'rest'.

⁶ Romans 10:21

⁷ Romans 1:5; Romans 16:25-26

⁸ **4:3.** We, the believers (πιστευσαντες>πιστευω)(vpaanmχp), enter (εισερχομεθα>εισερχομαι) (vιpη--xp) (that)(dafs) Rest (η καταπαυσις) (n-af-s), just as (καθως)(cs) he (God) has said (ειρηκεν>λεγω)(vira--zs), "So (ως)(cs) I swore (declared an oath) (ωμοσα>ομνημι)(viaa--xs) in (εν)(pg) my (μου)(npg-xs) anger (η οργη)(n-df-s). Never (ει)(cs)(very strong negative) shall they enter (εισελευσονται>εισερχομαι)(vιfr--zp) into (εις)(pa) my Rest." And yet (καιτοι)(cs) (his) works (το εργος)(n-gn-p) have been completed (finished) (γενηθεντων>γινομαι)(vpaogn-p passive deponent) since/from (απο)(pg) the creation (η καταβολη)(n-gf-s) of the world (ο κοσμος)(n-gm-s). (One would expect his Rest to commence from the creation onwards)

⁹ **4:4.** For (γαρ)(cs) somewhere (που)(abi indefinite) he has spoken (ειρηκεν>λεγω)(vira--zs) about (περι)(pg) the seventh (εβδομος-η-ον) (apogf-s ordinal) (day) in this manner (with these words) (ουτως)(ab): "And (και)(cc) God rested (κατεπαυσεν>καταπαυω)(viaa--zs) on (εν)(pd) the seventh (εβδομος-η-ον)(a-odf-s ordinal) day (η ημερα)(n-df-s) from (απο)(pg) all (τας)(a--gn-p) his (αυτος-η-ον)(npgmzs) work (το εργος)(n-gn-p) (Genesis 2:2)

¹⁰ John 5:17

¹¹ Mark 3:4

¹² The Epistle of Barnabas is an apocryphal manuscript written between 70-136 A.D. "Pay attention, children, to the meaning of the words: 'He finished it in six days'. It means that in 6000 years the Lord will bring everything to completion. For 'the day' with him is a thousand years, of which he himself bears me witness when he says, 'Behold, the day of the Lord shall be as a thousand years' (2 Peter 3:8). Therefore, children, in six days - that is in 6000 years - everything will be brought to completion. 'And he rested the seventh day'. This means: when his Son comes and brings to nought the period of the Lawless One and judges the ungodly and changes the sun and moon and stars, then he will rest properly on the seventh day (representing the 7th 1000 years) ... Finally he says to them: 'Your new moons and sabbaths I cannot endure' (Isaiah 1:13). See what he means: it is not your present sabbaths that are acceptable, but the sabbath that I have made, in which, when I have put everything to rest, I will make a beginning of the eighth day (representing eternity), that is, the beginning of a new world."

'The sabbath' of God is here the seventh millennium of the present creation, which is to be followed by the eternal age of the new creation.

Barnabas has confused the issue by superimposing on the Jewish scheme of the millennial sabbath or seventh 'day' the Christian concept of the eighth millennium corresponding to the resurrection day. Thus the seventh day is a type of the seventh age of righteousness which is to follow six ages of sin's domination. *The mistaken Jewish millennial thinking is the root of the modern mistaken Christian millennial thinking!*

In modern dispensationalism: the 6 dispensations of sin's domination will be followed by the 7th dispensation, 'the millennial kingdom of peace.'

¹³ **4:5.** And (και)(cc) in (εν)(pd) this (above mentioned passage) (ουτος-αυτη-τουτο)(apddm-s=adjective pronominal demonstrative dative masculine singular) again (παλι)(ab): "Never (ει)(cs)(very strong negative) shall they enter (εισελευσονται>εισερχομαι)(vιfd--zp) into (εις)(pa) my (μου)(npg-xs) Rest (η καταπαυσις)(n-af-s)." Psalm 95:11

¹⁴ cf. Deuteronomy 12:9

God's Rest remained open to his people since his work of the creation was finished, but it will be forfeited by unbelief and disobedience. "I (Jesus) tell you, not one of those men invited will get a taste of my banquet"¹⁵, that is, the great banquet/feast in the Kingdom of God.

4:6. Since then it remains that some will enter into that (Rest), and those who formerly had the gospel preached (to them) did not go in, because of disobedience!¹⁶

4:7. God again set a certain day, (*calling it:*) 'Today'. In (*through*) David¹⁷ he *continues* to speak after so long a time¹⁸, as was said before,: "Today, if you hear his voice, you *must* not harden your hearts."¹⁹

The generation of Israelites during the exodus from Egypt, "had been evangelised formerly", yet failed to enter God's Rest (not only in a physical sense: the Promised Land, Canaan, but also in a spiritual sense: the Kingdom of God or the Heavenly Jerusalem) because of their lack of faith and lack of obedience. They heard the gospel, but were not saved. They were lost instead.

Every time God speaks in human history it is 'Today' for the hearers! "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts".

"After so long a time God continues to speak through David" (4:7). It means David speaks "through the Psalter"²⁰. It does not imply that David actually composed Psalm 95. What is important is that GOD continues to speak 'through the Psalms' (as through the rest of the Bible)²¹! God's Word remains 'alive' and 'effective' long after it was spoken and speaks to the heart and conscience of the hearers in the New Testament period. The divine warning is as applicable to Christians (today) as it was in the days of Moses or David or Paul or the author of the letter to the Hebrews. If the New Testament readers treat God's Word lightly and 'tempt' God by trying to see how far they can presume upon his patience, they in turn will forfeit God's Rest!

4:8. For if Joshua had *once for all* given Rest to them, he (God) would not *have spoken* after this about another day.²²

Joshua and Jesus. The parallel between the Old Testament 'Jesus' (Joshua means 'saviour'), who led his followers into the earthly Canaan, and the New Testament 'Jesus' (Jesus also means 'Saviour'), who leads the heirs of the new covenant into their heavenly inheritance, is a prominent theme of early Christian typology²³. Jesus is not only the antitype of the earlier (general) Joshua, but also of the later (high priest) Joshua, the first post-exilic high priest²⁴.

The writer does not make this typology, but contrasts the temporal rest (the Promised Land), which Israel entered under Joshua, and the true Rest (the Heavenly Jerusalem), which is still reserved for the people of God (the believers, whether from Jewish or other background). It is plain that the 'Rest' spoken of in Psalm 95:11 is not the earthly Canaan. 'The land of rest' was occupied under Joshua by the second generation of Israelites and they enjoyed "rest from all their enemies round about"²⁵. The Israelites addressed in Psalm 95 already lived in the land of Canaan for generations and were warned that they could forfeit the 'Rest' of God (the eternal heaven and the new earth), which must be different than the rest of their enemies round about (the Promised Land, Israel).

4:9. Consequently there remains a Sabbath-Rest for the people of God;²⁶

The writer of Hebrews concludes that the 'Rest' of God, called 'the Sabbath-rest', is still open for the people of God! The Greek text uses the substantive 'sabbatismos' (a Sabbath-rest). *This 'Rest' has nothing to do with the mistaken notion that Christians are commanded to keep the Saturday as a Sabbath day. It also has nothing to do with the notion that Israel would inherit the Holy Land in the Middle East in the future (1948)!*

¹⁵ Luke 14:24

¹⁶ **4:6.** Since (because) (επει)(cs) then (ουν)(ch) it remains (is left over) (απολειπεται>απολειπω)(vipr--zs) that some (τις, τινες)(apiam-p indefinite) will enter (εισελθειν>εισερχομαι)(vnaa) into (εις)(pa) that (ουτος-αυτη-τουτο)(npafzs) (Rest), and (και)(cc) those who formerly (προτερον)(arman-s / abm adverb *coMparative*) had the gospel preached (ευαγγελισθεντος>ευαγγελιζομαι)(vparnm-p) (to them) did not (ουκ)(ab) go in (εισηλθον>εισερχομαι)(viaa-zp), because of (δια)(pa) disobedience (remaining unpersuaded) (η απειθεια)(n-af-s)!

¹⁷ Psalm 95:11

¹⁸ after Genesis 2:2

¹⁹ **4:7.** God again (παλιν)(ab) set (designated, appointed, marked out with a boundary) (οριζει>οριζω)(vipa--zs) a certain (τις, τινος) (a-iaf-s indefinite) day (η ημερα)(n-af-s), 'Today' (σημερον)(ab). In (εν)(pd) David he *continues* to speak (λεγων>λεγω)(vppanm-s) after (μετα)(pa) so long (τοσαυτος)(a-dam-s demonstrative) a time (ο χρονος)(n-am-s), as (καθως)(cs) was said before (*and those words keep ringing in the ears*)(προεφρηται>προλεγω)(virp--zs perfect tense): "Today (σημερον)(ab), if (εαν)(cs) you hear (ακουσητε>ακουω)(vsaa--yp) his (αυτος-η-ον)(npgmzs pronoun) voice (η φωνη)(n-gf-s), you *must* not harden (σκληρυνητε>σκληρυνω) (vsaa--yp subjunctive / vmaa--yp *iMperative*) your (υμων)(npg-yp) hearts (η καρδια)(n-af-p)."

²⁰ Psalm 95:7-8

²¹ cf. Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16

²² **4:8.** For (γαρ)(cs) if (ει)(cs) Joshua (Ιησους) had *once for all* given Rest (κατεπαυσεν>καταπαυω)(viaa--zs) to them (αυτος-η-ον)(nparmpz), he (God) would not *have spoken* (ελαλει>λαλω)(viaa--zs aorist tense) after (μετα)(pa) this (ουτος-αυτη-τουτο)(arpan-p demonstrative) about (περι)(pg) another (αλλος-η-ον)(a-gf-s) day (η ημερα)(n-gf-s).

²³ The Epistle of Barnabas 6:8f, 70-136 A.D.; Justin's Dialogue with Trypho 113,132, 155-170 A.D.

²⁴ Ezra 3:20; Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 3:1; Zechariah 6:11f

²⁵ Joshua 23:1; cf. Joshua 21:44

²⁶ **4:9.** Consequently (αρα)(ch) there remains (απολειπεται>απολειπω)(vipr--zs) a Sabbath-Rest (ο σαββατισμος)(n-nm-s) for the people (ο λαος)(n-dm-s) of God (του θεου)(n-gm-s);

The 'Rest' is not the rest which God enforces on others or even bestows on others, but it is the Rest which God himself enjoys. The Rest is the eternal reality of eternal life in the presence of God/Jesus in heaven and on the new earth after the second coming of Christ to restore everything²⁷.

4:10. For he who enters into his (God's) Rest also himself *once for all* rests from his works, just as God (did) from his own.²⁸

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God. The rest of God is called 'a sabbath rest' or 'a sabbath keeping', because it is a participation in God's own Rest! When God completed his work of creation, he rested, that is, he stopped creating. So his people, when they have completed their work of service on earth in accordance with God's will, they will enter into God's Rest; they will permanently enjoy 'the completed work of salvation of Christ in the presence of God in the Heavenly Jerusalem' (and after the second coming: in the New Jerusalem on the new earth). "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. They will Rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them"²⁹!

Christians do not yet enjoy the experience of that Rest in their present mortal bodies on this present earth, but it is their heritage. By faith they live in the assured hope (cf. 11:1) here and now that it will be a complete reality in the future. Hebrews 11 speaks of people who had such 'faith'. They looked forward to 'the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God' (11:10). They were longing for 'a better country' - 'a heavenly one' (11:16). They were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain 'a better resurrection' (11:35).

c. When will believers enter this Rest?

- When they die? i.e. at 'the first death and first resurrection'? At the physical death of their body and the translation of their human spirit into the presence of Christ³⁰?
- Or when they are resurrected, i.e. at 'the second resurrection'? At the physical resurrection of their body? The bodies and spirits of unbelievers will be translated/thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulphur.

The author of Hebrews gives no explicit answer. On the one hand, he says that the believers of the Old Testament period would only receive what had been promised (the New Jerusalem) together with believers of the New Testament period (11:39-40). On the other hand, he says that the New Testament believers already enjoy the reality of the Heavenly Jerusalem at the time of their physical death (12:22-24)³¹.

The key is Hebrews 11:39-40, "None of the Old Testament believers received what had been promised. They would only once for all be made perfect", 'be made complete' or 'be brought to the goal'³² together with the New Testament believers (11:40). The full number of elect believers saved from Israel will be reached simultaneously with the full number of elect believers saved from the Gentile nations³³.

The real Old Testament Israel (the chosen believers in Israel) was never a perfect reality by itself, that is, without the New Testament Church! The Old Testament Israel still had to be continued on a higher plane of realities and extended to include the chosen believers in all the other nations in order to reach God's perfect goal, namely, God's people which consists of the chosen believing Jews and the chosen believing non-Jews on its way to 'the New Jerusalem on the new earth'³⁴. The perfect reality will be the full number of the chosen and believing Jews throughout the ages and the full number of the chosen and believing non-Jews/Gentiles throughout the ages³⁵. Together they only will receive the unshakeable Kingdom on the new earth (12:26-28)!

It does not seem likely that the words 'what has been promised' (11:39) refers to 'the enjoyment of salvation in the presence of God in the Heavenly Jerusalem', because Old Testament believers like Abraham are already alive in the presence of God³⁶ and likewise New Testament believers are already alive in the presence of God in the Heavenly Jerusalem³⁷. It seems more likely that the words 'what has been promised' refers, not to *eternal life in heaven after physical death, but to the eternal life on the new earth after the resurrection from the dead*³⁸!

²⁷ Acts 3:21

²⁸ **4:10.** For (γαρ)(cs=conjunction subordinating) he (the believer)(ddnms=definite article dative nominative masculine singular / aprnm-s) who enters

(εισελθων>εισερχομαι)(vpaanms) into (εις)(pa=preposition accusative) his (God's) Rest (η καταπαυσις)(n-af-s) also (και)(ab) himself (αυτος-η-ον)(nprnmzs) *once for all* rests (ceases)(κατεπαυσεν >καταπαυω)(viaa--zs) from (απο)(pg=preposition genitive) his (αυτος-η-ον)(nprgmzs) works (το εργον)(n-gn-p), just as (ωσπερ)(cs) God (ο θεος) (did) from (απο)(pg) his own (ιδιος-α-ον)(ap-gn-p).

²⁹ Revelation 14:13

³⁰ Philippians 1:23; Revelation 20:4-6

³¹ Philippians 1:23

³² τελειωθωσιν <τελειωω (subjunctive aorist passive)

³³ Romans 11:25-26

³⁴ Romans 2:28-29; Romans 4:11-17; Galatians 6:12-16; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 5:9-10

³⁵ Romans 11:25-26

³⁶ cf. Matthew 22:32

³⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Philippians 1:21-23; Hebrews 12:22-24

³⁸ Revelation 21:1-2,9-10,12-14

Believers during the Old Testament period were already *THEN* citizens of that ‘Rest’ and believers during the New Testament period are already *NOW* citizens of that ‘Rest’, of that heavenly city and that heavenly country³⁹, even when they will only exercise their civic rights in the future. At the time of their death they will enter heaven and at the time of their resurrection they will enter the new earth⁴⁰.

God’s New Testament people are urged to press forward towards this ‘Rest’ in unbroken fellowship with the Living God. “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to”⁴¹.

4:11-13. An exhortation to persevere and make every effort to enter into the true Rest of God.

a. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that Rest.

4:11. Let us therefore make every effort to *once for all* enter into that Rest, so that someone will not (no-one will) fall in the same example of disobedience.⁴²

In view of the glory that is accessible to faith and in view of the disaster that follows upon unbelief, believers must ‘make haste’, ‘make it their earnest endeavour’, ‘concentrate their energies to achieve that goal’. Their goal is the eternal home of the people of God. God is not to be trifled with. God’s Word cannot be ignored with impunity, but must be received in faith and obeyed in daily life. *Whenever God speaks, then his ‘today’ has arrived! Let all hearers take God’s Word seriously and make haste to obey it*, that is, to enter God’s Rest.

b. The word of God is not like the word of man.

4:12. For the word of God is *continuously* living and active. Sharper more than any double-edged short sword, it *always* penetrates even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; and able to discern the thoughts and deliberations of the heart.⁴³

Characteristics of God’s Word:

- It is ‘living’ - *it continually speaks as a living person (here and now) to us* and it *continually* brings (divine) life to every kind of death in us. Whenever we read the Bible, it is God’s “today” in which God is speaking to us!
- It is ‘active’, ‘energetic’ and ‘productive’. *It produces effective results*. It is self-fulfilling and speeds to fulfil the purpose for which it has been uttered⁴⁴. God promised: “So is my Word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I send it”⁴⁵.
- It is sharper than any double-edged sword, it ‘penetrates’, ‘pierces’, or ‘passes through’ even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, that is, to the very core of our human being, personality and character. The word of God is double-edged or two-mouthed, it cuts both ways, that is, it *accuses and defends*; it *judges or approves* the reflections, thoughts or ideas and deliberations (of especially philosophers and religious people) or intents of the heart; it *shows what lacks and needs improvement or what is present and receives praise*. *The word of God diagnoses the conditions and attitudes of the human heart. It brings blessings to those who receive it in faith, but pronounces judgement on those who disregard it*.
- It is the short ‘sword’ or ‘sacrificial knife’⁴⁶ of the Romans, which the Holy Spirit wields in spiritual warfare⁴⁷. In Revelation 1:16 it is the long sword⁴⁸ used by the barbaric people, which Christ wields in judgement⁴⁹.

³⁹ Philippians 2:20

⁴⁰ cf. Philippians 2:21; cf. Revelation 21:1-2,9-10

⁴¹ Luke 13:24

⁴² **4:11.** Let us therefore (οὐν)(ch=conjunction hyper/superordinating)) make every effort (make haste) (σπουδασωμεν>σπουδαζω)(vsaa—xp)(cohortative subjunctive) to *once for all*

enter (εισελθειν>εισερχομαι)(vnaa) into (εις)(pa) that (εκεινος-η-ον)(a-daf-s demonstrative) Rest (η καταπαυσις)(n-af-s), so that (ινα)(cs) someone (τις)(apinms indefinite) will not (μη)(ab)(no-one will) fall (πεση>πιπτω)(vsaa--zs) in (εν)(pd=preposition dative) the same (ο αυτος-η αυτη-το αυτο) (a-dn-s demonstrative) example (το υποδειγμα)(n-dn-s) of disobedience (η απειθεια)(n-gf-s).

⁴³ **4:12.** For (γαρ)(cs) the word (ο λογος)(n-nm-s) of God (του θεου) is *continuously* living (ζων>ζαω)(vppanm-s) and active (energetic, productive)

(ενεργης-εις)(a--nm-s). Sharper (τομητερος>τομος-η-ον)(a-mnm-s comparative) more than (υπερ)(pa) any (πας)(a--af-s) double-edged (two-mouthed) (δυστομος-ον> δι+το στομα)(a--af-s) short sword (sacrificial knife) (η μαχαира)(n-af-s), it *always* penetrates (pierces) (δουκνουμενος>διυγνεομαι)(vppnmm-s) even to (αχρι)(pg) the dividing (ο μερισμος)(n-gm-s) of soul (η ψυχη)(n-gf-s) and

(και)(cc=conjunction coordinating) spirit (το πνευμα) (n-gn-s), joints (ο αρμος)(n-gm-p) and marrow (ο μυελος)(n-gm-p) (these words together

express the very core of man’s being); and (και)(cc) able to discern (judge) (κριτικος-η-ον)(a--nm-s) the thoughts (η ενθυμησις)(n-gf-p) and deliberations (intents) (η εννοια)(n-gf-p) of the heart (η καρδια)(n-gf-s).

⁴⁴ Jeremiah 23:29

⁴⁵ Isaiah 55:10-11

⁴⁶ η μαχαира

⁴⁷ Ephesians 6:17

⁴⁸ η ρομφαια

⁴⁹ Revelation 1:16; Revelation 2:12

The rhetorical accumulation of related words: soul, spirit, joints and marrow does not intend to give a teaching on the psychological make-up of the human being, but rather expresses the inmost recesses of the spiritual human being, bringing subconscious thoughts and motives to light⁵⁰. God knows the human heart⁵¹.

c. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight.

4:13. And no creature is hidden before him (God). Everything is uncovered and *continually* powerless/helpless (as in a wrestler's grip around the neck) before/to the eyes of him to whom by us the matter (is) (to whom we must give account / to whom the final reckoning has to be made).⁵²

People can hide things from their neighbours and even deceive themselves, but they cannot hide anything from God⁵³! Everything is 'naked', 'stripped', 'bare', 'uncovered' and 'laid bare' to the eyes. Every argument of defence will be 'powerless' before the eyes of God. The word "trachélizó" means 'to twist the neck and the word "trachélismos" was a wrestler's grip around the neck of his opponent, rendering him limp, powerless and helpless! *Every argument against the Word of God / the final reckoning (Greek: logos) will be as powerless as a wrestler's grip around your neck rendering you limp, powerless and helpless! Every mouth is silenced when the whole world is held accountable to God*⁵⁴.

"The weapons we believers fight with are not 'carnal' (the weapons of this world). On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"⁵⁵. When people face God in the final judgement they will be likewise completely revealed naked and powerless. Stripped of every disguise and protection, people will be at the complete mercy of God, the Judge of all, when they give an account of their lives.

Section 3. Hebrews 4:14 to 5:10. Christ qualifies for the high priesthood.

4:14-16. Christians have a great High Priest. They should approach him with bold confidence.

a. Christians have a High Priest.

4:14. Therefore, *since we continually* have a great High Priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us *continually* hold firmly to the confession.⁵⁶

Jesus is a merciful and faithful High Priest (2:17). He is transcendent. He has gone through the heavens. The plural does not refer to the three heavens in 2 Corinthians 12:2, but reflects the plural used in the Hebrew word 'shamajim'⁵⁷. What is emphasized is Christ's transcendence: "he is made higher than the created heavens" (7:26). He transcends the creation (the created dimensions of matter, energy, space and time)! He is the Creator⁵⁸. He upholds the creation (1:3) and fills the creation with everything he accomplished through his completed work of salvation. He ascended "far above all the created heavens, that he might fill all things"⁵⁹.

4:15. For we do not have a High Priest who is not able to sympathise with our weaknesses, but (we have) One who has been tempted⁶⁰ in every way, likewise (just as we are) - (yet) without sin.⁶¹

⁵⁰ 1 Corinthians 4:5

⁵¹ John 1:25; Acts 1:24; Acts 15:8

⁵² **4:13.** And no (ουκ)(ab=adverb) creature (or created thing) (η κτισις)(n-nf-s) is (εστιν)(vipa--zs) hidden (not manifest, invisible) (αφανης-εσ>α+φαινω to appear, become visible, reveal)(a--nf-s) before (ενωπιον)(pg) him (αυτος-η-ον)(npgmzs) (God). Everything (πας)(ap-nn-p) is uncovered (naked) (γυμνος-η-ον)(a--nn-p) and *continually* powerless/helpless (as the grip of a wrestler around the neck) (τετραχληλισμενα>τραχηλιζω)(vprpnn-p) before/to the eyes (ο οφθαλμος)(n-dm-p) of him (αυτος-η-ον)(npgmzs) (with reference to) (προς)(pa) whom (ον)(apram-s relative) by us (ημιν)(npd-xp=noun pronoun dative) the matter (ο λογος)(n-nm-s) (is) (the final reckoning has to be made, or to whom we must give account).

⁵³ Psalm 33:13-15

⁵⁴ Romans 3:19-20

⁵⁵ 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

⁵⁶ **4:14.** Therefore (ουν)(ch), *since we continually* have (εχοντες>εχω)(vprpnmxp) a great (μεγας-αλη-α)(a--am-s) High Priest (ο αρχιερευς) (n-am-s) who has gone through (διεληλυθοτα>διερχομαι)(vpraam-s)(the *perfect tense* relates that Christ had already passed through the heavens and is still there) the heavens (ο ουρανος)(n-am-p), Jesus, the Son (ο υιος)(n-am-s) of God (του θεου)(n-gm-s), let us *continually* hold firmly (κρατωμεν>κρατω)(vspa--xp) to the confession (profession) (η ομολογια)(n-gf-s) (of faith).

⁵⁷ cf. Genesis 1:1

⁵⁸ John 1:3

⁵⁹ Ephesians 4:10; cf. Ephesians 1:21

⁶⁰ He is no longer sacrificed on a daily basis as the Roman Catholic Church teaches in their 'mass'!

⁶¹ **4:15.** For (γαρ)(cs) we do not (ου)(ab) have (εχομεν>εχω)(vipa--xp) a High Priest (ο αρχιερευς)(n-am-s) who is not (μη)(ab) able (powerful) (δυναμενον>δυναμαι)(vprpnam-s) to sympathise (συμπαθησα>συμπαθεω)(vnaa) with our (ημων)(npg-xp) weaknesses (η ασθενεια)(n-df-p), but (δε)(ch) (we have) One who has been tempted (πειραρασμενον>πειραζω)(vprpam-s)(the *perfect tense* expresses the absolute completion of his work of salvation, the completed state and its continuing results!) in every way (with reference to all)(κατα παντα), likewise (according to similarity) (καθ + η ομοιοτης)(n-af-s)(just as we are) - (yet) without (χωρις)(pg) sin (η αμαρτια)(n-gf-s)

His transcendence (above and beyond creation) has made no difference to his humanity (within creation). He sympathises with us in every temptation or trial. He helps us in every weakness and in every difficult situation. He himself has suffered these temptations and trials (2:17). Christians have a High Priest that identified himself with humans. He endured human temptations and trials and endured them triumphantly.

‘Sympathy’ with the sinner’s weakness in his trial/temptation does not mean that he actually experiences (does) the sin, but rather that he experiences the strength/violence of the trial/temptation to sin, which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. Every human being, who falls before a temptation or trial, yields before the last strain. But Jesus Christ remained without sin; he did not yield to the temptations of sin⁶².

Romans 8:3 and Philippians 2:7 say, “God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering for man”. This does NOT mean that Jesus was a sinner, but rather that Jesus came to earth in a weak and tested (tempted) and mortal human nature (as we have), yet without ever yielding to sin⁶³! Otherwise Jesus could not have been the Saviour from sin!

b. Let Christians approach the throne of grace with ‘confidence’, ‘boldness’.

4:16. Let us then approach with confidence the throne of grace, so that we *once for all* may receive mercy and find grace with a view to well-timed help.⁶⁴

In contrast to all the restrictions placed on the Old Testament priesthood and believers when they entered into God’s presence, New Testament believers have the right and the ability to approach God!

The throne of grace in heaven is constantly ‘open’ and ‘accessible’ so that Christians may receive mercy and grace to help them just when they need it. At the moment of the temptation or trial Christ’s mercy and grace to help is immediately available! Note God’s promise, “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it”⁶⁵.

The throne of grace is the throne of God, where Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God the Father as the exalted King, Prophet and High Priest. It is the antitype of the type (the reality of the shadow): ‘the mercy seat’ in the holy of holies in the earthly temple (9:5).

c. For Christians atonement is constantly available.

During the Old Testament period, *atonement of sins was done in token* before this mercy seat or throne of grace *only once a year* on the Great Atonement Day! But now during the New Testament period, *atonement of sins has been made, not in token but in fact*⁶⁶, and not once a year, but *constantly available* to assure the Christian that his sins have really been forgiven (8:12; 10:17).

⁶² cf. John 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁶³ Romans 8:3

⁶⁴ **4:16.** Let us then (οὖν)(ch) approach (προσερχομεθα>προσερχομαι)(vspn--xp)(cohortative subjunctive) with confidence (η παρρησια)(n-gf-s)

the throne (ο θρονος)(n-dm-s) of (characterised by) grace (η χαρις)(n-gf-s), so that (ινα)(cs) we *once for all* may receive (λαβωμεν>λαμβανω)(vsaa--xp) mercy (το ελεος)(n-an-s) and find (ευρωμεν>ευρισκω)(vsaa--xp) grace (η χαρις)(n-af-s) with a view to (εις)(pa) well-timed (ευκαιρος-ον)(a--af-s) help (η βοηθεια)(n-af-s) (help at the right time, just when we need it).

⁶⁵ 1 Corinthians 10:13

⁶⁶ John 19:30 “It is finished” and remains finished for ever!