

1. In Hebr. 3:1-4:13 the writer introduces Moses. Moses and Joshua could not give lasting rest to Israel. Jesus can do that. In fact, many in Israel rejected the temporal rest which Moses and Joshua offered them in the Promised Land. But though Israel in large part rejected not only the Promised Land but also eternal rest, there still remains a rest for God's people. Vs. 9 tells us: "Therefore there remains a Sabbath Rest for the people of God." This word "Sabbath Rest" occurs nowhere else in the Bible. It is heaven.
2. Vss. 1-10 of our text establish the fact that there is still a Sabbath Rest for God's people. Vss. 11-13 say: "Don't lose this offered rest." Many in Israel lost the Promised Land under Joshua, the leader, because they refused to believe. Vs. 8 is pivotal: "If Joshua could have given them rest, the writer would not have spoken thereafter about another day." Joshua was an OT type of Jesus. In fact, in Hebrew the word for Joshua and Jesus are the same word. Joshua led believing Israel into the Promised Land. Jesus is the fulfillment of Joshua. He leads God's believing people into the Promised Land of heaven, the fulfillment of the Promised Land of Canaan. That is why vs. 9 says: "There remains a Sabbath Rest for the people of God."
3. The last vs. of chapter 3 said: "We see that they could not enter because of unbelief." There is all hope for a sinner who believes. But if he refuses to believe, no one can help him. The great warning of our text is that we should never become guilty of unbelief. Think of Jesus' conflict with the Jews about the Sabbath Day, Jn. 5:16-18. They refused to believe that Jesus was and is the true Son of God. They began to hate Him and then they murdered Him. Mk. 16:16 says: "He who does not believe will be damned."
4. There are two pivotal hortatory verbs in our text: In vs. 1 we read: "Therefore let us fear." Why? Because of the danger of unbelief. And vs. 13: "Therefore let us be zealous to enter into that rest." Why? Because the writer had just said: "There remains a Sabbath Rest for the people of God."
5. Vs. 2 is a truly remarkable statement. It plainly says that the OT people of God, Israel, received the Gospel just as we do. For a parallel passage read I Cor. 10:1-5. Why then were they lost? Because the preached Word was not received by faith in the hearers. This vs. reminds us of: "Faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the Word of God." Rom. 10:17. And Lk. 11:28: "Blessed are they that they hear the Word of God and observe it." And Jesus frequently said: "Let him who has ears hear."
6. Vs. 4 of our text clearly states that God created the Rest of everlasting life on the seventh day of creation. This Rest was not withdrawn when sin entered the world. Not was it withdrawn when Israel rejected it. It still remains and we enter it. In fact, that is why David repeated the thought of this Rest at Ps. 95:11. Since creation God's message to man has been: "Enter My Rest."
7. It is suggested that vss. 9-11 be used as a funeral text. Vss. 9-10 describe heaven to us, rest from all labors, and vs. 11 is an admonition to those attending the funeral to take their Christian faith seriously and to be careful not to become guilty of unbelief as did Israel in the wilderness.
8. Vss. 12-13 are a grand passage on the Word of God in both the OT and the NT. Vs. 2 had just told us that many in Israel refused to believe what the Word told them. The Word is called living, active, sharp, piercing, judging. The Word, both Law and Gospel, has the power to enter, permeate and transform. For the believer these are comforting Words but for the unbeliever these are terrifying Words. Only one thing will remain when heaven and earth pass away, the Word of God. It is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path. Listen to Him!

Theme: LET US FEAR AND LET US BE ZEALOUS

Introduction: These two exhortations are taken from vss. 1 and 11 of our text. The first one reads: "Let us fear lest anyone of you fails of the promise of entering eternal rest." And the other reads: "Let us be zealous to enter that rest lest anyone fall because of unbelief." Unbelief is the great problem. Not the sinner but the unbeliever will be damned. Mk. 16:16. Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. Our text warns us not to be overcome by unbelief.

I-Let Us Fear Lest Any of You Fails to Enter Eternal Rest. Vss. 1-10

A-God prepared eternal rest for all men at creation. Gen. 2:2.

God rested from His labors on the seventh day. According to our text this is where eternal rest for all men began. Although sin entered the world God did not ^{cease} → cease to make eternal rest available to mankind. After man fell into sin God promised the Savior. Gen. 3:15. At the time of the flood He saved Noah and his family. They believed the promises of God. He promised the Savior to Abraham. The patriarchs are now in everlasting life. He made His Covenant with Israel. But we know that many in Israel rejected Him. They did not enter the promised land although they heard the good news of salvation. Vs. 2.

B-But this eternal rest can be lost. Chapter 3:7-19 tells us of Israel in the wilderness. They hardened their hearts against the Lord and His Word. Although they heard the Gospel just as we do (I Cor. 10:1-5) they refused to believe. And so they could not enter God's rest because of their unbelief. At Jesus' time the Jews treated Jesus in same way. John 5 is a good example. It was then that they began to plot His death. In Ps. 95 David continued to warn the children of Israel not to walk in the ways of Israel in the wilderness.

II-Let Us Be Zealous to Enter That Rest Lest Anyone Fall in Unbelief.

This is the thought in vss. 11-13 of our text.

A-There remains a Sabbath Rest for the people of God. Vs. 9. Here we learn that the person who inherits eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ rests from all his labors just as God rested from His labors on the seventh day of creation. At that time creation, as we now know it, will be gone, but God, His people, His Word, will reside in everlasting rest. There is a golden chain from creation to life eternal in heaven.

B-Let us be zealous to enter into that rest. Vs. 11. We must live every day in the consciousness that we are citizens of heaven, that heaven is our home, that here we have no continuing city, that this life is only a preparation for the life to come. We must live every day in the consciousness that there are many mansions in the Father's House and that Jesus has gone before us to prepare a place for us. But how do we do that? That is the subject of the next part of our sermon.

C-We must listen to the Word of the Lord. Vss. 12-13. Our text says that the Word of God is living, active, sharp, piercing, judging. It has the power to enter, to permeate and transform. This involves us in the Law and the Gospel. The Law shows us our sin so that we might confess our sin. The Gospel shows us our Savior so that we might receive forgiveness of sins. This forgiveness of sins leads to God's eternal rest, everlasting life. And then the Law assists us in leading a God-pleasing life of faith toward God and love toward our neighbor. Heaven and earth will pass away but God's Word will never pass away. And Jesus promises: "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it."

Conclusion: Remember that Israel in the wilderness heard the Word of God but rejected it. They were lost in the wilderness and did not enter God's rest. And so our text warns us: Let us fear lest we fail of God's promises. Let us be zealous to enter that rest.