

The Christian Sabbath:
a Spiritual Reality in Christ, Not a Weekly Observance
Hebrews 4:10

Nutshell: When Christ said, “It is finished,” He rested from the work of Redemption, just as God the Father rested from the work of Creation on the 7th day. Christ’s rest is the Sabbath we observe by resting in it for salvation.

I. Context: The Open Invitation that the Wilderness Generation missed.

II. Text

Heb 4:10 for He having entered into His rest, He also rested from His works, just as God from His own.

Literal Standard Version with modifications

4 of the next outline items, III - VII, are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 + the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. Outline of Hebrews

I. Christ’s person and work better than the angels, 1:1 - 2:18

II. Christ’s stewardship better than Moses’, 3:1-6

III. Christ’s **rest** better than Joshua’s, 3:7 - 4:13

◆ IV. Christ’s priesthood better than Aaron’s, 4:14- 10:18

V. Admonitions based on Christ’s excellence, 10:19 - 13:25

B. Paul wrote an inspired book to a Jewish audience; 2 Pet 3:15-16; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 3:1. Hebrews is the only possibility.

C. Summary paraphrase of the book so far:

Christ’s Exaltation: FROM God and As God

1. Christ is from God the Father (1:1-2) *and* is God Himself (1:8).

2. He **purged our sins** and assumed a **settled** position of authority with the Father (1:3).

3. His being and authority are greater than angels’ in every way, as Scriptures testify (1:4-14).

4. His authority is therefore binding (2:1-4)

Christ's Exaltation: As Man and FOR Man

5. God promised man dominion over all, even over angels (2:2-8a), PSALM 8
 - a. but we forfeited that dominion by sin (2:8b)
 - b. Jesus *became* man, briefly lower than the angels, to be the fulfillment of man's promised dominion (2:9, 16)
6. But the Father's plan was not for Christ *alone* to have dominion, but to give a people dominion *with Him* (2:9-13)
7. The Father sent Christ to suffer, paying for the sins of the elect, in order to **bond** them to Christ (2:9-13),
 - a. for them (not for angels) to enjoy freedom from Satan's fear-of-death regime (2:14-17)
 - b. *and* for Him to come to them in every test (2:18).

Christ's Exaltation: As Inheritance RECEIVER and GIVER

8. Christ as a servant *paralleled* Moses, but also far *exceeded* Him, calling for our highest loyalty (3:1-6)
9. And just as Moses' generation failed to experience the end they set off for, so *we might* fail to join to Christ (having *appeared* to join Him) (3:7-19), PSALM 95
10. But the offer to the Wilderness Generation to enter the Promised Land was ultimately an offer to join God's 7th Day of Creation Rest (4:1-8)
 - a. Ps 95 makes it clear that that invitation is *always open* to those believing
 - b. Making God's Creation Rest a type, or symbol, of **Salvation: an ending of human effort**; an ending of our insistence on our own rightness

Kid-speak: What book are we in? Hebrews! What does Hebrews mean? Hebrews is a name for the Israelites or the Jewish people. So Paul, who was a Jew (a Hebrew), was writing a book to other Jews (Hebrews) who had believed in Jesus.

11. Paul then condensed all this into a new, 1-time word for "rest": *Sabbatismos*- an official celebration of resting in Christ for salvation, leading to the ending of our present labors in Heaven (4:9). This rest "remains" for us.
- D. Bringing us to 4:10. There are *three* ways to understand its 5 pronouns. All *three* views agree that the final "His" refers

to God (God the Father, particularly)

View 1. “For **he** who entered into **his** rest, **he** also rested from **his** works, as God did from **His** own.”

- a. This takes the first four pronouns as any Christian
- b. But this makes 4:10 an *accomplished* rest. 4:11 exhorts us to enter a rest: for a Christian, a rest that includes the *future*.
- (c. Unless it’s a hypothetical: a Christian who entered his rest *would* have already stopped laboring, but we, 4:11, have more work before us.)

View 2. “For **he** who entered into **His** rest, **he** also rested from **his** works, as God did from **His** own.”

- a. This takes the second *and* last pronouns as referring to God. The believer, *having* entered God’s salvation rest, has ceased from his efforts, just as God did at Creation.
- b. But then why would 4:11 exhort us to labor *to* enter it? Entering God’s rest would be trusting Him for salvation: certainly not something we’d keep exerting ourselves to enter.

View 3. “For **He** who entered into **His** rest, **He** also rested from **His** works, as God did from **His** own.”

- a. This understands the first four pronouns as referring to Christ and the last one to the Father
- b. That is, Christ rested from the work of **Redemption** as the Father rested from the work of **Creation**

Kid-speak: **God** made the world in 6 days and rested on the 7th day (He wasn’t tired. He was just enjoying it.) What work did **Jesus** rest from after He came to earth? The work of saving His people from their sins on the cross.

- c. This is consistent with the exhortation of 4:11. We must exert ourselves *to* enter Christ’s rest, since it is so easily slipped away from, 2:1
 - d. This also suits the whole book context. The Hebrews were in danger of falling away from Christ, of missing His rest.
4. We might prefer that Paul had come out and said, “For Christ has entered His rest, resting from His works.”
- a. But recall the elegant ambiguity of 4:4 “He spoke somewhere...” and 2:6, “but someone somewhere

testified...”

- b. The book doesn't mention Jesus by name until 2:9 (2:3 has “the Lord”). It's all “the Son” in chap 1, mainly identifying the OT view of a Messiah.
 - i. Paul isn't trying to avoid an explicit allusion to Jesus. Heb 1:3 is pretty obviously talking about Jesus.
 - ii. It's more like an organic revelation, beginning with OT basics (Angels, then man's Gen 1 dominion)
 - c. Paul ‘rides’ the 2:9 “Jesus” until 3:1. *Lots* of “He” and “His.”
 - d. The mention of Joshua (“Jesus”) in 4:8 primed us for Joshua's namesake (Jesus) in 4:9, but within the concept of a “*Sabbatismos*”
 - e. And 4:14 will go back to “Jesus” as though we'd been talking about Him all along
5. Note that 4:10 is **comparing** someone entering a rest AS God did. But our passage has not been *comparing our* resting to God's, but inviting us **into** God and His rest!
- ◆ a. Christ, however, *can* be compared to God in this regard, since He has a work from which He rested AS the Father did in Creation: the work of Redemption
 - b. The use of the 1-time *Sabbatismos* in 4:9 is also a good clue that Christ is in view
- E. Christ as the *Sabbatismos* of 4:9

Kid-speak: In the OT, the 7th day of the week was a rest day, or a Sabbath. But now, Jesus is our Sabbath, because we rest in Him to save us from our sin.

1. Paul has used the noun and verb forms of *katapausis* throughout the passage for “rest”
 - a. In chapter 3, he used Psalm 95 to show that the Israelites didn't enter God's “rest”
 - b. In chapter 4, he has shown that the same “rest” is still available
2. Then a summary statement in 4:9: “There remains (is left), therefore, a *Sabbatismos* for God's people.”
 - a. The main point of the summary statement is the introduction of a NEW WORD, and with it, a NEW IDEA
 - b. If Paul meant for us to understand salvation merely in terms of God's creation-week rest, he could have

- continued to use the word *katapausis*
- c. By switching words, he's teaching a **FULFILLMENT**- an upgrade to the 7th-Day rest
 - i. He's suggesting a **Reality** (Christ, the *Sabbatismos*), where the 7th-Day was (but) a (wonderful) **Shadow** of Christ
 - ii. This doesn't rule out Heaven as a meaning for *Sabbatismos*, but Heaven as our abode with Christ
 - d. This is very much in the mold of the whole book. In fact, it may be the first explicit use of the **Reality** vs. **Shadow** motif.

Kid-speak: In the OT, God gave a lot of pictures of how Jesus would save us. One of the pictures was the Sabbath. So if we still keep the OT Sabbath, we're saying that the *picture* of Jesus is better than *Jesus*.

- F. By using *Sabbatismos* instead of the normal word for the weekly Sabbath (*Sabbaton*), Paul is pointing to a **FULFILLMENT & FUTURE** version of the Sabbath, but one that is very much **PRESENT**
 1. *Future* in that it was not the current version; *Present* in that it was available NOW.
 2. A *Fulfillment* in the easy association between *Sabbaton* and *Sabbatismos*
 3. Paul used *katapausis* instead of *Sabbaton* throughout the passage, probably because *Sabbaton* might have confused the issue of the 7th-Day as a symbol
 4. But now, in describing the awaited substance in 4:9, he *hops over* the expected word-choice, and sets this new Sabbath in a whole, fresh category. It's a *Sabbatismos*: a *special Sabbath*.
 5. It's like the old garment with a new patch, Lk 5:36. Any association with the old Sabbath (*Sabbaton*) would have confused the issue. The Rest we enter is *not just* an upgrade. It would therefore not be helped by the continuation of a weekly Sabbath practice.
- G. THIS is why the Apostles didn't meet on the Sabbath for worship in the book of Acts
 1. They met on the Sabbath for *witnessing*, **not** as part of Christian *worship*. Christian worship was scheduled for the

first day of the week, Acts 20:7.

- a. “The disciples were meeting together,” perfect passive participle. An ongoing practice.
- b. 1 Cor 16:2, “throughout (*kata*) the First Day *observances...*”, *kata* having distributive force: *every* first day (Vincent).
- c. These two verses are why we meet on the first day of the week. No command, just these two examples.

Kid-speak: Why do we come to church on Sunday? Because it’s the first day of the week, and that’s the day Christians got together for worship in the NT.

2. The old Sabbath was still intact for those under the Old Covenant, but it was not binding for Christians.
3. Luke continues to call the 7th day the Sabbath throughout Acts
 - a. The new worship day never adopted the name Sabbath in any form (like “new Sabbath”), nor was the Old Covenant Sabbath called “the old Sabbath” or such, since the Christian meeting day was not a Sabbath at all.
 - b. We are explicitly told not to be subject to any of the Jewish Sabbaths (including extra ones that popped up during the feasts), Col 2:16
 - i. This verse groups the Sabbaths with other *ceremonial* observances
 - ii. Binding ourselves to OT ceremonial observances is a denial of their fulfillment in the New Covenant
4. *God* set the 7th Day aside on the original day, but He never called on anyone else to celebrate it until Exod 16:23

H. The Christian meeting day as the 8th Day

1. Christians began meeting on the first day of the week, not *specifically* to honor the Resurrection, but, more directly, to connote a STEP BEYOND THE OLD SABBATH. Sabbath = 7th Day; Christian worship = 8th day.
2. Since God gives no clear word on *why* the worship day changed, the simplest explanation is in the automatic relationship between the two days themselves
 - ✠ a. The OT has a clearly-defined place for the 8th day as a **renewal** day. 7 = complete; 8 = new start. (8th day 12x this way in the OT.)

Kid-speak: In the Bible, the eighth day meant something new. Sunday is the first day of the week, but it's also the eighth day after a 7-day week. Worshiping on Sunday means God has made us new in Jesus.

- b. The clearest 8th day example was circumcision, Lev 12:3, which corresponds to *regeneration* in Col 2:11, a starting over of life in Christ
 - c. The firstborn became *God's* on the 8th day, Exod 22:30
 - d. The (new) Altar was to be purified seven days, then it would be ready for use from the eighth day onward, Ezek 43:27
- I. Having said all this, Christians are still left with a 1-day-in-7 observance
- 1. It is enjoined by example in Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor 16:2
 - 2. Its observance is **commanded** in Heb 10:25
 - a. You've probably heard, "You don't have to go to church to be a Christian."
 - b. Oh really? Do you have to love God? Love your neighbor? Those are also commands. Shall we make them exceptions too?
 - c. How does "not forsaking the assembling" get short shrift as a command? But it was already happening when Paul wrote it, "as the manner of some is," Heb 10:25
 - 3. Technology allows a fellowship with 'distance worshipers' which previous generations could not enjoy
 - a. It is a definite advantage to the infirmed and otherwise waylaid
 - b. (Distance-worshippers, give me a weekly shout-out. Reply to the sermon outline, maybe, with something like "Enjoyed the worship today.")
 - 4. First-day worship is apparently called "The Lord's Day" in Rev 1:10
 - a. "Day of the Lord" (apocalyptic) is a stretch grammatically
 - b. It is Jesus' day, just as we who are meeting on it are His

Kid-speak: Sunday is Jesus' day and we are Jesus' people. Jesus' people getting together on Jesus' day go together great.

J. But Christians are still left with a Sabbath command! 4:11, "Let

us exert ourselves to enter into that Rest.”

1. But this one is *not* a 1-day-in-7 command
2. It is an exhortation to enter the spiritual fulfillment of the Sabbath: Christ
3. It is therefore *still* a Gospel command, just as it *primarily* was in the OT
4. Not very different from the impetus of circumcision: “You must be born again.”

IV. For the Walking Wounded, (1Thess 5:14, “Support the strengthless”) Hold on to Christ. In Him is rest. Rest in Him.

V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong? How have I lost righteousness?**
Do I see a ‘Full Stop’ in Christ’s redemptive Sabbath?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):
How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?
I will glory in the Cross as the place of my *beginning* because it’s the place of my *ending*.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?**
Jesus, only You could do a work in a league with Creation. I bow to You.

Wrap-up: Jesus is paired with the Father in 1:3. Since then, He has mainly been seen as sent by the Father. Now in 4:10, Jesus is once again paired with the Father. They both rested from God’s two great works respectively: Creation and Redemption.
4:10 is also similar to 1:3 (“purged our sins”) in their references to the Cross. In this way, 4:10 is a structural recap and restart in the book.

Paul sees Jesus as a *Sabbatismos* in terms of priesthood, as 4:14 makes clear. The Cross is central. It is where our High Priest sacrificed Himself. Why? Same as in 2:17-18: in order to **sympathize**. Do you need sympathy? If not, you don’t need the Cross. If you *do*, you have full and unending comfort there.