

4th. Gaffin.WCF.3.Book of Hebrews

3A. The main objection contributing to the disregard for the Sabbath: the realized kingdom teaching especially in Hebrews

4A. Hebrews & the Sabbath rest that still remains (*WC into 21st*, Vol. 1, 132-139)

Gaffin claims that the realized kingdom argument fails because it is one-sided, not because of what it affirms (rest in Christ now), but because of what it denies: “a continuing place of the Sabbath-sign under the new covenant.” Being blind by the “already” to the “not yet” the proponents miss “the rationale for the NT continuation of the weekly sign” (132). Their treatment of Hebrews 3.7-4.13 is an important text that exemplifies this failure and in turn supports the abiding place of the weekly Sabbath sign (contrary to *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, 1982, ed. Carson; especially contrary to Lincoln, 205-214). There are two Qs to answer.

1B. Why would someone take the reference to rest in Hebrews 3-4 to be *exclusively* present? Granted, the kingdom promised has arrived. The kingdom promised in OT, and announced by John and Jesus has come and, with the promise, kingdom rest has come. But why should we take this *exclusively* as a reference to the present time between the comings? Two main reasons are: the tenses of the main verbs in 4.3a & 4.10a, and the nature of works in 4.10.

1) The tenses of the main verbs in 4.3a and 4.10a

[**Hebrews 4:3 For we who have believed enter that rest**]; this view claims that by faith we are entering or enter that rest now in the present.

[**Hebrews 4:10 for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his**]; this view notes that the tense here is the past tense and the suggestion is that it points back to what believers have entered into now by faith, the point of 4.3.

2) The nature of works in 4.10

a) We cease from works and enter God’s rest by faith (becoming and being Christians by faith), so the works stand opposed to faith. These are faithless works, works without faith (Lincoln, 213).

b) Then Lincoln stresses that they are “our own works” (not physical labors) but “salvation” connected and therefore they refer to the “dead works” of Hebrews 9.14 (**how much more will the blood of Christ...purify our conscience from dead works**). We cease from our own works that God may work in us (Heb. 13.21). There is a consummation of this salvation rest; it anticipates “the removal of all curse on work” (213). [future aspect is muted]

2B. What is wrong with this view that opposes taking rest here to be something *entirely* future?

1) The tenses of the main verbs in 4.3a

[**Hebrews 4:3 For we who have believed enter that rest**]: The present tense (grammatically) can have a future reference (contextually). *Context excludes a present reference* because this “would violate a key aspect of the writer’s wilderness-model: Israel in the wilderness, even on the brink of entering the land, is not yet Israel entered into the promised land/rest” (Gaffin, 134).

2) The tense in 4.10 and the nature of works

[**Hebrews 4:10 for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his**]:

a) The past tense (grammatically) can describe a future state (contextually).

b) Context reveals this flaw in the present rest view: “The verse expresses a direct, positive comparison between the believer and God: their resting is to their works as God’s resting is to his” thus the present view is “left with the jarring incongruity to say the least: a direct, positive parallel between our sinful, self-justifying works and God’s works!” (135).

c) Moreover, “believer’s works...are...desert-works, ‘love and good works’ (10.24; cf. 6.10) in the present non-rest situation” (135).

d) Thus, the past tense generalizes about the future (once you enter that future, when entry is past for you, then your earthly labors will be past for you).

e) Accordingly, the writer exhorts believers to exert themselves to enter that future rest (4.11, **let us therefore strive to enter that rest**). The thought is similar to Revelation 14.13: **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!"** Therefore, because the rest promised since creation remains in the future, the sign of consummation rest, weekly Sabbath rest, abides; now, because of the presence of the kingdom, it abides in the new wineskin form of the Christian Sunday Sabbath.