

## THE EPISTLES TO THE HEBREWS

### HEBREWS 1:1-4:13, THE SUPERIORITY OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

#### INTRODUCTION

- A. Outline of Hebrews (to be finalized at completion of Hebrews study)
1. The superiority of the person of Christ (1:1-4:13)
    - a. Christ has the superior message (1:1-2a)
    - b. Christ is the superior person (1:2b-3)
    - c. Christ is superior to angels (1:4-2:18)
    - d. Christ is superior to Moses (3:1-4:13)
      - 1) In His work and person (3:1-6)
      - 2) In His provision of superior rest (3:7-4:13)
        - a) Second warning passage: the danger of disbelief (3:7-19)
          - 1] A warning to not harden one's heart (3:7-11)
          - 2] An appeal not to disbelieve (3:12-19)
    - b) God's rest is still available (4:1-13)
- B. Review of Hebrews 3:12-19
1. Zane Hodges, *The widespread view that he was concerned about mere professors of the faith as over against genuine believers is not found in the text.*
  2. Douglas Mangum, *The author builds on the quotation from Ps 95. Readers are given here direct commands to watch out for evil disbelief like that of the wilderness generation, and to encourage each other daily not to have hard hearts like Israelites and so be deceived by sinful faithlessness. . . Instead of unbelief, readers are urged to continue in faith, holding fast to confidence as they consider their high priest and God's faithful Son.*
- C. Comments on Hebrews 4:1-13
1. Raymond Brown, *Now that he has made special use of the idea of the promised rest for the people of God, our writer is at pains to emphasize that such a 'rest' was not limited to the historical circumstances attendant on the Canaan event.*
  2. William L. Lane, *The writer's task in this section is to pose in sharp terms the alternatives of rest and peril that now confront the new people of God.*
  3. R. Kent Hughes, *Their experience of Christ was not living up to expectations. Instead of rest, there was turmoil. They had given up their ancient religion but were suffering for their new faith. To some it seemed that the initial experience of rest was a cruel delusion. . . It is to these endangered hearts that the writer now focuses his remarks in chapter 4 as he instructs and exhorts them on participation in the rest of God.*

### HEBREWS 3:1-4:13, JESUS CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO MOSES AND JOSHUA

#### HEBREWS 4:1-13, GOD'S REST IS STILL AVAILABLE

- A. There is still a rest for the people of God (1-11)
1. The writer warns readers against not entering God's rest (1-2)
    - a. God's rest is still available (1), ***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.***
      - 1) *Therefore . . . let us fear*
        - a) The writer dealt with the loss of God's rest for the Israelites in chapter 3, which dealt with entry into the promised land.
        - b) Now, he encourages the readers to understand that the promise of God's rest is still available, not tied to land but to a spiritual inheritance.

- c) Donald Hagner, *It follows that that promise cannot have referred to entry and possession of the land, but must have been a more fundamental kind of rest.*
  - d) Zane Hodges, *The writer's concept of "rest" must not be separated from its Old Testament roots. The Septuagint includes notable passages where the word for rest, in connection with Israel's possession of the land, is clearly paralleled with the word for inheritance. Moses showed clearly (Deut. 3:18–20; 12:9–11) that for Israel their rest was their inheritance. In the same way it is natural to suppose that the term "rest" for the writer of Hebrews was a functional equivalent for a Christian's inheritance.*
- 2) God's rest is still available.
- a) Thomas Constable, *The writer expressed concern in this verse that some of his readers might conclude that they had missed entering into their rest . . . Apparently some of the original readers had doubts because the Lord had not yet returned.*
  - b) The writer encouraged readers to be patient in Hebrews 10:36-37, *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;*
  - c) Raymond Brown, *God's gracious promise of rest has not been withdrawn. The invitation is still open, but we must realize that in the course of our pilgrimage the pursuit of this rest might well be costly. We must strive and apply ourselves diligently to the journey ahead.*
  - d) William Barclay, . . . in Psalm 95:7–11 *David hears God's voice saying to the people that if they do not harden their hearts they can enter into his rest. That is to say, hundreds of years after Joshua had led the people into the rest of the promised land, God is still appealing to them to enter into his rest. There is more to this rest than merely entry into the promised land.*
- 3) Common views on rest in Hebrews
- a) Heaven
    - 1] This can't be the meaning of rest since heaven is a free gift and not based on human faithfulness.
    - 2] John 10:27-29, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*
    - 3] Philippians 1:6, *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*
    - 4] Charles Spurgeon on *let us fear, Now, the apostle cannot mean that we are to fear lest we should come short of heaven for want of merit. There is not a man living, nor has one ever lived, nor shall one ever live, who will not come short of heaven if he tries that road. Human merit is not the way to heaven.*
  - b) Present rest
    - 1] It equates rest with one's present life in the Lord. It has been described as a *peaceful life.*
    - 2] Thomas Constable, *This view seems unlikely because of how the writer equated rest and inheritance after the pattern of Old Testament usage, namely, as a future possession. Furthermore, if rest equals enjoying our spiritual blessings now, the writer should have warned his readers about losing their rest if they departed from God (3:12).*
    - 3] Raymond Brown, *God certainly gives his people inward peace, but the imagery of 'rest' is not necessarily helpful when describing God's work of present sanctification in the life of a believer.*
    - 4] Christians are not guaranteed a peaceful life today, free from pain and suffering, 1 Peter 4:16, *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.*
  - c) Full inheritance
    - 1] It is the future enjoyment of all God has for us.
    - 2] Thomas Constable, *The writer used the term "rest" as Moses did, as an equivalent to entering into all the inheritance that God promised His people. . . It is an eschatological rest, not a present rest. We enter into our rest after we cease from our labors in this life. We then enter into our "Sabbath rest," the rest that follows a full period of work.*

- 3] Hebrews 4:9-11, *So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*
- 4] One should consider this as the clearest view of *rest* which fits the context and does not contradict others truths of Scripture. I do believe the concept of *rest* has a secondary meaning of present rest in God's grace. Note Ray Stedman, . . . *rest not only describes the introduction of believers into eternal life, but also depicts the process by which we will continue to work and live, namely, dependence on God to be at work through us.*
- 4) A warning to every Christian concerning the possibility of not entering God's rest.
- a) The writer included himself in the warning, *let us fear. . . seem to have failed to reach it.*
  - b) William Barclay, *This Christian fear is not the fear which makes people run away from a task, nor the fear which reduces them to paralyzed inaction; it is the fear which makes them summon every ounce of strength they possess in a great effort not to miss the one thing that is worth while.*
  - c) William L. Lane, *let us begin to fear,* "at the beginning of the paragraph implies that the attitude toward the word of God in Scripture within the community has not been acceptable. The appeal for a more sensitive attitude was motivated by earnest pastoral concern for every individual within the house-church. . .
  - d) Thomas Constable, *The readers might fail to enter their rest, in the sense of losing part of their inheritance, if they apostatized. Losing part of one's inheritance probably involves losing the privilege of reigning with Christ in a position of significant responsibility in the future at least (cf. Matt. 25:14-30).*
  - e) Ray Stedman, . . . *The Greek construction of the phrase that none of you be found to have fallen short of it indicates that wrong behavior, such as disobedience or long-continued grumbling, suggests the heart is unchanged and unbelieving.*
- b. The Israelites who did not enter God's rest were those who heard God's word but did not receive it by faith (2), ***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.***
- 1) The Israelites and the readers heard the *good news*.
    - a) Based on the context, the *good news* should not be the Gospel of Christ but God's promised rest.
    - b) Thomas Constable, *It was probably the news about their inheritance and the possibility of entering into their rest.*
    - c) Zane Hodges, *What was preached to the Israelites of old was, quite clearly, God's offer of rest. This, of course, was "good news" for them just as it is for people now, but it is not exactly what is meant today by "gospel". . . But as the whole context shows, his concern was with the good news about a future rest for God's people (cf. Heb. 4:10), not with the fundamental facts Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 15.*
  - 2) There is no benefit from *the good news* without a faith response.
    - a) Thomas Constable, *The good news the Israelites heard did not profit them because they refused to trust God but rebelled against Him. Likewise the good news of our inheritance and rest may not profit us if we fail to trust God but turn from Him in unbelief.*
    - b) Zane Hodges, . . . *through unbelief they (Israelites) failed to take advantage of God's offer of rest. So it follows that for the readers to profit from this invitation to rest, they had to exercise faith.*
    - c) James Moffatt, *The reason for the failure of the past generation was that they merely heard what God said, and did not believe him . . . The fault lies, as in the parable of the Sower, not with the message but with the hearers.*
    - d) William Barclay, *The hearing that matters is the hearing that listens eagerly, believes and acts. The promises of God are not merely beautiful pieces of literature; they are promises on which we are meant to stake our lives and which should dominate our actions.*
    - e) R. Kent Hughes, *Many, perhaps thousands, were believers (they believed in God), but only two really trusted God and found rest.*

- 3) The consequences of apostasy.
  - a) Thomas Constable, *We will all receive many blessings even if we apostatize because we are God's children whom He has saved by His grace (1 Pet. 1:3–9). Nevertheless we will not enter into full rest or experience all we could inherit if we depart from God.*
  - b) William L. Lane, *Hearing a message of good news does not guarantee that what has been promised will be received. Only faith as confident expectation for the future can secure the promised reality.*
  - c) William Barclay on the Israelites, *They did not trust God to bring them through the difficulties that lay ahead; and, therefore, they never enjoyed the rest they could have had.*

2. The writer ties God's rest to finishing one's work (3-5)

a. Believers enter God's rest (3a), ***For we who have believed enter that rest,***

- 1) The verb may be translated, *we who believe.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *The writer was not looking back to initial faith that resulted in justification but to present faith that would result in entering into rest (inheritance).*

b. Some do not enter (3b), 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.***

- 1) The writer cites Psalm 95:11 to remind the readers that some do not enter God's rest.
  - a) Those who did not enter God's rest did not continue to believe God but turned to disbelief.
  - b) Thomas Constable, *The quotation from Psalm 95:11 emphasizes the impossibility of entering without faith.*
  - c) Zane Hodges, *This exclusion was definitive despite the fact that this rest had been established as far back as Creation itself.*

2) The writer alludes to Genesis 2:2 concerning God's rest.

- a) James Moffatt, *. . . we believers do enter into God's Rest; it is prepared and open, it has been ready ever since the world began. . . . When God excluded that unbelieving generation from his Rest, he was already himself in his Rest. . . . the reason why these men did not gain entrance was their own unbelief, not any failure on God's part to have the Rest ready.*
- b) R. Kent Hughes, *. . . when we are given rest by him, it is not simply a relaxation of tensions, but a rest that is qualitatively the same rest God enjoys—his personal rest that he shares with us . . . . The sublime fact that we share God's personal rest, the rest he enjoys, ought to set our hearts racing!*
- c) William L. Lane, *Gen 2:2 indicates that God's promised rest has been prepared and available since that time.*

c. God rested after He finished His work (4-5), ***For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” And again in this passage he said, “They shall not enter my rest.”***

a. *For he has somewhere spoken*

- 1) The writer again uses Scripture without specifying the passage.
- 2) His emphasis is on the words as those spoken by God and of course, the Hebrew audience was certainly familiar with the passage and knew its location.

b. The passage cited is Genesis 2:2.

- 1) Genesis 2:2, *And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *The writer evidently introduced the idea of God's resting on the seventh day (cf. v. 3) because it illustrates the fact that rest follows work. The work God called the Israelites in the wilderness to do was trusting and obeying Him. This would have resulted in rest from wandering in the wilderness, rest in the land, if they had carried it out.*
- 3) R. Kent Hughes, *God's rest began with the completion of the cosmos and continues on and on—and thus is available to all his children. Its fullness is available to all.*

- c. Concerning God's rest and a second citation of Psalm 95:11.
- 1) R. Kent Hughes, *There is a now and then to our rest. Now, in Christ, we have entered and are entering our rest. Our experience of rest is proportionate to our trusting in him. A wholehearted trust, for example, brings his rest into our souls in all its divine, cosmic and ideal dimensions. But there is also a future rest in Heaven—the repose of soul in God's rest forever joyous, satisfied and working—“work that never becomes toil nor needs repose.*
  - 2) Thomas Constable, *The work He calls us to do is also continuing to trust and obey Him. If we do this we can look forward to receiving our full inheritance (rest), but if we turn from God we cannot. The writer stated the positive prospect in verse 4 and the negative possibility in verse 5.*
  - 3) Zane Hodges, *When, as with the nation in the wilderness, a task is left unfinished, of such it must be said, They shall never enter My rest.*
3. He emphasizes the urgency of continued belief (6-11)
- a. God's rest is available despite the fact that some did not enter due to disobedience (6-7), ***Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, 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.”***
    - 1) Rest is still available despite disobedience of some.
      - a) Thomas Constable, *All the descendants of Abraham did not lose their opportunity to receive God's inheritance because the generation of Israelites living during the wilderness wanderings failed God.*
      - b) R. Kent Hughes, . . . *nothing can prevent the promised rest from taking effect except distrust and disobedience. God's promised rest stands. Anyone can have it.*
      - c) Donald Hagner, *For it is in this rest that God's ultimate purpose for the creation finds its realization.*
      - d) Some implies that not all will enter God's rest.
        - 1] Hebrews 3:12, *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.*
        - 2] Hebrews 3:13, *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
        - 3] Hebrews 4:1, *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.*
        - 4] Hebrews 4:11, *Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*
    - 2) The time to receive God's rest.
      - a) The offer of rest was declared in Psalm 95:11 long after rejection by Israelites in the desert.
      - b) Thomas Constable, *In David's day God re-extended His offer of entering rest, and that generation had to respond. They had their “today” of opportunity also.*
      - c) R. Kent Hughes, *The only way this rest will be missed is through a hardened heart, a disbelieving heart that shows contempt for God in disobedience. The tone here is one of urgency. Now is the day of salvation!*
      - d) William Barclay, *God's 'today' still exists and the promise is still open; but 'today' does not last forever; life comes to an end; the promise can be missed; therefore, says the writer to the Hebrews, 'Here and now through faith enter into the very rest of God.'*
      - e) Ray Stedman, *Today is a word of hope. All is not lost while today lasts. Though there has been some hardening, it can yet be reversed if prompt repentance is made.*
  - b. God's rest did not come through Joshua (8), ***For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.***
    - 1) Zane Hodges, *The psalm (Psalm 95) which forms his text disproves the notion that the rest had already been entered and was no longer open.*
    - 2) Thomas Constable, *The prospect of rest for the Israelites, specifically the possession of the Promised Land and life in it, did not end when Joshua defeated the Canaanites. Each succeeding generation had to continue to trust and obey God to assure its own rest in the land.*

- 3) H. D. M. Spence, . . . *the rest of the promised land was but a type after all; it was not the true rest of God: otherwise the psalmist could not have still assigned a day for entering it so long after the arrival at Shiloh.*
  - 4) R. Kent Hughes, *The words for “Joshua” and “Jesus” are exactly the same in the Greek—Jesus was named after Joshua. . . So the great truth is, there was a “Jesus,” the son of Nun, who failed to lead his people to true rest. But now there is another Jesus, the Son of God, who can. He is the pioneer and captain of our salvation—the ultimate Joshua (cf. 2:10).*
- c. There is a rest for those who finish their work (9-10), ***So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.***
- 1) Sabbath rest is spiritual.
    - a) Charles Spurgeon, *The true rest of God lies higher than times and places. . . Joshua could not give it, nor Canaan yield it: it remains for believers.*
    - b) Ray Stedman, *The fact that God repeats his promise of rest through David in Psalm 95, centuries after Israel had entered Canaan, is used to indicate that Sabbath-rest is the substance and Canaan-rest but a shadow. There was an experience of rest for Israel in Canaan (from armed invasion, natural disasters, failure of crops) when they were faithful to God. But even at best that rest was outward and essentially physical, and could not satisfy the promise of rest to the human race which was intended from the beginning.*
    - c) Ray Stedman, *In verse 10, we learn at last the nature of that rest. It means to cease from one’s own work, and so, by implication, to trust in the working of God instead.*
  - 2) Sabbath rest begins in the present.
    - a) Donald Hagner, . . . *the author has in mind the ideal qualities of the sabbath-rest, namely, peace, well-being, and security—that is, a frame of mind that by virtue of its confidence and trust in God possesses these qualities in contradiction to the surrounding circumstances. In short, the author may well have in mind that peace and sense of ultimate security “which transcends all understanding” (Phil. 4:7).*
    - b) Jesus said, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:29).* Note Charles Spurgeon, *Carry Christ’s burden, and your shoulders shall have rest. We do not mean sleep or idleness when we speak of rest; that is not rest, but rust. Our rest is found in the service of God.*
    - c) Warren Wiersbe, *The Canaan rest for Israel is a picture of the spiritual rest we find in Christ when we surrender to Him. When we come to Christ by faith, we find salvation rest (Matt. 11:28). When we yield and learn of Him and obey Him by faith, we enjoy submission rest (Matt. 11:29–30). The first is “peace with God” (Rom. 5:1); the second is the “peace of God” (Phil. 4:6–8). It is by believing that we enter into rest (Heb. 4:3); it is by obeying God by faith and surrendering to His will that the rest enters into us.*
  - 3) Sabbath rest is future.
    - a) Revelation 14:13, *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”*
    - b) Charles Spurgeon, *This rest, I believe, is partly enjoyed on earth. . . But the full fruition and rich enjoyment of it remains in the future and eternal state of the beatified on the other side of the stream of death.*
    - c) Thomas Constable, *Christians will enter into our rest when we receive our inheritance from Jesus Christ at His judgment seat (2 Cor. 5:10). . . Millennial rest in the Promised Land will be the portion of Israel in the future. However this passage seems to be referring to eternal rest for all believers of which the Millennium is just the beginning. . . When we enter that rest we can cease walking by faith because then we will see what we now only hope for (11:1; cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). We will cease from our work as God did from His.*
    - d) Zane Hodges, *The readers need to model their lives after Jesus Christ who “was faithful to the One who appointed Him” (3:2) and must be careful to “hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first” (3:14; cf. 3:6). Only thus would they be able to rest from their works in the joyful possession of their inheritance in the messianic kingdom.*
    - e) William L. Lane, . . . vv 9–10 *anticipate the festival of the priestly people of God in the heavenly sanctuary, celebrating in the presence of God the eternal Sabbath with unceasing praise and adoration.*

d. Be diligent in pursuing God's rest (11), *Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*

1) *Let us therefore strive*

a) *Therefore* looks back to verse 10, *there remains a Sabbath rest.*

b) *strive*

1] It means *be zealous, eager, take pains, make every effort.*

2] It almost sounds contradictory - rest demands effort. The force is to not to diminish the importance of God's rest, now and in the future.

3] Ray Stedman, . . . *results can only be expected from the realization that God is also working and he will accomplish the needed ends.*

4] Charles Spurgeon, . . . *let us labor not to labor. . . Labor to get away from your own labors; labor to be clean rid of all self-reliance; labor in your prayers never to depend upon your prayers; labor in your repentance never to rest upon your repentance; and labor in your faith not to trust to your faith, but to trust alone to Jesus.*

5] R. Kent Hughes offers two ways a Christian can *strive to enter that rest*, *First, we must do our utmost to focus on the rest. We must strive to comprehend that it is a divine rest. . . Second, we must do our utmost to combine the hearing of the good news of the offered rest with genuine faith-that is, belief plus trust. . . There is no rest in this life without trust.*

6] Thomas Constable on the future aspect of rest, *If the rest was just heaven, we would not have to exercise diligence because God has promised that all believers will go to heaven (John 10:27–28; Rom. 8:30; Phil. 1:6; et al.). It the rest was just the rest we presently enjoy because God has forgiven our sins, we would not have to be diligent to enter it either because we already have entered into that rest.*

7] R. Kent Hughes, *The writer has used every angle to show his friends and us that we can know and experience this rest. If we learn anything from this text, we must understand that the rest is there if we want it.*

2) *the same sort of disobedience*

a) Douglas Mangum, *The warning here to avoid falling into the wilderness generation's pattern of disobedience reminds the reader that his entire argument is embedded in the history of God and his people in Scripture.*

b) Charles Spurgeon, *Let us not repeat the story of unbelieving Israel in our own lives. Let us not live and die in the wilderness, but let us go in and take possession of the promised land, the promised rest, in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

c) Ray Stedman, *Failure to expect God to act caused the disobedience of Israel in the wilderness, and a similar failure destroys thousands today.*

B. The Word of God examines the heart with regard to God's rest (12-13)

1. Introductory comments

a) Ray Stedman, *The subtlety of the temptation to self-dependence is highlighted by verses 12–13.*

b) Douglas Mangum, *He has been relying on the OT Scriptures from the beginning of the letter, and here he gives a terse and acute account of the nature of Scripture.*

c) William L. Lane, *God's word, whose sanctions were imposed so effectively upon the Exodus generation, is performative today and confronts the Christian community with the same alternatives of rest and wrath.*

d) Thomas Constable, *Many Christians use this verse to show that God will judge unbelievers with His piercing Word, but in the context it refers to God judging believers to determine rewards (1 Cor. 3:11–15).*

e) Zane Hodges, *Having completed his exposition of Psalm 95 and Israel's failure to enter rest, the writer brought this section of warning to a conclusion that is both sobering and comforting. God's Word is a solemn instrument of divine judgment, but His throne is both gracious and merciful.*

2. God's Word discerns the condition of one's heart (12), *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.*
  - a) *The word of God*
    - 1) Donald Hagner, *The word of God is neither a reference to Jesus nor even primarily to Scripture. It is instead what God speaks, and the idea was probably suggested to the author from the repeated reference to "hearing God's voice" in the preceding verses (3:7, 15, 16; 4:2, 7).*
    - 2) Charles Spurgeon, *It may be most accurate to interpret this passage as relating both to the Word of God incarnate, and the Word of God inspired. Weave the two into one thought, for God has joined them together, and you will then see fresh lights and new meanings in the text.*
  - b) Words that describe the nature of God's Word
    - 1) *living and active*
      - a) Isaiah 55:11, *so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*
      - b) R. Kent Hughes, *It lives because it endures forever (Psalm 119:89). Even more, it lives because it has life in itself. God is living (3:12), and the Word, as God's breath (2 Timothy 3:16), partakes of God's living character. It is alive! . . . The character of the Word's aliveness is that it is "active," or as that word is sometimes rendered, "effective." God's Word vibrates with active, effectual power as it rushes to fulfill the purpose for which it was spoken.*
      - c) William Barclay, *The great fact about the word of God is that it is a living issue for all people of all times. Other things may pass quietly into oblivion; other things may acquire an academic or historical interest; but the word of God is something that everyone must face, and its offer is something we must accept or reject.*
      - d) Charles Spurgeon, *The Word of God is alive. This is a living Book. This is a mystery that only living men, quickened by the Spirit of God, will fully comprehend. Take up any other book except the Bible, and there may be a measure of power in it, but there is not that indescribable vitality in it that breathes, and speaks, and pleads, and conquers in the case of this sacred volume.*
    - 2) *sharper than any two-edged sword*
      - a) The emphasis is on the penetrating power of the Word of God.
      - b) Raymond Brown, *It is like a sharp sword cutting its way through this substance or that without any kind of difficulty.*
      - c) William L. Lane, *The word of God poses a judgment that is more threatening and sharper than any double-edged sword because it exposes the intentions of the heart and renders one defenseless before God's scrutinizing gaze.*
      - d) R. Kent Hughes, *God's Word to pierce the human personality to its very depths. God's Word can cut through anything and bring conviction. . . God's Word cleaves through our hard-shelled souls like a hot knife through warm butter. Certainly we Christians find this to be true in our lives.*
      - e) Charles Spurgeon, *The Word of God is so sharp a thing, so full of cutting power, that you may be bleeding under its wounds before you have seriously suspected the possibility of such a thing. . . Blessed is that man who knows the Word of the Lord by its exceeding sharpness, for it kills nothing but that which ought to be killed. It quickens and gives new life to all that is of God; but the old depraved life, which ought to die, it hews in pieces. . .*
    - 3) *piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow,*
      - a) These enhance the precision and effectiveness of God's Word.
      - b) Donald Hagner, *The sentences that follow are merely a development of this metaphor and are not meant to convey information extraneous to the point being made . . . All of these details are concerned only to stress the utter effectiveness of God's word.*
      - c) William Barclay, *The writer piles up phrases to show how penetrating it is. It penetrates to the division of soul and spirit. . . It is as if the writer to the Hebrews were saying that the word of God tests our earthly life and our spiritual existence.*
      - d) Ray Stedman, *It is as if the writer to the Hebrews were saying that the word of God tests our earthly life and our spiritual existence.*

- 4) *discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart*
  - a) Charles Spurgeon, *The Word of God gets at the very marrow of our manhood; it lays bare the secret thoughts of the soul. When the Spirit of God works with the gospel, the man may dodge, and twist, but the preaching goes to his heart and conscience, and he is made to feel it, and to yield to its force.*
  - b) Douglas Mangum, *The Bible is alive, active, and sharp. It is also discerning, with the ability to judge the inner life of one's heart.*
  - c) Zane Hodges, *The readers might think that they were contemplating certain steps out of purely spiritual motivations when, as God's Word could show them, they were acting unfaithfully as did Israel of old.*
  - d) Raymond Brown, *This word probes more deeply than the mere voice of man however interesting or eloquent. It goes to 'the inmost recesses of our spiritual being and brings the subconscious motives to light' (Bruce).*
  
3. Everyone must be examined and give account to God (13), ***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.***
  - a. None of God's creation can hide from their Creator.
    - 1) Ray Stedman, *Once the ugly thoughts and hidden rebellions are out in the open, we stand like criminals before a judge, ineffectually trying to explain what we have done.*
    - 2) Leon Morris, *We must not think that we can bluff our way out of anything, for there are no secrets hidden from God. We cannot keep our thoughts to ourselves.*
    - 3) William L. Lane, *The images of nakedness and helpless exposure express vividly the plight of anyone who believes he can deceive his creator and judge.*
  
  - b. Everyone must give account to God Who see us as we really are.
    - 1) Ray Stedman, . . . *such honest revelation is what we need to humble our stubborn pride and render us willing to look to God for forgiveness and his gracious supply.*
    - 2) Thomas Constable, *Our Lord will examine every Christian; not one will escape His judgment seat. This prospect should motivate every Christian to remain faithful to God until we see Him.*
    - 3) Raymond Brown, *God uses his word to penetrate man's stubborn and rebellious heart, for he knows how much we need it; he sees what is really there. He looks right below the extremely thin veneer of merely outward piety to the true thoughts of man.*
    - 4) Donald Hagner, *Everything is uncovered and laid bare before his eyes, and the connotation of this language is that all are inescapably vulnerable not only to God's scrutiny but also to his judgment.*
    - 5) Charles Spurgeon, *We should earnestly labor to be right, for no deceptions will avail. The Lord's word lays us bare and opens up our secret selves. Oh, to be clean before the Lord! This we can never be except by faith.*
    - 6) Warren Wiersbe, *In the Word we see God, and we also see how God sees us. We see ourselves as we really are. This experience enables us to be honest with God, to trust His will, and to obey Him.*
    - 7) Zane Hodges, . . . *like all Christians, they would someday stand before the judgment seat of Christ where they must give account to God for their lives (cf. Rom. 14:10–12; 2 Cor. 5:10). If at that time their lives are seen to be marked by the kind of failure they have been warned against, the writer implied they will suffer loss of reward (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11–15). In this context the loss they suffer will be that of their inheritance-rest.*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- Raymond Brown, *Whether he likes it or not, man is moving to his destiny. The message of one who has gone before as pioneer and priest is a word of immediate relevance. Christ's essential work for man has been effectively accomplished. Our part is to hear, believe, obey and share this word of abundant life.*
- R. Kent Hughes, *Blessed be the double-edged sword of judgment and sanctification. God cuts us deeply that we might die. God cuts us again with his Word, that we might live.*
- Douglas Mangum, *The way to "make every effort" to enter God's rest is to let God, through his powerful word, instill and foster a deepening faith in Christ's mediating work, a theme to which the next paragraphs return.*