

# “A Sabbath rest for the people of God”

## An Exegetical Study of Hebrews 4:9–10

By Richard C. Barcellos

Hebrews 4 is a passage that has been used to support the case for a day of sacred rest for the people of God under the inaugurated new covenant. Verses 9 and 10 are used to argue this, which read, “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His” (Heb. 4:9–10 NASB). In my view, this is the clearest text in the New Testament indicating the redemptive-historical and Christological basis for the shift of a Sabbath day from the last day of the week to the first day of the week. I do not think the case for a Sabbath day to be kept under the new covenant relies solely on this text, however. The argument for a first-day, Christian Sabbath is quite extensive. It is a scriptural argument; that is, it takes into account the entire Bible exegetically, redemptive-historically, and systematically, but such a study is far beyond the scope of this article.

It is important to admit that good men disagree as to what is going on in this text as it relates to the Sabbath. For example, some see Hebrews 4:9–10 referring to the future alone, denying any present Sabbath day.<sup>1</sup> Others see an already/not-yet motif here, viewing the “Sabbath rest” as the believer’s rest in Christ.<sup>2</sup> Some see the “Sabbath rest” as wholly future, though advocating the Lord’s Day as the Christian Sabbath on other grounds.<sup>3</sup> Still others view this text as advocating a day of sacred rest for the people of God under the inaugurated new covenant, the day of Christ’s resurrection, the Lord’s Day.<sup>4</sup> The last view is the one I will argue below.

This will not be an exhaustive treatment. As readers will soon become aware, I think the essence of John Owen’s view of this passage is worthy of following. In my judgment, Owen accounts for various aspects of the passage in a way that makes the best sense of the author’s overall argument in this section (3:1–4:13). In the discussion on this passage, we will consider the

following: 1. the context of Hebrews 4:9–10; 2. the exposition of Hebrews 4:9–10; and 3. the implications of Hebrews 4:9–10.

### THE CONTEXT OF HEBREWS 4:9–10

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. sees the motif of the church as a wilderness community dominating the context of

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1. E.g., Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), 164–66, 170–71.

2. E.g., Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews*, Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 144 and Thomas R. Schreiner, “Good-bye and Hello: The Sabbath Command for New Covenant Believers,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 181–86.

3. E.g., Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “A Sabbath Rest Still Awaits the People of God,” in *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox of the Presbyterian Church*, ed. Charles G. Dennis (Willows Grove, PA: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1985), 46.

4. E.g., John Owen (Owen’s view will be discussed below); Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume Two, revised and corrected by Edward Hickman (1834; reprint, Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 97–98; Daniel Wilson, *The Lord’s Day* (London: The Lord’s Day Observance Society, 1988), 106, n. 1; Robert L. Dabney, *Discussions of Robert L. Dabney*, Volume 1 (1891; reprint, Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982) 535, n. 1; Walter J. Chantry, *Call the Sabbath a Delight* (Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 86–96; Joseph A. Pipa, *The Lord’s Day* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1997), 111–29; and most recently Robert Paul Martin, *The Christian Sabbath: Its Redemptive-Historical Foundation, Present Obligation, and Practical Observance* (Montville, NJ: Trinity Pulpit Press, 2015), 249–63.

Hebrew 4:9–10.<sup>5</sup> This influences his understanding of Hebrews 4:10. Commenting on that verse, he says:

In a word, the works of 4:10 are *desert*-works, the works of believers in the present wilderness, that is, *non*-rest situation, looking toward the future, hoped-for promised rest. They are the wilderness-works of the church on the way between exodus from Egypt/redemption ... and Canaan/rest.<sup>6</sup>

Though wilderness is a motif in the context, beginning at 3:7 the author mentions the concept of rest using Psalm 95 (and Gen. 2:2) to frame his discussion through 4:11. Though the wilderness motif is present, the mention and development of rest at 3:7–4:11 must not be minimized.<sup>7</sup> It is good to be reminded that the conclusion in 4:9 is “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” That which remains is assumed to be related to the previous discussion, which is infused with the motif of rest. In fact, in light of Hebrews 3:1–6 and the first word of 3:7, “Therefore,” entering into rest is connected to Christ being “over His house—whose house we [i.e., believers] are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end” (Heb. 3:6). Owen helps make the connection in these words:

The illative, “wherefore,” as was first observed, denotes both the deduction of the ensuing exhortation from the preceding discourse, and the application of it unto the particular duty which he enters upon, verse 12. “Wherefore;” that is, ‘Seeing the Lord Christ, who is the author of the gospel, is in his legatine [i.e., authorized by a legate] or prophetic office preferred far above Moses in the work of the house of God, as being the son and lord over that house as his own, wherein Moses was a servant only, let us consider what duty is incumbent on us, especially how careful and watchful we ought to be that we be not by any means diverted or turned aside from that obedience which he requires, and which on all accounts is due unto him.’<sup>8</sup>

5. Gaffin, “A Sabbath Rest Still Awaits the People of God,” 42–46.

6. Gaffin, “A Sabbath Rest Still Awaits the People of God,” 45; emphasis original.

7. See Nicholas J. Moore, “Jesus as ‘The One who Entered his Rest’: The Christological Reading of Hebrews 4:10,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36, #4 (2014): 385–86, 397.

8. John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 23 vols., ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987 edition), 20:18. In context, when Owen says ‘prophetic office,’ he is referring to Christ as “the Apostle ... of our confession” (Heb. 3:1).

What duty is incumbent upon believers to which Owen is referring? Several texts in the context answer this question (Heb. 3:12–13; 4:1, 11).

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called “Today;” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb. 3:12–13)

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. (Heb. 4:1)

Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience. (Heb. 4:11)

Though Hebrews 4:9 is not an explicit exhortation to duty, it is a conclusion to previous discussion and contains an implicit duty.

What follows in Hebrews 3:7ff. is dependent upon what was stated in 3:1–6. Hebrews 3:1–6 says:

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; 2 He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. 3 For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. 4 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. 5 Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; 6 but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. (Heb. 3:1–6)

Owen summarizes the importance of 3:1–6 in these words:

The proposition is this, that “Christ was counted worthy of more glory than Moses.” The first proof of this proposition lies in these words of verse 3, “Inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house;” and this he further confirms or illustrates, verse 4, “For every house is builded of some; but he that built all things is God;” the latter expressly in verses 5, 6, of which afterwards.

As for the manner of arguing here used by the apostle,

it is deduced from the foregoing verses. In the comparison made between Christ and Moses, he allowed Moses to be faithful, proving it by the testimony of God himself, who had said he was “faithful in all his house” [see Num. 12:7]. The church or people of God being in that testimony called “The house of God,” and that by God himself, the apostle takes advantage of the metaphor to express the dignity of Christ in his relation to the church under that expression of “The house of God;”... And a double relation unto this house doth he ascribe unto him, which are the principal relations that attend any house whatever. The first is of a builder, whence he takes his first argument, verses 3, 4; the other is of an owner, inhabiter, and possessor, whence he takes his second, verses 5, 6....

In his first argument, verse 3, the proposition only is expressed, the assumption is included, and the conclusion left unto an obvious inference; for plainly the apostle reasons syllogistically in this case.

The proposition is this, “He that buildeth the house hath more honour than the house.”

The assumption included is, “But Christ built the house, and Moses was only of the house, or a part of it: and therefore he had more glory than Moses.”

... The proposition of the argument in these verses [i.e., 5 and 6] is, ‘A son over his own house is of more honour than a servant in the house of another.’ This is only supposed.

The assumption is expressed, “But Christ is a son over his own house; Moses was only a servant in another’s house:” whence the conclusion is plain and evident.

... In the confirmation of the first argument [i.e., Christ is worthy of more glory than Moses] the fourth verse is inserted, “For every house is builded of some; but he that built all things is God.”<sup>9</sup>

In his essay on a day of sacred rest, Owen says that the writer in Hebrews 3:3–4

expressly asserts the Son to be God, and shows the analogy that is between the creation of all things and the building of the church,—that is, *the works of the old and new creation*. As, then, God wrought in the creation of all, so Christ, who is God, wrought in the setting up of this new church-state.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note the words “the works of the old and new creation.” Owen views the finished work of Christ as the establishing of the new creation. This motif will show up in our ensuing discussion.

Hebrews 3:5 says, “Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later.” Owen comments:

In his ministry he was a testimony, or by what he did in the service of the house he gave testimony. Whereunto? To the things that were afterwards to be spoken, namely, in the fulness of time, the appointed season, by the Messiah,—that is, the things of the gospel. And this, indeed, was the proper end of all that Moses did or ordered in the house of God.

This is the importance of the words, and this was the true and proper end of the whole ministry of Moses, wherein his faithfulness was tried and manifested. He ordered all things by God’s direction in the typical worship of the house, so as that it might be a pledge and testimony of what God would afterward reveal and exhibit in the gospel.<sup>11</sup>

Moses paved the way for Christ. As Schreiner says:

The readers should not turn back to Moses the faithful servant, for Moses himself spoke of a coming day. Moses himself looked forward to the arrival of the faithful Son, and the readers should remain loyal to the Son. In this sense Moses functions as the type of the one to come, Jesus.<sup>12</sup>

Christ, as the cornerstone of the church (Eph. 2:20), established the new temple of God via his work on the earth, and now a rest connected to that finished work and related to previous rests is pressed upon the Hebrews. In Hebrews 3:1–6, the author is arguing from Moses to Christ as the greater faithful servant of God over his own house (Heb. 3:2–6) and to a rest to be entered

9. Owen, *Works*, 19:532–33. Schreiner points out many of the same things as Owen (Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 113, 115, 117).

10. Owen, *Works*, 18:416; emphasis added. See Owen, *Works*, 18:418 for another reference to Heb. 3:3–4 as implying the deity of Christ. Schreiner argues similar to Owen at this point: “On the one hand Jesus as a human being and as the high priest is faithful to God. On the other hand, as the divine son he is the builder of the house—the Creator of all! ... Jesus is the divine Builder of the house” (Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 116–17).

11. Owen, *Works*, 19:559.

12. Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 118.

(4:1, 6, 8, 9–11). The redemptive-historical institution of Christ's house, therefore, entails a rest to be entered. It is a work of God that has practical implications for the people of God in their service for God.

In Hebrew 3:7–4:11 divine rests are presented by the author to induce perseverance in the readers' profession of faith in Christ. Owen identifies three divine rests in the passage. These rests are all founded upon a great work of God, are identified as divine rests, are the grounds upon which man is invited into God's rest, and include a sign or emblem of that rest via a day of rest. The first divine rest pertains to creation and man under the law of nature. The second rest pertains to the people of God under the law of institutions. The third rest pertains to the people of God under the Messiah.<sup>13</sup>

We will now identify the first two divine rests in the passage. What is important about Owen's view of these divine rests is the way he describes them and the way he connects them to Hebrews 4:9–10. The connection to Hebrews 4:9–10 will be noted in the exposition of those verses under the next heading. The quotes below by Owen are quite extensive. I thought it best to quote at length so readers can get the gist of Owen's view. After the quotes I will offer brief comments. I will also show that some of the insights made by Owen have been made by others. What are the first two divine rests in the context? First, in the words of Owen:

He considers the church and the state of it under *the law of nature*, before the entrance of sin. And herein he shows first that there was a rest of God in it; for saith he, "The works were finished from the foundation of the world. . . . And God did rest the seventh day from all his works," verses 3, 4. As the foundation of all, he layeth down first the works of God; for the church, and every peculiar state of the church, is founded in the work, some especial work of God, and not merely in a law or command. "The works," saith he, "were finished from the foundation of the world." . . . This work of God, as hath been proved, Exerc. iii., was the foundation of the church in the state of nature, and gave unto it the entire law of its obedience.

On this work, and the completing of it ensued the rest of God himself: Verse 4, "God did rest the seventh day from all his works." This rest of God, and the refreshment he took in his works, as comprising the law and

13. Owen, *Works*, 18:413–16. Owen's discussion reflects a redemptive-historical reading of Scripture terminating upon Christ and his kingdom.

14. Owen, *Works*, 18:413–14; emphasis original.

covenant of our obedience, have been explained already.

But this alone doth not confirm, nor indeed come near, the purpose or argument of the apostle: for he is to speak of such a rest of God as men might enter into, as was a foundation of rest unto them, or otherwise his discourse is not concerned in it; whereupon, by a citation of the words of Moses from Gen. ii. 2, he tells us that this rest of God was on the seventh day, which God accordingly blessed and sanctified to be a day of rest unto man. So that in this state of the church there were three things considerable:—(1.) The rest of God himself in his works, wherein the foundation of the church was laid; (2.) A rest proposed unto man to enter into with God, wherein lay the duty of the church; and (3.) A day of rest, the seventh day, as a remembrance of the one and a means and pledge of the other. And herewith we principally confirm our judgment on the Sabbath's beginning with the world; for without this supposition the mentioning of God's work and his rest no way belonged to the purpose of our apostle. For he discourseth only of such rests as men might enter into and have a pledge of; and there was no such thing from the foundation of the world, unless the Sabbath was then revealed. Nor is it absolutely the work and rest of God, but the obedience of men and their duty with respect unto them, which he considers; and this could not be, unless the rest of God was proposed unto men to enter into from the foundation of the world.<sup>14</sup>

The first divine rest came as a result of a divine work (i.e., creation). It included a rest proposed to man to be entered via obedience and it had added to it a weekly pledge, the seventh day. This rest reflects man under the covenant of works.

The second rest in Hebrews 4 is described by Owen as follows:

The apostle considers the church under the law of institutions; and herein he presenteth the rest of the land of Canaan, wherein also the three distinct rests before mentioned do occur:—(1.) There was in it a rest of God. This gives denomination to the whole. He still calls it his rest: "If they shall enter into my rest." And the prayer about it was, "Arise, O LORD, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength," or the pledge of his presence and power. And this rest also ensued upon his work; for God wrought about it works great and mighty, and only ceased from them when they were finished. And this work of his answered in its greatness unto the work of creation, whereunto it is compared by

himself: Isa. li. 15, 16, “I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundation of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.” The dividing of the sea, whose waves roared, is put by a synecdoche for the whole work of God in preparing a way for the church-state of that people in the land of Canaan. And this he compares to the work of creation, in planting the heavens, and laying the foundations of the earth; for although these words are but a metaphorical expression of the political and church state of that people, yet there is an evident allusion in them unto the original creation of all things. This was the work of God, upon the finishing whereof he entered into his rest, in the satisfaction and complacency that he had therein; for after the erection of his worship in the land of Canaan, he says of it, “This is my rest, and here will I dwell [Psalm 132:14].”

God being thus entered into his rest, in like manner as formerly two things ensue thereon:—(2.) That the people are invited and encouraged to enter into the rest of God. This the apostle treats concerning in this and the foregoing chapter. And this their entrance into rest, was their coming by faith and obedience into a participation of the worship of God wherein he rested, as a means and pledge of their everlasting rest in him. And although some of them came short hereof, by reason of their unbelief, yet others entered into it under the conduct of Joshua. (3.) Both these, his own rest and the rest of the people, God expressed by appointing a day of rest. This he did, that it might be a token, sign, and pledge, not now, as given to the people absolutely, of his first rest at the creation, but of his present rest in his instituted worship, and to be a means, in the solemn observation of that worship, to further their entrance into his rest eternally. Hence had the seventh day a peculiar institution among that people, whereby it was made to them a sign and token that he was their God, and that they were his people. And here lies the Judaical Sabbath in our fourth Exercitation.

It is true, this day was the same in order of the days with that before observed, namely, the seventh day of the week; but it was now re-established upon new considerations, and unto new ends and purposes. The time of the change of the day was not yet come; for this work was but preparatory for a greater. And the covenant whereunto the seventh day was originally annexed

being not yet to be abolished, that day was not to be yet changed, nor another to be substituted in the room of it. Hence this day came now to fall under a double consideration,—first, As it was such a *proportion of time* as was requisite unto the worship of God, and appointed as a pledge of his rest in his covenant; secondly, As it received a new institution, with superadded ends and significations, as a *token and pledge of God’s rest* in the law of institutions, and the worship erected therein.<sup>15</sup>

Notice how Owen views the rest of Canaan grounded upon a divine work that is reflective of the original creation. He bases this on a text in Isaiah.

“For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar (the LORD of hosts is His name). 16 “I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’” (Isa. 51:15–16)

Canaan is viewed as a new Eden. Israel is God’s corporate son, a new son of God (Exod. 4:22–23) with a new rest (Psalm 132:14) in the promised land. God’s people are now in a new place, with a new rest, based on a new divine creational work, along with a new divine rest.

Viewing Canaan as a recapitulation of Eden is not unique to Owen. For example, Oren R. Martin, while discussing the book of Exodus, says:

Furthermore, the multiplication of a people and movement towards inhabiting a place to live under God’s blessing is rooted in his original blessing on humanity. The promises to Israel to plant them in the land are reiterations of a former promise. This connection is forcefully illustrated in Exodus 15:17:

You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O LORD, which your hands have established.

At the end of the song sung by Israel after crossing the Red Sea, ‘the establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan is pictured as the planting of a tree in a *mountain sanctuary*, exactly the picture of Eden presented in Genesis 2 and Ezekiel 28.’<sup>16</sup> Through their redemption, then, Israel inherits the role of Adam in a new Eden-like land

15. Owen, *Works*, 18:414–15; emphasis original.

16. Martin footnotes the citation of this quote as follows: “Gentry and Wellum 2012: 227; emphasis original.”

and are the means by which God will fulfill his world-wide purposes.<sup>17</sup>

In subsequent discussion, Martin says:

Through the miraculous act of the exodus (ch. 14), an event pregnant with creational overtones, God delivers his people through the chaotic waters of judgment and brings them out as a new creation, free from foreign rule.<sup>18</sup>

While discussing the book of Deuteronomy, Martin says:

... the land is described as a new paradise.<sup>19</sup> That is, the description of the land holds out promise of a return to an Eden-like bliss.<sup>20</sup>

... Deuteronomy contains numerous references to the creational mandate given to Adam.<sup>21</sup>

... recurring themes of 'life' and the 'prolonging of days' allude back to Eden and the life Adam enjoyed before the fall.<sup>22</sup>

... inheritance and rest become important aspects of the promise of land.<sup>23</sup>

17. Oren R. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land: The land promise in God's redemptive plan* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 78. The formatting of Exod. 15:17 is original. See Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003, reprinted 2006), 102–03, where he discusses creational echoes in the book of Exodus.

18. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 80. See Owen, *Works*, 18:414–15, quoted above.

19. Martin lists the following texts in a footnote: Deut. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20.

20. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 83.

21. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 84.

22. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 84.

23. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 85.

24. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 85–86. Martin is referring to T. Desmond Alexander. Commenting on the book of Deuteronomy, Dempster says: "Divine presence and holy land echo the lost glory of Eden" (Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 118).

25. E.g., Alexander, Beale, Dempster, Dumbrell, Fesko, and Hamilton.

26. See the discussion in G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A biblical theology of the dwelling place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 118–21.

27. See Francis Foulkes, "The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 342–71.

28. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 25.

Finally, Deuteronomy 12:9–11 pulls together the thematic threads of inheritance and rest.... That is, rest provides the opportunity for Israel to worship in the place God has chosen to dwell with his covenant people. On this note, Alexander rightly points out that it is impossible to consider the concept of rest without noting its association with the Sabbath. Despite differences in wording, the Decalogue in both Exodus and Deuteronomy associate these two concepts. Whereas Exodus 20:11 contains an explicit connection between the divine institution of the Sabbath and the seventh day of creation, Deuteronomy highlights God's deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptians (e.g., Deut. 5:15). As a result, Alexander suggests that the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and subsequent settlement in the Promised Land were viewed as in some manner paralleling God's rest following the completion of his creative activity. This textual connection indicates that the rest offered in the land may be tied to the rest of God in creation prior to the fall.<sup>24</sup>

Martin's insights correspond to Owen's. In fact, many contemporary authors make connections between Eden and Canaan.<sup>25</sup> Israel is God's son in a new Eden-like place, given a task, and a weekly Sabbath based on divine acts. Just as Adam, the protological and typological son of God, was placed in Eden, given a task, and had a weekly Sabbath day founded on the divine rest, so Israel, the redemptive-historical and typological son of God (Exod. 4:22–23) was placed in Canaan, given a task, and had a weekly Sabbath day founded on the creational rest of God (Exod. 20) and the redemptive work of God (Deut. 5). This implies that Israel ought to be viewed as a corporate Adam.<sup>26</sup>

Owen also views the rest of Canaan as a preparation for a greater work. Many others have seen the pattern of divine works preparing the people of God for greater works in the future. Francis Foulkes, for example, shows that the writers of the Old Testament viewed the past acts of God as the basis for future, greater acts of God ultimately pointing to Christ and his kingdom.<sup>27</sup> As Oren Martin says, "... God's past dealings with his people serve as patterns, or types, for his future dealings with his people."<sup>28</sup> Israel (as with Adam) functions as a type of something greater to come—the people of God under the inaugurated new covenant. Commenting on Hebrews 4:9, Schreiner says this of Israel:

Another typological connection should be made explicit. The writer refers here to "the people of God" ... The rest given to Israel was a rest for a particular

people in a specific location. But just as the rest points forward to a rest that embraces the whole creation, the new creation, the heavenly city, so Israel functions as a type for the new people of God, the church of Jesus Christ. The new people of God is not restricted to Israel but consists of Jewish and Gentile believers scattered throughout the world.<sup>29</sup>

Owen then draws this conclusion from these two divine rests:

So both these states of the church had these three things distinctly;—a rest of God in his works, for their foundation; a rest in obedience and worship, for man to enter into; and a day of rest, as a pledge and token of both the others.<sup>30</sup>

The common features of these rests are: 1. a divine rest after a divine work; 2. a rest to be entered in terms of man's obedience and worship in light of the divine work/rest; and 3. a day of rest as a pledge and token of the divine rest and of man's entrance into it. These rests function, in part, as foreshadowings of a better rest to come for the people of God.

Having mentioned the two previous divine rests, Hebrews 4:9 announces that “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” Does this relate to previous rests? If so, how? Is this rest related to a divine work? If previous rests had an eschatological element to them, does this one? And who is the someone who has entered his rest in 4:10? These and other questions (and their answers) will be pursued below.

#### THE EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS 4:9–10

Here is an outline of these two verses as I understand the syntax:

- I. The conclusion to previous discussion (v. 9)
  - A. Its indicator: ἄρα (“so”)
  - B. Its essence: ἀπολείπεται ... (“there remains ...”)
    1. The fact that something remains: ἀπολείπεται (“there remains”)
    2. The identity of what remains: σαββατισμὸς (“a Sabbath rest”)
    3. The party for whom it remains: τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ (“for the people of God”)
- II. The basis for the conclusion (v. 10)
  - A. Its indicator: γὰρ (“For”)
  - B. Its precondition: ὁ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ (“the one who has entered His rest”)
  - C. Its statement: καὶ αὐτὸς κατέπαυσεν ... (“has himself also rested ...”)

1. The essence of it—someone has rested from his works: καὶ αὐτὸς κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ (“has himself also rested from his works”)
2. The correspondent to it—this rest corresponds to God's rest at creation: ὡσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων ὁ θεός (“as God did from His”)

The exposition below will follow the syntactical outline above. First, note that verse 9 is a conclusion to previous discussion. This is recognized by the commentators. For example, Schreiner says, “The word ‘therefore’ (ἄρα) signals that a conclusion is drawn from the preceding verses.”<sup>31</sup> Upon what specifically is this conclusion based? Two themes seem to be picked up by Hebrews 4:9 (and v. 10) from the preceding discussion—the concept of remaining (Heb. 4:1 and 6) and the concept of rest (Heb. 3:11, 18, 19 [implied]; 4:1, 3, 4, 5, 6 [implied], and 8). As will be noted below, however, a new word for rest is brought into the discussion at Hebrews 4:9 (i.e., “Sabbath rest” [σαββατισμὸς (*sabbatismos*)]). Schreiner notes, “The threads of the preceding verses are picked up here and the author draws a conclusion about the nature of the rest God promised.”<sup>32</sup> Owen, commenting on the particle “therefore” (ἄρα [*ara*]), says:

... the common note of inferring a conclusion from any argument ... Hereby, therefore, he would mind the Hebrews to attend both to what he was about to assert, and to the dependence of it on the former testimonies and arguments that he had pleaded and vindicated.<sup>33</sup>

That Hebrews 4:9–10 are connected to the previous discussion is vital to keep in mind as we work our way through those verses. Hebrews 4:9 is an inference based on the previous discussion. It is not another way of saying what had already been said. It is not tautological. It finds as its basis the previous rests of God and the practical inferences for the people of God, but it is not a repetition of what had been said in different words. Second, notice the essence of the conclusion: “There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” There are three views on Hebrews 4:9. First, the “Sabbath rest” is wholly future. Second, it is an already/not-yet soteriological reality experienced by believers in Christ. And third, it is “a Sabbath rest” for the people of God in terms of a day of sacred rest to be kept reflective of the finished

29. Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 144.

30. Owen, *Works*, 18:415.

31. Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 143.

32. Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 143.

33. Owen, *Works*, 20:325.

work of Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, though involving a symbolic and typological element.

The verb translated “there remains” is used in Hebrews 4:1, 6, and 9. In 4:1 it appears as a participle (*καταλειπομένης* [*kataleipomenēs*]), “while a promise *remains* of entering His rest . . .” At 4:1 it is compounded with the preposition *κατά* (*kata*). In 4:6 and 4:9 it appears in its present passive indicative verbal form (*ἀπολείπεται* [*apoleipetai*]). Here it is compounded with *ἀπό* (*apo*). This compound form occurs seven times in the New Testament. The present passive verbal form, however, is used only three times—Hebrews 4:6, 9, and 10:26. Hebrews 4:6 says, “Therefore, since *it remains* for some to enter it” (emphasis added). And Hebrews 4:9 reads, “So *there remains* a Sabbath rest for the people of God” (emphasis added). This word occurs in the same form in Hebrews 10:26, where we read, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer *remains* a sacrifice for sins” (emphasis added). The question that pertains to our discussion is whether or not “there remains” of Hebrews 4:9 refers to something exclusively future, to an already/not-yet soteriological experience of believers, or to the present, though symbolic and typological of the future eschatological rest. That it refers to the present, though to the future as well, is the best understanding for at least three reasons. First, notice the use and meaning of the word translated “there remains” in the same form elsewhere in Hebrews. In the two previous uses in Hebrews 4 (vv. 1 and 6), it refers to the (then) here and now, and both times it is connected to a rest which is both now and future, an already/not-yet rest of God ultimately in Christ though experienced by believers of all ages.<sup>34</sup> This is so because of Hebrews 4:3a, which says, “For we who have believed enter that rest.”<sup>35</sup> The use in Hebrews 10:26 seems to refer to both the present and the future. The second and third reasons for taking “there remains” as referring to the present, though with symbolic and typological significance, pertain to what “a Sabbath rest”

means and the interpretation of Hebrews 4:10. These will be discussed below.

That which “remains” is “a Sabbath rest.” The noun “a Sabbath rest” (*σαββατισμός* [*sabbatismos*]) is used only here in the Bible. Various cognate forms of it are used in the Septuagint (LXX) in at least four places (Exod. 16:30; Lev. 23:32; 26:34; 2 Chron. 36:21). Each use in the LXX, when referring to men, refers to Sabbath-keeping in terms of an activity in the (then) here and now. Lincoln admits this, when he says, “In each of these places the term denotes the observance or celebration of the Sabbath.”<sup>36</sup> This can be seen especially in Exodus 16:30, Leviticus 23:32, and 26:35.

So the people rested (LXX: ἐσαββάτισεν [*esabbatisen*]; a verb) on the seventh day. (Exod. 16:30)

It is to be a sabbath (LXX: σάββατα [*sabbata*]; a noun) of complete rest (LXX: σαββάτων [*sabbatōn*]; a noun) to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep (LXX: σαββατιεῖτε [*sabbatieite*]; a verb) your sabbath (LXX: τὰ σάββατα ὑμῶν [*ta sabbata hymōn*]; a noun). (Lev. 23:32)

All the days of *its* [i.e., the land’s] desolation it will observe the rest (LXX: σαββατιεῖ [*sabbatiei*]; a verb) which it did not observe (LXX: ἐσαββάτισεν [*esabbatisen*]; a verb) on your sabbaths (LXX: τοῖς σαββάτοις ὑμῶν [*tois sabbatois hymōn*]; a noun), while you were living on it. (Lev. 26:34–35)

Something interesting occurs in the LXX version of Leviticus 23:32a. The LXX text reads as follows: *σάββατα σαββάτων ἔξαι ὑμῶν (sabbata sabbatōn estai hymin)*. The NASB translates this verse: “It is to be a sabbath of complete rest to you.” The word *σάββατα* in the LXX complements the verb “to be” (*ἔξαι*). The word *σαββάτων* (“of complete rest”) modifies *σάββατα*. Both nouns clearly refer to an activity, a Sabbath-keeping to be rendered by those addressed in the passage. In Leviticus 23:32b of the LXX a verb is followed by its direct object as follows: *σαββατιεῖτε τὰ σάββατα ὑμῶν (sabbatieite ta sabbata hymōn* [“you shall keep your sabbath”]). Here a Sabbath for the people of God to keep is pressed upon them, explicitly by verbs and implicitly by nouns. Also, in each case the word “Sabbath” is the same used by Moses in Genesis 2:2, “and He *rested* on the seventh day” (emphasis added). Pertinent to our discussion as well is the fact that God’s creational rest in the LXX of Exodus 20:11 is referred to with the verb *κατέπαυσεν (katepausen)*, the

34. E.g., Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 135; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1990; reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 155–56 and 159–60; and Andrew T. Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (reprint ed., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 206, 207, 210, 211, and 212.

35. E.g., Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” 206, where he says: “Hence also the fact that those who by faith already enter rest (4:3) need at the same time to be exhorted to strive to enter that rest (4:11).”

36. Lincoln, 213.

same word translated “rest” in Hebrews 3 and 4. In the LXX, what for the Creator is “rest” implies a Sabbath day to be kept for creatures. Hebrews 3 and 4 seem to follow this septuagintal pattern (see the discussion on divine rests above and the exposition of Heb. 4:10 below).

Robert P. Martin has an excellent discussion on the word “a Sabbath rest” (σαββατισμὸς [*sabbatismos*]). In the context of interacting with Andrew T. Lincoln, Martin says:

It is interesting that Lincoln acknowledges that “in each of these places [i.e., the LXX texts cited above] the term denotes the observance or celebration of the Sabbath,” i.e., not a Sabbath rest as a *state* to be entered into but a Sabbath-keeping as a *practice* to be observed. This, of course, corresponds to the word’s morphology, for the suffix —μὸς indicates an *action* and not just a *state*. This at least suggests that if the writer of Hebrews meant only “a Sabbath rest,” i.e., “a Sabbath state” to be entered into, he would have used the term *σάββατον* (“Sabbath”) or continued to use *κατάπαυσις* (“rest”), for he already had established the referent of *κατάπαυσις* as God’s own Sabbath rest which is to be entered into by faith (cf., 4:1, 3–4, 11). Thus *σαββατισμὸς* suggests a Sabbath action, i.e., “a Sabbath-keeping,” although the idea of a “a Sabbath state” is not necessarily excluded because of the overarching theme of the larger context.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the passage thus far, the word translated “rest” is *κατάπαυσις* (*katapausis*). This word is also used in Hebrews 4:10–11. The shift from *katapausis* to *sabbatismos* at Hebrews 4:9 is deliberate.<sup>38</sup> But why the change? Joseph A. Pipa suggests the following:

The uniqueness of the word suggests a deliberate, theological purpose. He selects or coins *sabbatismos* because, in addition to referring to spiritual rest, it suggests as well an observance of that rest by a ‘Sabbath-keeping’. Because the promised rest lies ahead for the New Covenant people, they are to strive to enter the future rest. Yet as they do so, they anticipate it by continuing to keep the Sabbath.<sup>39</sup>

Notice that Pipa includes “spiritual rest” in his understanding of the word *sabbatismos*. This is an important observation, also made by Martin above (i.e., “the idea of ‘a Sabbath state’ is not necessarily excluded because of the overarching theme of the larger context”).

Though many commentators take *sabbatismos* as either salvation rest in Christ now and in the future or

exclusively eschatological rest, its use here in light of the flow of the contextual argument and its LXX usages suggest a different meaning. The LXX use has already been noted. In the context of Hebrews 4:9–10, the divine rests referred to have at least three things in common: 1. a divine rest after a divine work; 2. a rest to be entered in terms of man’s obedience and worship in light of the divine work/rest; and 3. a day of rest as a pledge and token of the divine work/rest and of man’s entrance into it. Each divine rest as given to the people of God (i.e., at creation and Canaan) had an abiding rest day remaining once the rest was instituted. If the other two divine rests included rest-keeping in the form of a Sabbath day, it is not without warrant to expect future divine rests (assuming they occur) to include the same. I am suggesting Hebrews 4:9–10 indicates just such a rest.

The party for whom “a Sabbath rest” remains is “the people of God.” The people of God refers to the now people of God under the inaugurated new covenant, which obviously includes the recipients of the book of Hebrews. Christians are called the people of God elsewhere in the New Testament. First Peter 2:10 says, “who once were not a people but are now the people of God” (see Rom. 9:25 and Hos. 1:10 and 2:23). The people of the inaugurated new covenant have a Sabbath day to keep. But why does there remain a Sabbath-keeping for the people of the inaugurated new covenant? Because a new divine rest has been inaugurated and the not-yet eternal rest of God in the eternal state is yet future. So as the old Sabbath both looked back to creation and forward to an eternal rest, so the inaugurated new covenant’s Sabbath looks back to the inauguration of the new creation (i.e., Christ’s resurrection on the first day) and forward to the eternal rest of God. The “Sabbath rest” of Hebrews 4:9 is for “the people of God” under the inaugurated new covenant.

The rests prior to Hebrews 4:9 referred to divine rests into which people entered and remained on the earth, though symbolic and typological of eschatological rest. The conclusion being drawn is that the people of God under the inaugurated new covenant have “a Sabbath rest” which remains, a divine rest instituted by the Son of God, the Lord of the Sabbath. This becomes clear in Hebrews 4:10.

In Hebrews 4:10, the author accounts for the remaining “Sabbath rest for the people of God.” This is

37. Martin, *The Christian Sabbath*, 251–52.

38. See Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” 213, where he admits this.

39. Pipa, *The Lord’s Day*, 117.

indicated by the conjunction γάρ (*gar* ["For"]). Owen comments on the function of γάρ (*gar* ["For"]):

The conjunction γάρ, "for," which introduceth this assertion, manifests that the apostle in these words gives an account whence it is that there is a new sabbatism remaining for the people of God. He had proved before that there could be no such rest but what was founded in the works of God, and his rest that ensued thereon. Such a foundation therefore, he saith, this new rest must have; and it hath it.<sup>40</sup>

Understanding the function of γάρ (*gar* ["For"]) is very important in order to account for how verse 10 relates to verse 9. Lincoln seems to ignore it while discussing Hebrews 4:9–10.<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Edwards' comments are helpful and to the point:

When it is said, "There remaineth a rest to the people of God;" in the original, it is *sabbatism*, or *the keeping of a sabbath*: and this reason is given for it, "For he that entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."<sup>42</sup>

The participial clause "the one who has entered His rest" functions as the precondition for the main clause of Hebrews 4:10 (see the outline above). In other words, because someone has entered into his rest and also rested from his works, "there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." As will be shown below, though the grammar and syntax argues for this understanding of the text, the way most explain the clause does not make sense.

The identity of this someone who has entered into his rest is debated. A common view is that it refers to believers.<sup>43</sup> This view does not make sense in light of the grammar and syntax of verses 9 and 10 and the contextual argument. Taken as referring to believers, the subsequent words "has himself also rested from his

works" (the basis for the conclusion in v. 9; see the outline above) refers to the same believers. In other words, some understand this to mean that when believers have entered their or God's rest (v. 10), they will have entered the "Sabbath rest" that remained for them to enter while still on the earth. In other words, taking "Sabbath rest" as wholly future, it could read this way: "There remains a personal rest in the future, a personal Sabbath rest for the future, when individual believers enter their rest, that is, when they cease from their works as believers."<sup>44</sup> Or it could be stated this way for the already/not-yet view of 4:9: "There remains a Sabbath rest for believers, a Sabbath rest that we taste of in the present, to be fully enjoyed when believers have ceased from their earthly works."<sup>45</sup> Both ways, verse 10 would seem to be saying that there is a future rest until we rest in the future. The common view makes verse 10 tautological or exegetical of verse 9. There remains a future, full rest until we rest in the future fully? The grammar and syntax of verse 10 argue otherwise.

As indicated above, the conjunction γάρ (*gar* ["For"]) introduces us to the basis for the conclusion stated in verse 9. The conclusion stated in verse 9 is: "So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." The basis for this conclusion is: "For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His." There remains, in the here and now (see above), a Sabbath rest for the people of God under the inaugurated new covenant *because* someone has entered his rest, ceasing from his works. Who is this someone who has entered his rest? As stated above, a common view is that it refers to believers. This view does not make sense of the verse, its relation to verse 9, nor does it do justice to the flow of the argument in the preceding discussion (see below).

There is another view of Hebrews 4:10 which makes more sense of its relation to verse 9 and the context and flow of argumentation. In brief, this view maintains that Christ is the one who has entered (i.e., in the past) his rest. Assuming this interpretation for now, verses 9 and 10 would be saying: "There is a remaining Sabbath day to be kept under the inaugurated new covenant for the present people of God on the earth because Christ, who is God, has entered his rest via his first-day resurrection, ceasing from the work of redemption, a new creation, just as God rested from his works of the old creation." This is Owen's view, and that of many others, and I think it is the correct one.

In a 2014 article, Nicholas J. Moore shows that some before and many after John Owen understand Hebrews 4:10 as a Christological referent. Moore notes

40. Owen, *Works*, 20:332.

41. See Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," 212–14.

42. Edwards, *Works*, 2:98.

43. E.g. Hughes, Gaffin, O'Brien, Schreiner, Lincoln. This is not a novel view. It has adherents, for example, in the English Puritan era as well.

44. See Hughes, *Hebrews*, 161–62 and O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 171–72. Gaffin, "A Sabbath Rest Still Awaits the People of God," 45, says: "A parallel is drawn, with some deliberateness, between believers and God; *their* resting is to *their* works, as God's resting is to his works" (emphasis added).

45. See Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 144–46.

that though William Gouge takes Hebrews 4:10 to refer to believers, he was aware of the Christological view held by others. Gouge’s work was published posthumously in 1655. Owen’s work on this text was published in 1674. Moore also lists the following as adherents to a Christological view: Ebrard, 1850; Vanhoye, 1963; Andriessen and Lenglet, 1971; Sabourin, 1973; and deSilva, 2000.<sup>46</sup> As noted above, there are others who hold the Christological view, such as: John Gill, 1809; Daniel Wilson, 1827; Jonathan Edwards, 1834; Henry Alford, 1857; Robert L. Dabney, 1891; Walter J. Chantry, 1991; Joseph A. Pipa, 1997; and Robert P. Martin, 2015.<sup>47</sup> Though a view ought not to be taken simply because others have taken it, it is important to acknowledge that Owen’s view is not unique to him. The major issue is not who holds what; it is the identity of the person or persons in the clauses: “the one who has entered His rest” and “has himself also rested from his works.” The Christological reference makes the best sense of the verse, its relation to verse 9, and the overall flow of the argument (see below).

Before continuing, it may help to notice several translations of Hebrews 4:10. This will display the fact that various interpretive nuances are evidenced in these translations.

For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. (Heb. 4:10, KJV, 1611)

For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. (Heb. 4:10, ERV, 1885)

For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. (Heb. 4:10, ASV, 1901)

For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. (Heb. 4:10, NKJV, 1982)

for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. (Heb. 4:10, NIV, 1984)

for those who enter God’s rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. (Heb. 4:10, NRSV, 1989)

For the one who has entered His rest has himself

also rested from his works, as God did from His. (Heb. 4:10, NASB Updated, 1995)

For the person who has entered His rest has rested from his own works, just as God did from His. (Heb. 4:10, CSB, 2004)

for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. (Heb 4:10 ESV, 2007 update)

The first clause in the Greek text of Hebrews 4:10 reads, ὁ γὰρ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ (*ho gar eiselthōn eis tēn katapausin autou* [“For the one who has entered His rest”]). The word for God is not in the clause, yet the NKJV, NIV, NRSV, NASB, CSB, and ESV either insert the word “God’s” or capitalize the pronoun “His.” This clearly tilts readers in a certain interpretive direction. According to this reading, the “rest” someone has entered is “God’s” creational rest, which is implied in the last clause of the verse (i.e., “as God did from His” [i.e., as God rested from His works]). The second clause of 4:10 reads, καὶ αὐτὸς κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ (*kai autos katepausen apo tōn ergōn autou* [“has himself also rested from his works”]).<sup>48</sup> Notice that the second use of the pronoun *autou* (“his”) refers to the person “who has entered His rest.” The first referent of *autou* is taken to be God, the second to be the person or persons who have rested from works. Though this is certainly plausible, I think there is a better way to understand the pronouns. Both refer to the same person. The “one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works.” I take both pronouns as referring to Christ. The reasons for this should be clear in the ensuing discussion.

An important interpretive question has to do with the time reference in the initial dependent clause and the independent clause which follows it. The two options are a future time referent or a past time referent. If taken as referring to believers, there are three views. For the future rest view of Gaffin and O’Brien, it puts the time referent at death, when believers cease working on the earth. For the already/not-yet view of Schreiner, it would seem to put the time referent both in the past and the future.<sup>48</sup> For the already/not-yet view

46. Moore, “Jesus as ‘The One who Entered his Rest,’” 386.

47. Gill and Alford deny Heb. 4:9 teaches a Sabbath day to be observed under the inaugurated new covenant.

48. Though Schreiner advocates an already/not-yet motif in Heb. 4:9, he seems to locate Heb. 4:10 exclusively in the future. See Schreiner, *Hebrews* 144–46.

of Lincoln, it puts the time referent in the past, when believers came to faith in Christ and ceased their sinful works, but also has a future referent.<sup>49</sup> It is best to take the time referent for both clauses as past, the reasons for which will be shown below.

Who is the one or who are the ones who have entered rest in the first clause of Hebrews 4:10? The two options are believers or Christ. Those who take it as believers view the rest either as an already/not-yet soteriologic experience of believers (Lincoln, Schreiner) or as a wholly future rest (Gaffin, O'Brien). Who is the author referring to in verse 10, when he says, "For the one who has entered His rest" (emphasis added)? As noted, some refer this to the believer who has "rested from his works" (Heb. 4:10b). But this interpretation would compare God's ceasing from his work of creation and being refreshed by it (Gen. 1:31, "Then God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good" and Exod. 31:17, "and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed") with the believer's ceasing from his unrighteous works of sin and resting in God's salvation rest in Christ or the wilderness works of believers which are mixed, the rest being experienced in the intermediate or eternal state. When God ceased from his work of creation, it was not because it was bad or mixed but because it was "very good." He was refreshed; that is, he approved what he had done. God's ceasing from his work of creation and his subsequent rest does not compare with the believer's ceasing from sinful works and taking rest in God or ceasing from wilderness works and then entering the intermediate or eternal state. Believers don't cease from their work and call it "very good." They are not "refreshed" as they look back at their sinful works or their mixed wilderness works; they don't approve them (or at least not all of them). This kind of rest finds no parallel with God's rest. Owen comments:

But now, if those mentioned be the works here intended, men cannot so rest from them as God did from his; but they cease from them with a detestation of them as far as they are sinful, and joy for their deliverance from them as far as they are sorrowful. Now, this is not to rest as God rested. Again, when are men supposed to rest from these works? It cannot be in this world, for here we rest not at all from temptations, sufferings, and sorrows; and for that mortification of sin of which we attain unto, we are to fight continually, "resisting even

unto blood." It must therefore be in heaven that they so rest; and this is affirmed accordingly.<sup>50</sup>

The text presents a parallel between "the one who has entered His rest" and "has himself rested from his works" and God, who ceased from his work of creation. The words "the one who has entered His rest" and "has himself rested from his works" cannot apply to believers. It destroys the parallel. The writer is speaking of an individual ("the one who ... himself ... his") who has entered his rest. Owen says:

A single person is here expressed; on whose account the things mentioned are asserted. And of this change of phrase there can be no reason be given, but only to signify the introduction of a singular person.<sup>51</sup>

To maintain the parallel, it must be an individual "who has entered His rest" and "rested from his works, as God did from His." The only individual who can fit this parallel is Jesus Christ, who entered his rest as our representative and "rested from his works" of redemption/re-creation when he rose from the dead. Owen says:

There is a direct parallel in the whole verse between the works of the old creation and those of the new, which the apostle is openly comparing together. 1. For the authors of them: Of the one it is said to be God, —"As God did from his;" that is, the Creator: of the other, "He, ... ; 'who is that of whom we speak,' saith our apostle, 'verse 13,'—for in these words he makes also a transition to the person of Christ ... 2. The works of the one and the other are expressed. The works of the Creator are, ..., "his works;" "his own works," the works of the old creation. And there are the works of him of whom he speaks, ..., "his works;" those which he wrought in like manner as God did his own at the beginning—that is, the work of building his church. For these works must answer each other, and have the same respect unto their authors or workers. They must be good and complete in their kind, and such as rest and refreshment may be taken in as well as upon. To compare the sins of the sufferings of men with the works of God, our apostle did not intend. 3. There is the rest of the one and the other. And these must also have their proportion to one another. Now God rested from his own works of creation,—(1.) By *ceasing from creating*, only continuing all things by his power in their order, and propagating them to his glory. (2.) By his respect unto them or *refreshment* in them, as those which set forth his praise and satisfied his glorious design. And so also must he rest who is here spoken

49. See Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest," 213.

50. Owen, *Works*, 20:332.

51. Owen, *Works*, 20:333.

of. (1.) He must cease from working in the like kind. He must suffer no more, die no more, but only continue the work of his grace, in the preservation of the new creature, and orderly increase and propagation of it by the Spirit. (2.) In his delight and satisfaction which he taketh in his works, which Jesus Christ hath to the utmost. “He sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied,” and is in possession of that “glory which was set before him” whilst he was at his work.<sup>52</sup>

Taking both clauses as referring to Christ is the better option for these reasons: first, the first clause is best understood as a reference to an individual; second, the past tense referents in the two clauses; third, the previous rests are divine; fourth, the comparison with God’s rest; fifth, it makes better sense of the conjunction “For”; and sixth, the overall flow of the contextual argument. Since most of these have been discussed above, let’s consider the first clause as a reference to an individual and the time referent of both clauses. These will be considered together. In both clauses, the word “rest” is used. The first clause uses a noun form (*κατάπαυσιν* [*katapausin*]) and the second a verb form (*κατέπαυσεν* [*katēpausen*]). This verbal form occurs in Hebrews 4:4 and 4:8. Hebrews 4:4 reads, “For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: ‘AND GOD RESTED [*κατάπαυσιν* (*katapausin*)] ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS.’” Hebrews 4:8 reads, “For if Joshua had given them rest [*κατάπαυσιν* (*katapausin*)], He would not have spoken of another day after that.” Both uses clearly refer to past events.

Another issue concerns the participle of the first clause (*ὁ εἰσελθὼν* [*ho eiselthōn*]), translated “the one who has entered.” When does or did this one enter his rest? The participle is aorist active, which does not in itself tell us when this action occurred. The participial clause occurs prior to the main verb in the Greek text. It is dependent upon the aorist active verb of the main clause (*κατέπαυσεν* [*katēpausen*]), and “any temporal reference is relative to the action of the main verb.”<sup>53</sup> Moore’s discussion of participles preceding main verbs is helpful at this point. He says:

As a general but not universal rule, participles preceding the main verb tend to be antecedent to the action of that verb, whereas those following the main verb tend to be concurrent or subsequent; additionally, aorist participles tend to precede the main verb, and present participles tend to follow it (Fanning 1990: 407; Porter 1989: 380–81; 1994: 188). These considerations suggest that we would expect *ὁ εἰσελθὼν* [“the one who has

entered”], which is both aorist and prior to the main verb, to be antecedent to the action of the main verb; examination of the verse confirms this expectation: the action of entering rest is logically prior to the state of resting from works.<sup>54</sup>

Moore analyzed all the substantival aorist participles (i.e., participles that function as nouns as in Heb. 4:10a) in the book of Hebrews.<sup>55</sup> This is an important interpretive consideration, especially since the clause “the one who has entered” can refer to a number of people or anyone who thus enters rest. Moore says:

The letter contains 33 substantival aorist participles, of which 17 are plural and 16 are singular (including the one in question here). All of the plural instances refer to a group of people who did something in the past; similarly, 11 of the singular instances refer unambiguously to the past. Of the five remaining participles, one is the case in question, leaving four to account for. In Heb. 3:3 and 4 *ὁ κατασκευάσας* [*ho kataskeusas* (“the builder”)] occurs twice—first referring generically to ‘the builder of the house’, and, on the second occasion, referring to God, ‘the builder of everything’. In the case of God, it is clear that this refers to past action: God is ‘the one who prepared/built everything’; but also in the case of the nonspecific ‘builder’, who is a builder because he or she *has built* a house—and indeed it is precisely the relationship to the house that is in view in 3:3. A similar argument obtains for the remaining participle [*τοῦ διαθεμένου* (*tu diathemenou*)], which comes twice, in Heb. 9:16 and 17. Although one might translate this as ‘the testator’, a person can be a testator only if he or she has made a will at some point in the past. Thus all substantival aorist participles in Hebrews refer either explicitly or implicitly to the past, a consistent feature of the letter’s style, which means that a gnomic sense [i.e., not limiting action in the past, present, or future] for *ὁ εἰσελθὼν* [“the one who has entered”] in Heb. 4:10 is not impossible but would be at least unusual. Grammatical considerations are not decisive for or against either interpretation, but they do give reason to favour a past sense.<sup>56</sup>

52. Owen, *Works*, 20:333–34.

53. Moore, “Jesus as ‘The One who Entered his Rest,’” 388.

54. Moore, “Jesus as ‘The One who Entered his Rest,’” 388.

55. Moore lists all the substantival aorist participles in Moore, “Jesus as ‘The One who Entered his Rest,’” 389, n. 19. They are as follows: for plurals, 2:1, 3; 3:16 (2x), 17, 18; 4:2, 3, 6; 6:4–5 (4x), 18; 11:31; 12:19; and for singulars, 3:2, 3, 4; 4:10; 5:5; 9:16, 17; 10:23, 28, 29 (3x), 30; 11:11, 17; and 13:20.

56. Moore, “Jesus as ‘The One who Entered his Rest,’” 389.

This gives a sufficient background for Owen's claim, where he says:

A single person is here expressed; on whose account the things mentioned are asserted. And of this change of phrase there can no reason be given, but only to signify the introduction of a singular person.<sup>57</sup>

The "change of phrase" refers to going from "We who believe" and "the people of God" to the singular participle, "He that is entered."<sup>58</sup>

Taking the referent to past actions of Christ in both cases, the participle and the main verb, makes sense for other reasons as well. As Moore says and as mentioned above:

The presence of the particle ["For"] leads us to expect v. 10 to give the reason or cause for v. 9. On the usual reading of v. 10, however, it does not give grounds for v. 9 but rather introduces a clarification or explication of the *σαββατισμὸς*....

On the christological reading of v. 10, then, the ["For"] has it full force: *for* the one who entered his rest (i.e., Jesus) has also rested from his works. That is, it is because Jesus has completed his salvific work that rest remains open for the people of God....<sup>59</sup>

Also, the comparison in 4:10 is between our Lord as Mediator and God as Creator. This gives credence to the fact that the work of the old and new creations is that to which the author is referring. Moore agrees, when he says:

... the statement juxtaposes the creative work of God with the salvific work of Christ ... This, then, enables us to identify the 'works' with confidence, something which defenders of the standard reading are unable to do. There is a careful patterning: each party enters rest only after the completion of his specific and deeply important tasks, a parallel which becomes less exact if ["the one who entered"] refers to believers.<sup>60</sup>

Once Christ's work was accomplished he entered his rest; and we must remember that Christ is God. Just as previous divine rests came after divine works, so with

our Lord's rest. There is a new covenant Sabbath rest, the foundation of which is the great redemptive work of Christ. As with the previous rests, this rest is founded upon a great work of God—a new creation. Both the initial rest of God and the rest of Canaan are creational (see above) and so is this one. This interpretation would paraphrase Hebrews 4:9–10 as follows: "There remains a Sabbath-keeping for the people of God under the inaugurated new covenant in terms of a day of rest symbolizing the rest won for us by Christ and typifying the eternal rest of God to be enjoyed in the eternal state because Christ has rested from his works of accomplishing redemption, inaugurating a new creation via his resurrection, and a Sabbath day founded on it."

Just as God entered his rest on the seventh day at creation, thus becoming the Sabbath day by positive example (and a pledge of glory to come), so Christ entered his rest on the first day, the day he rose from the dead, the day his new-creative/redemptive work was accomplished, thus becoming the Sabbath day for the new covenant people of God by positive example. Owen says:

Therefore did the Lord Christ enter into his rest, after he had finished and ceased from his works, 'on the morning of the first day of the week,' when he rose from the dead, the foundation of the new creation being laid and perfected.<sup>61</sup>

Though the interpretation of Hebrews 4:9–10 offered above appears to be the minority view in current literature, when many discuss the sufferings and glory of our Lord, they often do so utilizing such language as redemption accomplished via the foundation of the new creation by the work and resurrection of Christ. When the question is asked, when did our Lord enter rest? Many reply, "At his resurrection." Why did he enter his rest at the resurrection? Because his work of redemption was finished. In fact, Christian hymnody reflects the theology of Hebrews 4:9–10 as offered above. There seems to be a theological intuition reflecting this view in older hymn-writers. Two such examples make this clear (see next page). Notice the creational and new-creational motifs in both of these hymns, as well as Edenic, redemptive-historical, and eschatological emphases. The first hymn was written by Christopher Wordsworth in 1862 and the second by William Walsham How in 1871. Both men were Anglicans.

#### THE IMPLICATIONS OF HEBREWS 4:9–10

Assuming the exposition above, several implications follow. First, there is a present Sabbath rest, a

57. Owen, *Works*, 20:333.

58. See Owen, *Works*, 18:418 and 20:333.

59. Moore, "Jesus as 'The One who Entered his Rest,'" 390–91.

60. Moore, "Jesus as 'The One who Entered his Rest,'" 393.

61. Owen, *Works*, 20:335.

<p><b>“O Day of Rest and Gladness”</b></p> <p>1. O day of rest and gladness, O day of joy and light, O balm of care and sadness, Most beautiful, most bright; On thee the high and lowly, Through ages joined in tune, Sing Holy, Holy, Holy, To the great God Triune,</p> <p>2. On thee, at the creation, The light first had its birth; On thee, for our salvation, Christ rose from depths of earth; On thee our Lord, victorious, The Spirit sent from heav’n; And thus on thee, most glorious, A triple light was giv’n.</p> <p>3. Thou art a port protected From storms that round us rise; A garden intersected With streams of Paradise; Thou art a cooling fountain In life’s dry, dreary sand; From thee, like Pisgah’s mountain, We view the promised land.</p>	<p>4. Today on weary nations The heav’nly manna falls; To holy convocations The silver trumpet calls, Where gospel light is glowing With pure and radiant beams, And living water flowing With soul-refreshing streams.</p> <p>5. New graces ever gaining From this our day of rest, We reach the rest remaining To spirits of the blest. To Holy Ghost be praises, To Father and to Son; The church her voice upraises To thee, blest Three in One.<sup>62</sup></p>	<p><b>“This Day at Thy Creating Word”</b></p> <p>1. This day at thy creating word First o’er the earth the light was poured: O Lord, this day upon us shine And fill our souls with light divine.</p> <p>2. This day the Lord for sinners slain In might victorious rose again: O Jesus, may we raised be From death of sin to life in thee!</p> <p>3. This day the Holy Spirit came With fiery tongues of cloven flame: O Spirit, fill our hearts this day With grace to hear and grace to pray.</p> <p>4. O day of light and life and grace, From earthly toil sweet resting place, Thy hallowed hours, blest gift of love, Give we again to God above.</p> <p>5. All praise to God the Father be, All praise, eternal Son, to thee, Whom, with the Spirit, we adore For ever and for evermore.<sup>63</sup></p>
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Sabbath-keeping, for the people of God under the inaugurated new covenant. This is what the Old Testament prophesied (Isa. 56:1–8; Jer. 31:33) and what the Gospel accounts lead us to expect (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28).<sup>64</sup>

Second, the present Sabbath rest is for the people of God to enter into and remain in. This is why the recipients of Hebrews were exhorted to persevere in it, for it includes gospel or evangelical worship, not only union with Christ and the individual benefits of that union. This Sabbath rest is for the people of God as such.

Third, the present Sabbath rest is founded on the work of Christ in the accomplishment of redemption, the foundation of the new creation. That work is the foundation upon which salvation rest is offered to man (and always has been since the first promise of salvation was revealed [Gen. 3:15]), which rest is inclusive of a day of rest that is symbolic of and typifying a future, eschatological rest.

Fourth, this Sabbath rest is reflective of the fact that our Lord entered his rest, via his first-day resurrection, for us and for our salvation. He entered glory, the eschatological state, proffered in Eden and typified in Canaan but attained only by our Lord. The inaugurated new covenant’s Sabbath day reflects redemptive-historical

conditions brought in by the sufferings and glory of our Lord, as the Old Testament predicted he would and the Gospels confirmed he did.

Finally, this remaining Sabbath rest corresponds to the original creational rest of God. As with many divine acts, earlier acts of God often typify later, greater acts of God, which are both similar and dissimilar to his previous acts. Just as God at creation and just as God in Canaan, so also with our Lord. God, the Creator, worked then rested and God, the Mediator, worked then rested. And just as the Creator’s acts were both divine exemplars, imperatival for man, so with the acts of the Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ. “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His” (Heb. 4:9–10).■

62. Christopher Wordsworth, “O Day of Rest and Gladness,” in *Trinity Hymnal—Baptist Edition* (Suwanee, GA: Great Commission Publications, Inc., 1995), #321.

63. William Walsham How, “This Day at Thy Creating Word,” in *Trinity Hymnal—Baptist Edition*, #324.

64. See my *Getting the Garden Right: Adam’s Work and God’s Rest in Light of Christ* forthcoming from Founders Press for argumentation.