

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

The Theological Implications of *κατάπαυσίν* and *σαββατισμός* in Hebrews 3:7–4:11

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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The warning passages in the book of Hebrews have been studied extensively over the years (Heb 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14-29). In 2007, *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* was published. In this book, four different authors lay out their arguments for how best to understand the warning passages.¹ By the end of the book, the only clear conclusion is that there is more research to be done. While these four scholars agree on several points, two significant interpretive questions remain: 1) How does the author of Hebrews understand salvation for followers of Jesus? 2) How does the author understand the permanency and assurance of salvation? Each of the four scholars, Gareth Cockerill, Buist Fanning, Randall Gleason, and Grant Osborne, take a different position on how the warning passages should be understood, with no position being completely compelling. In all of the debates, one crucial issue that cannot be ignored is the theme of “rest” in the very first warning passage, Hebrews 3-4. This thesis will argue that rest in Hebrews is entering into humanity’s rightful place, ruling over creation with God, in the full image of God, as intended by God since the seventh day.

Rest in the book of Hebrews is a vitally important theme. The word for rest in Greek is *κατάπαυσίν* and is used eight times in Hebrews 3-4. When introducing Hebrews 3-4, Herbert Bateman writes, “However we might define ‘God’s rest,’ it is something to be pursued with diligence.”² The definition of rest determines the crux of understanding the warning passage by the author of Hebrews. As Bateman hints, there is a lack of clarity about what rest means here.

1 Herbert W. Bateman V, “Introducing the Warning Passages in Hebrews: A Contextual Orientation,” in *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2007).

2 Ibid., 59.

The basic lexical definition of this word is “rest” or “resting place.”³ While a basic gloss of the Greek term *κατάπαυσίν* is easy to find, the contextual meaning of “rest” in all its connotations in Hebrews 3–4 is much more difficult to ascertain.

The leading scholars on the theme of rest show no consensus as to the definition of the term in Hebrews. William Lane writes, “Whatever the rest is, it is available now and not only in the future when believers get to heaven.”⁴ Lane adds something to the conversation that brings up the timing of when such rest is attained. However, the question remains: what is the rest in this context of Hebrews 3–4? George Guthrie writes, “God’s idea of ‘rest’ is wholly different from man’s idea, and the writer here uses the psalmist’s words to turn his readers’ minds towards a spiritual idea, the kind which can truly be called God’s rest.”⁵ Guthrie suggests that the rest discussed in Hebrews is something more than settlement in the physical Promised Land and argues that it is instead a spiritual rest. While many scholars agree with the distinction between physical and spiritual rest from Israel’s wanderings onward, an aspect is still missing. By quoting Genesis 2:2, the author of Hebrews argues that rest was not merely available after the wilderness generation of Israelites but has always been available since the seventh day of the world’s creation. The access to rest since the end of creation is an aspect that demonstrates that scholars have not formulated a complete theme of rest.

3 Otfried Hofius, “κατάπαυσις” In *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Balz, Horst Robert, and Gerhard Schneider, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 266.

4 David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 282.

5 Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 119.

Statement of Purpose

Scholars have not given the theme of rest in Hebrews 3–4 the attention it deserves, so this study will address that gap. G. K. Beale, for example, gives a substantial overview of Sabbath rest in a chapter of his book.⁶ He brings some clarity to the discussion of rest in Genesis 2:2, but when addressing Hebrews 3–4, he writes, “This section of Hebrews needs some analysis before conclusions about its bearing on the Sabbath question can be addressed.”⁷ While Beale then elaborates on aspects of the rest described in Hebrews 3–4 as well as a theological understanding of Sabbath rest (σαββατισμὸς), he does not address or develop the theme of rest (κατάπαυσις) throughout the Old Testament. While the work of Beale and other recent scholarship has furthered our understanding of rest, there are still gaps in explanations of rest in the Bible as it pertains to κατάπαυσις and how various biblical authors, especially the author of Hebrews, understand that rest. This study will evaluate scholarship related to rest and develop a biblical theology of rest in order to bring clarity to how the theme is used by the author of Hebrews and the resulting implications for Christians today.

Statement of Importance of the Problem

There are several reasons to address the topic of rest in the book of Hebrews. The first reason is primarily exegetical. There is no question that rest plays a crucial role in Hebrews. Rest is also alluded to throughout the letter, especially in the warning passages as “the promise” (Heb 4:1; 6:12, 15, 17, 19-20; 7:6; 8:6; 9:15; 10:36; 11:9, 13, 17, 33, 39). The term is also used many times in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, most often in the Pentateuch, followed

⁶ Gregory K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: 2012), 775-801.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 784.

by the Psalms. The term *κατάπαυσις* is also used in various apocryphal books such as Judith, 2 Maccabees, and Sirach. The basic lexical entry defines *κατάπαυσις* as rest, calm, or resting place.⁸ Exegetically, however, the implications of this rest are still widely debated.

The second reason is polemical or doctrinal. The way one understands rest in Hebrews 3–4 plays a significant role in understanding what is at stake in the warning passages, including the meaning of apostasy and the goal of perseverance. Therefore, the definition of rest in this context plays a significant role in formulating a biblical view of salvation (soteriology). The warning passages historically have been a point of controversy and polemical debate between Arminians and Calvinists. While some scholarship on rest in Hebrews is present, there is a lack of consensus and interdisciplinary collaboration between biblical exegetes and systematic theologians concerning the theme of rest and its implications for soteriology.

The third reason is practical. The theological implications of rest in the book are not merely for abstract knowledge but rather for motivating the audience to respond in how they live the Christian life. The author of Hebrews writes the letter in a sermonic fashion, which is why some claim that he is the pastor of this church and is using a “pastoral strategy” to communicate these theological teachings.⁹ Therefore, this is not merely a theological exercise but also a look at a biblical case of pastoral ministry. The author of Hebrews believed that this information was vital for his church to hear in their pursuit of perseverance towards the promise God gave (Heb 12:1-2).

⁸ Otfried Hofius, “*κατάπαυσις*” In *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 265.

⁹ George H. Guthrie, “Conclusion,” in *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2007), 436.

Therefore, the meaning of rest in Hebrews 3–4 is vital for exegetical, doctrinal, and practical reasons. It is exegetically pivotal to understanding what is lost in the other warning passages. This research will contribute to the conversation concerning a biblical theology of rest, not only as the author of Hebrews understands it but also its theological development in the other biblical texts. The implications of rest in biblical theology and the use of the motif by the author of Hebrews are vital in order to have a gospel-centered, biblical soteriology. The definition of rest determines the end goal of salvation, when it is attained, how it is attained, and whether it can be lost. Inaccurate interpretations of rest in the letter of Hebrews lead to a faulty understanding of God’s saving work (soteriology).

Statement of Position on the Problem

While many scholars have offered definitions of rest in the Old Testament as well as in Hebrews, their views diverge regarding several aspects of this theme. There are only a few aspects of rest upon which all scholars agree in the book of Hebrews. One of those main points of agreement is that the rest is available for Christians, and therefore not impossible to attain.¹⁰ Another point of agreement is that rest is attained in the future.¹¹ To understand the theme of rest, one must take a cumulative approach to all the various nuances. Rest, in the context of Hebrews 3–4, is an eschatological reigning with God that can be experienced partially in the present, but fully in the future. The rest is available to all those who put their faith in Christ’s work, who has already entered rest. Because of sin, the image of God has been broken, and therefore, sin must be dealt with through Christ’s atonement, allowing the restoration of the

10 Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 784; Randall C. Gleason, “The Old Testament Background of Rest in Hebrews 3:7–4:11,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 157 (2000), 302-03; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8.*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47A (Dallas, TX: Word, 1998), 104.

11 *Ibid.*, 90.

image of God in humanity. Responding to the promise of rest, now spoken through the Son, with unbelief like the wilderness generation results in the failure of attaining God's rest. The other positions do not highlight these important theological aspects.

Limitation and Delimitations

Because this thesis is focused on the author of Hebrews' understanding of rest, it will not focus on other New Testament writers and their understanding of rest. While it is commonly accepted among scholars that Paul influenced the author of Hebrews, it would be too speculative to assume that the author of Hebrews was aware or influenced by other New Testament writings about rest. This is especially so because the dating of the book of Hebrews is debated, so any direction of influence is hard to determine. Because of the considerable number of texts, an exhaustive treatment of every Old Testament passage, and Jewish writing that mentions rest is outside the scope of this study. Instead, only passages quoted by the author of Hebrews, along with other passages that add new insights and follow the same interpretive stream, will be included.

Since both the authorship and dating of Hebrews have been exhaustively researched and debated with no concrete results, these historical issues will not be discussed either. Many centuries ago, Origen concluded, "who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows."¹² However, for a thematic, exegetical study, the precise identity of the author and audience are not as relevant as the contextual clues and the texts the author quotes. The internal evidence of the letter demonstrates that the author understood the Levitical cultic system (Heb 7–10). He used the Septuagint exclusively and used typological interpretation throughout the letter. These features suggest that he was a Hellenistic Jewish Christian. Due to the extensive quotations from the Old

¹² Cited in Allen, *Hebrews*, 32.

Testament in the letter, it can be assumed that the audience would have been familiar with the Old Testament texts, albeit in a Greek translation. Since the author of Hebrews quotes from the Septuagint exclusively, I will not interpret the Hebrew texts, as they were not the source text for the author's theology.

Another area that cannot be covered is an exhaustive treatment of the background issues of the biblical passages that the author of Hebrews quotes. Only a brief overview will be given as it pertains to the author's familiarity with the quoted passages used to formulate his exposition on rest. Even within the exegesis of the passages that the author quotes, space does not permit an exhaustive analysis of each text. Instead, only the details relevant to the author's understanding of the passage and the way he uses each one will be the focus of those chapters.

Method

Research Methods

This thesis is a biblical-theological examination of rest in the book of Hebrews. The method of rhetorical analysis of Second Temple Judaism, primarily Hellenistic practices such as *midrash* as well as the Greco-Roman thought of Platonism, will be used to analyze Hebrews 3–4. In addition, it is necessary to examine the standard interpretive practices of the time. These include an understanding of typology, *Targumim*, and *Midrashim* because these Hellenistic interpretations of Scripture arguably influenced the ancient author. The intertextuality of the letter with other Old Testament and other early Jewish writings will be used to discern the author's theology of rest. In order to analyze the rhetoric of Hebrews, exegesis of the relevant biblical data from the Old Testament passages that are quoted in Hebrews 3–4 must be done. Other biblical and extra-biblical texts that are linked textually through *κατάπαυσις* will also be analyzed to discover if they influence the author of Hebrews understanding of rest. Because the

author of Hebrews uses other texts to shape his understanding of rest, evaluation of the author's consistency with the original meaning will play a part. I will provide exegesis of the Greek language of Psalm 95 and Genesis 2:2 since the author quotes exclusively from the Septuagint. With these background texts and practices discussed, exegesis of Hebrews 3–4 in light of these other passages will provide the answer to how the author of Hebrews understands rest.

Data Collection

Throughout the thesis, primary and secondary sources are the basis of analysis. Primary sources include Greek texts from the scholarly editions of the New Testament and Septuagint.¹³ Secondary sources include commentaries, and tertiary sources include articles, monographs, and other theses and dissertations. Tertiary sources were the starting place to attain an overview of the issue of rest in Hebrews 3–4. Beale's *A New Testament Biblical Theology* deals with creating a biblical theology of Sabbath rest but does not include treatment of the keyword *κατάπαυσις*.¹⁴ In Beale and Carson's *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, *κατάπαυσις* is given more emphasis, and the foundation for this thesis is laid out.¹⁵

Data Analysis

The first step in my analysis will be to exegete the passages quoted by the author of Hebrews and observe the connections and themes that each text emphasizes. Secondly, I include a comparative theological analysis of the theme of rest in the remainder of the Old Testament

13 Aland, Kurt, Barbara Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. 28th rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012; Swete, Henry Barclay. *The Old Testament in Greek: According to the Septuagint*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1909.

14 Gregory K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: 2012), 775-801

15 G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 954.

and other Jewish writings, allowing me to provide a theology of rest in the Old Testament. From there, I will use rhetorical analysis to discuss the theology of rest found in Hebrews 3–4. Following that analysis, other resources will be studied and analyzed for the theological implications of the rest in Hebrews.

The main text for the author of Hebrews in defining rest is Psalm 95. Therefore, the exegesis of this text will appear first. The author uses lexical connections and interpretations based on the psalm’s background to make his points. However, in alluding to Numbers 14, the author of Hebrews is merely concerned with the narrative story to prove his points. Therefore, an exhaustive treatment of the wording of Numbers 14 will not be necessary to explain how the author of Hebrews is using the passage. He also quotes Genesis 2:2 to convey more theological implications about rest, and so special attention will be given to the theological motifs about rest that Genesis 2:2 initiates, canonically. Following the interpretive stream of rest from Genesis 2:2 to the rest of the Old Testament and other Jewish writings, I will argue that the author of Hebrews understands rest as available to Christians partially now and fully in the future, culminating in my definition of rest through an exegesis of Hebrews 3:7–4:11 in light of the background information and intertextual references.

Exegesis of Quoted Passages in Hebrews 3-4

Exegesis of Psalm 95

Influence on the Author of Hebrews

The author of Hebrews directly quotes LXX Psalm 94:8-11 in Hebrews 3:7-11.¹⁶ He then gives his application of this passage in Hebrews 4:3, 5, 7. Therefore, in order to understand the theme of rest in Hebrews 3-4, it is vital to understand its meaning in Psalm 95. The occasion,

¹⁶ The paper will use the English Bible numbering of Psalm 95 instead of LXX Psalm 94, unless quoting directly from the LXX.

structure, and genre of the psalm will play an essential role in understanding the warning given in Psalm 95:7-11. Once the necessary background is addressed, an exegesis of Psalm 95:7-11 is presented with special attention given to its development of the idea of rest. Although the original psalm was written in Hebrew, the author of Hebrews quotes the passage from the Septuagint (LXX), and therefore I examine the text in that ancient Greek translation.

Background

Psalm 95 finds its place in a group of psalms that praise and celebrate God as King.¹⁷ In Christian history, the psalm has been used as a guide to worship.¹⁸ The occasion of the psalm is undoubtedly liturgical, but exactly how it was used in Israel's worship is debated. Most modern scholars argue that the psalm was used during the Feast of Tabernacles, a festival that commemorates the nation's years in the wilderness before entering the land of Canaan.¹⁹ Since this proposed occasion fits the content of the psalm, the Feast of Tabernacles becomes an essential background for understanding the warning in the second half of Psalm 95 and brings in the context of the wilderness generation. There is also a long Jewish tradition that the psalm was used in the celebration of the Sabbath.²⁰ Kistemaker writes that Psalm 95 was "regarded as a preamble of services on Friday evening and Sabbath morning."²¹ This theory has explanatory power: If Psalm 95 was used in the celebration of the Sabbath during the Feast of Tabernacles,

17 Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 16, ed. David G. Firth, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 338.

18 Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 16, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 375.

19 Ibid., 499.

20 Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20, (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 499.

21 Kistemaker, Simon. *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Amsterdam: G. Van Soest, 1961. 35.

then there is a connection from the idea of rest to that of the Sabbath, a connection not lost on the author of Hebrews since he quotes Genesis 2:2 (Sabbath) along with Psalm 95 (rest). The use of the psalm in the post-exilic community cannot be ignored either, because this setting demonstrates the ongoing invitation for a new audience to enter into rest--again a point that the author of Hebrews notes in his letter.²² While the dating of the psalm is not essential to determine if the author is familiar with the passage, since he quotes it explicitly, it is essential to see where the psalm fits in the interpretive stream of Jewish writings about rest. Most scholars place its origin in early postexilic Israelite communities.²³ By comparison, there are earlier texts in the Old Testament and later texts outside of the Old Testament that constitute the background context for the author of Hebrews when it comes to the theme of rest.

An analysis of the structure of Psalm 95 results in a clearer understanding of the psalm and is discussed in the following section. The opening of the psalm begins with a call to worship, but in verse 7c, the tone changes abruptly and becomes a warning to those who worship Yahweh. This abrupt change has led some, including Wellhausen, to split the psalm into two sections, but according to Kidner, “most recent scholars see it as a unity.”²⁴ The first half of the psalm includes three calls to worship found in vv. 1, 2, and 6 and chorus in vv. 3-5, 7ab.²⁵ Following the first half of the psalm is the second section, where a prophetic voice introduces a “warning to the entire worshipping throng” from God himself.²⁶ The context of the psalm is a warning to the

22 Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 500.

23 Ibid.

24 Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*, 375. Cf. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 498.

25 Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 499.

26 Elmer A. Leslie *Psalms: Translated and Interpreted in the Light of Hebrew Life and Worship*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1949), 215.

worshipping community. Peter Enns sees a creation/re-creation theme in the psalm.²⁷ The connection to creation is seen throughout verses 1-5 and culminate in exclaiming him as Maker in verse 6. Enns writes that the portrayal of the Exodus as re-creation is found in verses 6-7, where a repetition of “let us praise Yahweh, our maker because we are his[second creation].”²⁸ Depending on how we define a “creation” motif, this theme in the psalm would make a text like Genesis 2:2 a relevant connection the author of Hebrews to cite, and indeed he does cite both texts. There is thus a thematic and not simply a semantic field connection between the rest in Psalm 95 and the Sabbath rest in Genesis 2:2. Namely, they are also connected by their shared creation theme.

In terms of genre, Psalm 95 is a psalm of praise, but its uniqueness in structure has pushed many to be more specific. The psalm finds its place in a “series of psalms that praise God as King (see also Pss. 96; 97; 98; 99) and celebrate the fact that he is the Creator and the Shepherd of his people.”²⁹ The placement of the psalm has called some to classify the psalm as an “enthronement” psalm. Among praise psalms, interestingly, Psalm 95 is the only psalm that ends with a call to obedience. Specifically, the psalm ends with a prophetic oracle from God, leading some commentators to classify the text as a prophetic liturgy psalm.³⁰ This classification is justified because the second half of the psalm does contain a prophetic exhortation, a voice

27 For a more exhaustive understanding of the creation/recreation theme in Psalm 95, see Peter Enns, “Creation and Re-Creation: Psalm 95 and Its Interpretation in Hebrews 3:1-4:13,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 55, no. 2 (1993): 256-269.

28 Ibid., 264.

29 Longman, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, 338.

30 Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begich, *An Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 417.

speaking to the Israelites on behalf of God.³¹ In addition to its genre, it is also essential to understand the placement of the psalm within the Psalter. Psalm 95 is in Book IV of the psalms and begins with a focus on Moses.³² The explicit reference to Moses in this section of psalms may be what leads the author of Hebrews to use this psalm after making a comparison between Moses and Jesus in Hebrews 3:1-6.

Exegesis of Psalm 95

Although the author of Hebrews quotes only the second half of Psalm 95, the first half (Ps. 95:1-7) becomes necessary in understanding whom the psalm is warning and how the author of Hebrews can use the text to address his audience much later in history. The Greek superscription of the Psalm gives Davidic authorship. This tradition places the warning many centuries after the wilderness generation when the kingdom of Israel had some measure of “rest.” In 2 Sam 7:1, some measure of rest has been given, “Now it came about when the king [David] lived in his house, and the LORD had given him rest on every side from all his enemies” (NASB). If David could write prophetically about those who failed to enter God’s security or rest, then the invitation must have still been open, and the rest for God’s people must have been incomplete in David’s time, awaiting a future fulfillment. If Psalm 95 is post-exilic and not written by David, the same logic still applies. Therefore, the rest is incomplete and still available. In verses 1, 2, and 6, the author uses three different verbs to call the people to worship Yahweh. Some see the different verbs as just a poetic variation, but Marvin Tate suggests that it demonstrates liturgical movement.³³ Tate suggests that the “first call (v 1) reflects a procession moving toward a

31 Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalm*, trans. Keith R. Grim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 98.

32 Christian Frevel, "σήμερον—Understanding Psalm 95 within, and without, Hebrews." *Psalms and Hebrews: Studies in Reception* (2010): 167.

33 Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 501.

sanctuary. The second call to worship (v 2) is received as the procession nears the entrance to the worship place or is already in the outer courts, while the third (v 6) is at the entry to the holy place of worship.”³⁴ Verses 2 and 6 both use speaking of coming near to God. In verse 2, the LXX has προφθάσωμεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ (LXX Ps 94:2), which is translated as “let us come before His face” or presence.³⁵ Coming before the Lord’s face is the same as being before His presence. In verse 6, there is another phrase indicating proximity to God, κλαύσωμεν ἐναντίον Κυρίου (“Let us weep before the Lord”). Based on the calls to worship God, the audience of the psalm must include those who come to worship God, specifically Hebrew-speaking people who have an accessible location at which the divine presence of the Lord was manifested. The author of Hebrews uses this setting of worshippers in God’s presence and applies it to his audience. Since his audience now comes before God in worship, the warning of the psalm is for them as well, since they want to worship the same Lord. Subsequently in the psalm is a warning to respond to God properly lest the audience is like the disobedient Israelites of the past. Those earlier Israelites were not allowed to enter God’s “rest.” The exact phrase is κατάπαυσίν μου, “my rest,” from the divine perspective. The other portions of verses 1-7 give reasons to worship God. He is a great God and King over every other god and over all creation.

After the initial appeal to worship God for his greatness, the psalm changes direction suddenly, giving a warning from the very God who is to be praised. The worshippers are before the Lord in verse 6, and in verse 7, the audience is urged to heed the message from God. A translation of the second half of the psalm from the Greek is as follows:

⁸ Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts, as at the rebellion,

³⁴ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 501.

³⁵ Translations from Greek or Hebrew are my own unless otherwise noted.

like on that day of the trial in the wilderness,
⁹ where your fathers tested me,
when they put me to the test and saw my works.
¹⁰ Forty years I loathed that generation,
and I said: “Always their heart leads them astray,
and they have not known my ways.”
¹¹ As I swore in my wrath:
“They shall not enter my rest.”

The first word of verse 8 in the LXX is σήμερον, meaning “today.” The audience is to hear and respond to the message immediately, without procrastinating. The “today” could refer to the time when Israel would sing the psalm, either during the Feast of Tabernacles, on the regular Sabbath celebration, or the Sabbath day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The “today” expression is often a “stylistic device in Deuteronomy (see, e.g., Deut. 4:40; 5:3; 6:6; 7:11).”³⁶ The use of “today” stresses the urgency of the need for the audience to listen to the message.³⁷ The psalmist then gives an example of those who failed to heed God’s voice in the past. The phrase “do not harden your hearts” (LXX Ps 94:8) is significant, because the author of Hebrews assumes that the same thing can happen to his audience and prevent them from receiving what is promised. The most famous biblical example of a hard human heart is probably in Exodus 9:12 and similar verses, where Pharaoh’s “heart” was hardened or made stubborn (Ex 7:22; 8:19; 9:12, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 13:15; 14:8). In the Old Testament, the hardening of one’s heart towards God was potentially the worst degree of sin, because it lessens the likelihood of ever changing one’s mind or behavior—of repenting and finding forgiveness.³⁸ The hardening of the heart is not a physical process but a spiritual, mental change, and it means to disobey God

³⁶ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 502.

³⁷ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 502.

³⁸ Gustav Friedrich Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. and rev. by George E. Day (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883), 164.

willfully, resisting what he has communicated as his will for the person or community.³⁹

Longman writes, “The psalmist, relating a divine oracle, tells the present generation living many years later not to imitate their behaviour, or they too will not enter their rest.”⁴⁰ The psalmist reapplies the theme of responding to God properly, not just as it pertained to the wilderness generation of Israel but to his post-exilic audience and all those who might read this psalm afterward.

At the end of verse 8, the Septuagint has translated two Hebrew words (מֵרִיבָה and מִסָּה) not as the location as the Hebrew connotes, but as a snapshot of what happened there. As Attridge explains, “The LXX translates these [place] names abstractly, imitating the etymological play in Hebrew, but obscuring the geographical reference.”⁴¹ The first change concerns מֵרִיבָה. The LXX translates it as παραπικρασμός, meaning “rebellion.” The Hebrew meaning is a location, specifically Meribah, “the site in Kadesh Barnea where Moses drew water from a rock.”⁴² The translators of the Septuagint do the Hebrew justice because the root meaning of the Hebrew is “strife,” and the location is named after the event that happened there, namely, Israel’s strife or rebellion against God. The parallel term is מִסָּה. The LXX translates this as πειρασμός, meaning “trial.” Again, this is adequate because Massah is the place “where Israel tried (*nāsā*) God in the wilderness.”⁴³ The root word of the Hebrew can be translated as “test.”

39 The psalmist’s use of “on that day” plays with the first word of the verse, “today.” He compares “that day” in the past, the time of rebellion in the wilderness, with the “today” of the present time when he urges his audience against being stubborn.

40 Longman, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, 340.

41 Harold W. Attridge and Helmut Koester, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 2009), 115.

42 James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos., 1997).

43 Sun Hee Kim, “Testing,” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014).

In verse 8, the author gives the backdrop to the warning that follows, the events that happened at Meribah (Ex 17:7), and the rest of the psalm extends the backdrop to the entire wilderness generation and the situation in Number 14.⁴⁴ The testing by the wilderness generation should be seen theologically, their testing of God since the psalmist uses Massah and Meribah as examples of putting God to the test and, therefore, representative of Israel's failure to trust in God.⁴⁵ The warning to the hearers is that the hardening of hearts and the testing of God is not limited to the past but is a present danger. Tate comments that it is as if "the congregation is at Meribah again. Massah ("testing") is now."⁴⁶ The beginning of the warning in Psalm 95 implies that the Jewish congregation is at a place where rebellion is possible again, and the challenge for them is to heed God without hesitating, not to respond by hardening their hearts toward God.

Verse 9 of Psalm 95 is where the speaker shifts. Before, it was the psalmist who called his audience to worship, but now it is the divine voice speaking a warning. From verse 9 on, the pronouns shift to "me" and "my," and what is being said is now from God. Verse 9 also gives further background to the situation behind the rebellion and opens the context up to be more than the specific places called Meribah and Massah. The content of this verse alludes to Numbers 14, making it natural that the author of Hebrews also references the text in Numbers in combination with this psalm.

The English translation of the Septuagint rendering of the verse is "where your fathers tested me when they put me to the test and saw my works."⁴⁷ The phrase ἔργα μου in the

44 W. S. Prinsloo, "Psalm 95: If Only You Will Listen to His Voice," *The Bible in Human Society*, eds. M. Daniel Carroll R., David J. A. Clines, and Philip R. Davies, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 200* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 403.

45 Andrew E. Hill, "Massah and Meribah," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, 4:931-3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4:932.

46 Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 502.

Septuagint translated “my works” is referencing the works of God. The question is: what works are being referenced? One option is that the works of God are a reference to what God did for the Israelite community during the wilderness, mainly provisions. This would include the manna from heaven (Ex 16; Num 11), Quail was sent to eat (Ex 16:4; Num 11), drinking water became available (Ex 15:22-25; 17:2-6; Num 20:2-13), the crossing of waters (Ex 14; Josh 3). If these are the events behind “God’s works” then the passage strictly refers to these specific events. The two main problems with this view are (1) the psalmist has already broadened the context to be valid for his generation, and (2) verse 10 begins with the God loathing the generation for 40 years, is most likely about a different event. The event most likely being referred to is the refusal to trust in God to enter the promised land, bringing in the context of Numbers 14. The event revolving around Numbers 14 makes more sense in the context of verse eleven being a quotation from Deuteronomy 12:9, where the people did not enter God’s rest, i.e. The Promised Land. In Numbers 14:11, “How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?” Numbers 14:11 seems to be the background of the Psalm, as the people are said to have tried or tested God in the wilderness, and they did not trust him.

Another option is to understand this to mean all of God’s work. This argument brings in the broader context of the psalm. The first half gives the reason to worship God: he is Creator. The worship of God as Creator and Shepherd encompasses both God’s provision in the wilderness as well as the broader context of creation. Frevel’s analysis concludes that the works of God are, “all the deeds of God, namely, the ἔργα of the creation, v. 3 leads to the reflection on

47 Authors personal translation.

creational rest.”⁴⁸ To support Frevel’s understanding, the LXX translators use the same word many times throughout, the first being Genesis 2:2.

In Genesis 2:2, God completes his work and then rests, another word that is used in Psalm 95 as well as the two words emphasized by the author of Hebrews. Throughout Exodus 31-35, God’s work is also present. In Exodus 31-32 God’s work is concerning the Ten Commandments and connected to the Sabbath. In Exodus 34 God’s work is referring to the works that the Lord is going to do, and in Exodus 35 God’s work is referring to the Sabbath again. In Deuteronomy 5:13-14 refers to the Sabbath command. In Deuteronomy 11:7 and the beginning of Joshua however, the works of God are his great works. The context of these passages is all the works the Lord has done. The Psalms describe God’s work, and all references in a general sense or are linked to his specific work in creation. Psalm 101:26 says, “Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands” (NASB). It is likely because of the context of the psalm being about God’s creative work, other psalms mention of God’s work in creation, the link to Genesis 2:2 where both work and rest occur in the creation account, that the author of Hebrews believes that the work of God in this passage is describing God’s general works and more specifically his work in creation. The implication of God’s work in Psalm 95 is that the psalmist’s audience has seen the works of God as well, mainly his work as Creator (vv. 1-6) like the wilderness generation has, and yet can still respond with a hardness of heart.

Psalm 95:10 gives how the wilderness generation hardened their hearts towards God and how the psalmist’s generation can avoid it. The problem with the people is that their hearts led them astray, and they did not know God’s ways. Although God had cared for wilderness generation for forty years, he loathed them. Based on the context above, the wilderness

48 Frevel, "σήμερον—Understanding Psalm 95 within, and without, Hebrews." (2010): 187-8.

generation always put God to the test, never believing, and therefore hardened their hearts. The link to the beginning of the psalm again comes through, where the hearts of the people lead them astray, and they do not know “my ways” and God as their Shepherd (v7). This generation of God’s sheep did not listen. The warning for those who are God’s sheep in the psalmist's time is to respond correctly to his voice.

The punishment for the wilderness generation is that they did not enter God’s rest. The warning to the psalmist’s generation and the author of Hebrews’ generation is there remains an option for them to enter the rest, if they respond correctly, by not hardening their hearts. The meaning of rest in Psalm 95, however, is not as clear. The context suggests that the wilderness generation failed to enter the Promised Land. The Promised Land is “God’s land to settle in, and peace to enjoy it.”⁴⁹ However, Hebrew 3-4 certainly broadens the meaning.⁵⁰ Many scholars move quickly to how the author of Hebrews understands the passage but jump to conclusions too early. Tate defines the rest based on its use in Hebrews stating, “The “rest” of God is a yet unrealized goal.”⁵¹ The question remains: what is that unrealized goal? What is the rest? Because of the ties to creation throughout the psalm as well as the link to God’s work referring to creation regularly, and its context is a Sabbath celebration text, whether at the time of Passover or during worship on the weekly Sabbath, indicates that the rest is linked to the Sabbath. Therefore, it is necessary to define rest in its broader context of the Sabbath rest, as the author of Hebrews also does.

49 Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*, 378.

50 Ibid.

51 Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 503.

Rest can further be linked to creation through temple imagery. In the Hebrew, the root used in Genesis (שבת) for rest is different than in the Psalm (מנוחה), but in the LXX both come from the root “καταπαύω” giving the author of Hebrews a secure connection to Genesis 2:2. Of more importance is that the creation theme allows one to see “rest” in this psalm, not as the entrance to the Promised Land alone but rather an allusion to the temple of God. The Targum of Psalm 95:11 is translated “Whom I swore in the strength of my anger, they shall not come into the rest of the house of my temple.”⁵² According to the Targumist, rest is defined as the house of God’s sanctuary or temple.

The relation between rest and temple is further backed by Psalm 132:7, 8, 14. In Psalm 132, God’s resting place is identified as the temple, where he sits enthroned. Another place where God’s resting place is linked to the temple is in the Temple imagery of Ezekiel 40-48, in Ezekiel 43:7 God tells Ezekiel “Son of man, *this is* the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever” (NASB). Exodus 15:17 furthers the connection by bringing the ideas of “dwelling,” “land,” and “sanctuary.” In this passage, the land itself is God’s sanctuary where God “will bring them and plant them” (Ex 15:17 NASB). Stuart understands this song to conclude with three biblical themes, one of which is “the theme of God’s eternal holy dwelling as the proper and expected home for God’s people.”⁵³ The theme of God’s eternal holy dwelling is found from the beginning words of the Bible. Therefore, the next sections must look at the temple imagery and the meaning of Sabbath rest found in Genesis 2:2, and a more thorough exegesis of the background of the wilderness generation found in Numbers 14.

52 Authors personal translation of בית מקדשי יעלון אם רוגזי בתקופה דקיימית found in Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon, *Targum Psalms* (Hebrew Union College, 2005), Ps 95:10–11.

53 Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 360.

Exegesis of Numbers 14

Influence on the Author of Hebrews

As demonstrated in the section on Psalm 95, the background of the psalm is the wilderness generation. In the letter to the Hebrews, the author refers to the wilderness generation throughout Hebrews 3:7–4:11. He begins with a connection to Moses in Hebrews 3:1-6, with an allusion to Numbers before he quotes Psalm 95. In Hebrews 3:2, Moses is being described as a faithful servant over the household of God, and this is an allusion to Number 12:7 “Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all my household” (NASB). In Hebrews 4:8-11, in the exegesis portion of both Psalm 95 and Genesis 2:2, the author uses the historical situation of the wilderness generation and Joshua taking them into the land. Most of the proof that the author of Hebrews is familiar with the situation of the wilderness generation is in his exegesis of Psalm 95:7-8 found in Hebrews 3:16-19. In this section, he raises a question about the wilderness generation (Heb 3:17). This passage is an allusion of Numbers 14:2, 29. Throughout Hebrews 3:7–4:11, it is evident that the author of Hebrews alludes to wilderness generation, specifically Numbers 14, throughout this section as the background to his argument. Therefore, it will be essential to evaluate the content of these passages for insight into how the author of Hebrews defines rest and if he is accurately using this passage in his argument.

Background

The specific passages that will be evaluated as they relate to Hebrews 3:7–4:11 are Numbers 14:2, 22-23, 29 in its surrounding context. Although the structure, author, and date of the passage are not essential to understand how the author of Hebrews understands the passage, the narrative context of the passage is critical. A brief overview of the various background areas

will be discussed to demonstrate the view the author of this paper takes on these matters, followed by a summary of the book of Numbers.

Concerning the authorship of Numbers, the book ascribes internal evidence to Moses' hand in writing, "Moses recorded their starting places according to their journeys by the command of the LORD, and these are their journeys according to their starting places" (Num 33:2 NASB). There is also evidence to someone else writing portions of Moses, such as accounting his death. Most evangelical scholars attribute the structure and most content to Moses, with many arguing for the final stage of the book culminating after Moses.⁵⁴ Some have argued the date of completion as late as the post-exilic period, which would aid in the author of Hebrew's connection to his audience. However, Timothy Ashley writes, "one does not need to posit so late a date as the postexilic era for the book... a pre-exilic date is most likely."⁵⁵ Because the psalmist uses the wilderness generation as an example for his current generation, which is post-exilic, one does not need to hold to a late date of Numbers to understand the connection to the author of Hebrew's generation.

The last area of concern is answering the question: who is the audience of the book? The answer to this question depends almost entirely on when one dates the book. Holding to the authorship of Moses, followed by scribal changes in the text, the purpose of the book can only be defined as an account of the wilderness period written for Israel. With the collection of texts

⁵⁴ Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009) 3-7; R. K. Harrison, *Numbers: an Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019) 21-24; R. Dennis Cole, *Numbers*, New American Commentary, vol. 3B, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 29; W. David Baker, Dale A. Brueggemann, and Eugene H. Merrill "Numbers," in *Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, vol. 2, ed. Philip W. Comfort, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1996), 217; Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 4, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 25.

⁵⁵ Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, 7.

surviving at Qumran, the LXX, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, one scholar writes, “By inference, the text of the Book of Numbers was essentially the same as the later Proto-MT by no later than the early postexilic era. Thus, the text of the Book of Numbers suffered little scribal emendation after the fifth-century BC.”⁵⁶ Therefore the book’s audience is at minimum a historical retelling of Israel history, which is why the psalmist can use it as background and an example of his audience of how to not respond to God in Psalm 95.

Of most importance to understand the situation of Numbers 14 is evaluating its broader literary context and the background of the passage. Before one can evaluate Numbers 14, a narrative of the events leading to and flowing from the passage should be discussed. The book begins with Yahweh speaking to Moses in the wilderness in the tabernacle. He is commanded to take a census of the people, followed by an arrangement of the camps (Chapters 1–2). Following the opening comments of the book, the Levitical priesthood is set up, including some of their duties (Chapter 3). The duties given to the Levites are followed by a giving of the duties to different sons of Israel (Chapter 4). Laws, offerings, and vows are given to the people, culminating in the inauguration of Levitical priesthood as well as a description of the Passover and the presence of the Lord at the tabernacle are recorded (Numbers 5–9). In Numbers 10, the people leave Mt. Sinai, and this is a turning point in the story.

Numbers 11 opens with the people’s first complaint. Yahweh had provided manna each day to the Israelites as they were in the wilderness. The people complained that they had no meat to eat, like when they were slaves in Egypt, and there was no one to provide the meat. The Lord is angered, and his anger burns the camp, Moses prays, and the fire stops. God then provides meat for the people, but his anger is rekindled, and plague spreads throughout the camp. In this

⁵⁶ Cole, *Numbers*, 28.

passage, the people's complaints against the food, turn to Moses questioning his leadership, the end punishment of the plague is a result of the people's rejection of the Lord's leadership.⁵⁷

In Numbers 12, Aaron and Miriam doubt their leadership, and Yahweh again burns in anger. When Yahweh speaks to them, the Lord praises Moses saying, "Not so, with My servant Moses, he is faithful in all My household" (Num 12:7 NASB). In the book of Hebrews, chapter three begins with this allusion to Numbers 12:7. This then puts Numbers in the mind of the author as he brings his exegesis of Psalm 95 and the wilderness generation in the passage of Hebrews 3:7–4:11, which is the passage that defines rest. The immediate context of the passage being studied in this thesis alludes to a Numbers 12:7 by claiming that though Moses was faithful as a servant, Jesus is faithful as a Son. It is here in Numbers 12 that the author of Hebrews begins his connection to the wilderness generation and situation of Numbers 14.

The rebellion from Numbers 11 is continued in Numbers 13–14. This is the moment when the spies are selected, enter the land, and give their report. In Numbers 14:10-38, Yahweh punishes the entire wilderness generation, except for Caleb and Joshua. The story of the wilderness generation at Kadesh-Barnea echoes throughout Scripture: Numbers 32, Deuteronomy 1:20-40; Psalm 95:10; 106:24; Amos 2:10; 5:25; 1 Corinthians 10; and Hebrews 3:7–4:13.⁵⁸ Wenham, makes an interesting comment, that Israel arrives at its goal and then turned away, the author of Hebrews also understands the passage this way in Hebrews 4:1-2.⁵⁹ With Israel's constant rebellion of Yahweh, they try to enter the land on their own, and they are killed by the Amalekites and the Canaanites, which closes this narrative sequence in Numbers.

⁵⁷ Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, 206.

⁵⁸ Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, 139.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

Numbers 15 begins another section of lawgiving, but the interesting connection to the purposes of this paper is that it includes laws regarding the Sabbath day. Whether coincidental or not, the end of the wilderness rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea moves to a punishment of a breaking of the Sabbath. Following this, Numbers 16 tells of Korah's rebellion, followed by another section concerning the Levitical priests.

The incident at Kadesh-Barnea is not the final rebellion of the Israelites, Numbers 21, Yahweh sends fiery serpents to kill the people, this time Moses repents, and the people are rescued. From Numbers 21–25, there is a list of prophecies concerning Israel that ends with Yahweh giving a perpetual priesthood because of the act of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron. It is not mere coincidence that the author of Hebrews follows this section of rest, with Jesus' priesthood being greater than the Levitical priesthood.⁶⁰ Numbers 26 begins with a census of the new generation and an explanation of what they are to do as they enter the land that has been promised.

Exegesis of Numbers 14

Numbers 14:2 is the first allusion seen in Hebrews 3:7–4:11. Following the report of the spies, Numbers 14:1-4 records the community's rebellion. In verse one, the congregation shouted, cried, and wept that night. Both expressions, נשא את־קול and נתן את־קול are used in the context of laments with בכה.⁶¹ The combining of the two phrases indicate the intense situation of the lament of the people over the report the spies had just delivered.⁶² Numbers 14:1 is a

⁶⁰ This paper is not concerned with the connections outside of the ones that directly influence Hebrews 3:7–4:13, but it is hard not to notice that the letter of Hebrews is interested in claiming Jesus' superiority over the events and laws throughout the book of Numbers.

⁶¹ Cole, *Numbers*, 225.

⁶² Ibid.

summary statement that is succeeded by four more specific clauses of the content of the community's lament. Numbers 14:2-4 follows with the specifics of what the people cried and shouted that night. Numbers 14:2, the people's words are directed towards Moses and Aaron, as seen in the previous rebellions, the complaint is ultimately against Yahweh as they are God's appointed leaders.⁶³ The complaint of Yahweh's chosen leader is heightened in verse four, where the congregation looks to appoint a new leader who will take them back to Egypt. The specifics of their complaints are a wish to have died in Egypt and a wish to die in the wilderness. They complain that Yahweh has brought them to the land to kill them and their families, and instead, they should go back to Egypt. The major problem is that the wilderness generation does not believe God's promise to bring them into the land, and instead of confidence to follow, they are consumed with fear and worry, which are the antithesis of faith.⁶⁴ Their failure is a failure to believe or have faith in God; the sin is unbelief.

In Hebrews 3:11, the author alludes to Numbers 14:22-23. Although God has forgiven Israel and withheld immediate destruction of all Israel, he does not absolve the rebellious generation from their judgment. They will be killed in the wilderness and never reach the Promised Land. Based on the covenant, Yahweh will maintain the covenant promise, but this specific group, because of their rebellion, will not participate in the blessing.⁶⁵ Number 14:22-23 gives a general punishment that will be expanded upon in verses 26-35. The general punishment of the rebellious wilderness community is that none of them will see the Promised Land. The reason that they will not see the land is that they had seen the glory of Yahweh and his signs, and

63 See Numbers 11-12.

64 Harrison, *Numbers: An Exegetical Commentary*, 210.

65 Katherine D. Sakenfeld, "The Problem of Divine Forgiveness in Numbers 14," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1975): 327.

yet they have still chosen not to listen to Yahweh's voice. Yahweh's judgment is simple, "They rejected the land, so they will not see the land."⁶⁶

In Hebrews 3:16-17, the author alludes to Numbers 14:29. In the details of the punishment found in this portion of the passage, Numbers 14:29 states, "your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me" (NASB). The author of Hebrews uses this to make his point in Hebrews 3:17, that their "bodies fell in the wilderness." The detailed punishment given to the rebellious wilderness generation is that they will all die in the wilderness, and therefore they will not enter the land.

Throughout the book of Numbers, precisely Numbers 13–14, the Israelites are on the cusp of entering the land promised to them, instead of trusting God, they rebel, resulting in Yahweh's punishment of the generation that they will not enter the land. The author of Hebrews uses the wilderness narrative of the background of Psalm 95 to prove that through a hardened heart, like the wilderness generation, his audience can fail to enter the promised rest of God because of unbelief. The wilderness generation becomes an example not to follow, an antitype.

Exegesis of Genesis 2:2

Influence on the Author of Hebrews

The author of Hebrews directly quotes Genesis 2:2 to define rest in his letter. The connection has already been proven lexically through the Greek root "καταπαύω" used in the LXX of both Psalm 95 and Genesis 2:2. The simple lexical definition of καταπαύω means to rest, or cease, similar to the Hebrew שָׁבַת meaning "to cease." Although the lexical definition is simple, the questions that stem from the meaning of the word are vast. Genesis 2:2 becomes the

⁶⁶ Cole, *Numbers*, 233.

launching point of the interpretive stream throughout scripture that gives the author of Hebrews his definition of rest. After addressing some background concerning the book of Genesis, an exegesis of Genesis 2:2 will follow, with particular attention to the theological implications behind the text.

Background

Authorship, in the book of Genesis, is complicated. The New Testament attributes the authorship of the Pentateuch to Moses, including Genesis. Throughout the ages, most biblical scholars were content to ascribe authorship to Moses and allow for minor editing and clarifications by later writers.⁶⁷ Much like what is said about the book of Numbers. This paper will treat the text in line with both Scripture and tradition as a completed work, with authorship given to Moses, as do both Josephus and Philo, two contemporaries of the author of Hebrews, and the modern scholars' emphasis on the final completed work of Genesis.⁶⁸

The date of Genesis is equally debated if not more unclear than its authorship. If one holds to the JEDP theory, the composition would be completed by about the fifth century BC.⁶⁹ This would be in line with most critical commentators placing the date of such works as post-exilic. However, Gordon Wenham makes a statement that the literary form of the book would be between 1250 BC and 950 BC.⁷⁰ Taking Wenham's date, this would place the final form of the book before the time of the exile. While the books completed form is probably either the pre- or post-exilic time, it is known that the oral tradition reflects around the early second millennium.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt, *Genesis, Exodus*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 4.

⁶⁸ Ross and Oswalt, *Genesis, Exodus*, 4; K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 42; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, xxxiv.

⁶⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, xxvi.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, xliv.

Most of the background issues stem from how one views the authorship of the book of Genesis. This is no different when it comes to the audience of the book. Because the Pentateuch has traditionally been viewed as the book of Moses, one must use this basis to understand its audience. If the audience for all five books is assumed to be the same, one concludes that its audience is Israel, and the purpose is to record their history as a people. There is no change in meaning on the author's view of rest in Hebrews if one sees the audience as the first inhabitants of the land, early, pre-exilic, or post-exilic Israel.

How one defines the genre of Genesis has a significant theological impact on how one understands the book. Many have sought to describe Genesis 1–11 as only poetry and 12–50 as narrative. This paper holds to Hoffmeier's understanding that Genesis, including Genesis 1–2, is a narrative that relates historical facts and real events.⁷² Kenneth Matthews describes Genesis as having an eschatological message and is read as an interpretation of past events in view of Israel's future.⁷³

The general structure of Genesis breaks the book into two different sections. The first is Primeval history, followed by the patriarchal stories. There is, however, dispute where the Primeval history ends.⁷⁴ Some have demonstrated that the structure follows the *tōlēdōt* phrases through the book. Most break this into 12 different sections, a basic structure follows:

- I. Creation of Heaven and Earth (1:1–2:3)
- II. The *tōlēdōt* of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
- III. The *tōlēdōt* of Adam's Line (5:1–6:8)
- IV. The *tōlēdōt* of Noah (6:9–9:29)

71 Ibid., xlv–xlv.

72 For more detailed account of the genre, specifically Genesis 1–11 refer to Charles Halton, *Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither? Three Views on the Bible's Earliest Chapters*, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015), 20.

73 Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 51.

74 Ibid., 26.

- V. The *tōlēdōt* of Noah’s Sons (10:1–11:9)
- VI. The *tōlēdōt* of Shem (11:10-26)
- VII. The *tōlēdōt* of Terah: Abraham (11:27–25:11)
- VIII. The *tōlēdōt* of Ishmael (25:12-18)
- IX. The *tōlēdōt* of Isaac: Jacob (25:19–35:29)
- X. The *tōlēdōt* of Esau and Family (36:1-8)
- XI. The *tōlēdōt* of Esau (36:9–37:1)
- XII. The *tōlēdōt* of Jacob: Joseph (37:2–50:26)⁷⁵

While this is a general structure of the book, the *tōlēdōt* formula is not without issues. There are times throughout that the phrase is referencing or connected to the material that is before the phrase. An example of this could be in Genesis 2:4.⁷⁶ Within this structure, Genesis 1:1 does not begin with this formula. However, since this first section is the literal beginning of creation, there is no genealogy to introduce with. Genesis 1:1 is the introductory material for this section as a summary statement, as seen in the lexical connection between the next two verses.⁷⁷ Depending on if one sees Genesis 2:4 connecting to the previous section determines where the second section begins. Regardless, Genesis 2:2 is included in the first section of the book from Genesis 1:1 to at least 2:3.

Exegesis of Genesis 2:2

Genesis 1:1–2:3 is an account of the creation and focuses on God’s creative act throughout culminating in the seventh day. Genesis 2:2 is located at the end of this creative account and is within the view of the events of the seventh day. The beginning of Genesis begins with an introduction to the material. Genesis 1:1 starts with an introduction to the entire section: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”⁷⁸ From the introductory phrase in

⁷⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁷ For a more thorough treatment of this issue see ⁷⁷ Michael S. Heiser, “Creation, Evolution, Intelligent Design, and the Replicating Universe: What Does the Hebrew Text of Genesis 1 Allow?”

Genesis 1:1, the following will explain what God did when he created the heavens and the earth. In Genesis 1:2, the author of Genesis supplies background information to the narrative that follows. “The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep” (Gen 1:2).⁷⁹ This verse describes the situation prior to what God begins to do in verse three.⁸⁰ It is based on this understanding, that some scholars understand the creation account as God giving function and purpose to creation, not merely the creation of raw materials.⁸¹

The author of Genesis is not concerned with explaining anything about the situation of Genesis 1:2 further. Instead, attention is only given to what God does about it.⁸² Genesis 1:3 begins the process of correcting the formlessness, darkness, and void of Genesis 1:2. The first three days create the space, followed by three days that fill that space, culminating in the seventh day, a special day where God has finished his creative work and now rests, or *שָׁבַת*. Each day ends with the same concluding phrase, “There was evening, and there was morning, a (number)

78 The focus of this paper is not on the debate on Science vs. Creationism. The author of Genesis is not concerned with these debates and focuses on a polemic against other ANE cultures. The word *בָּרָא* can certainly mean creation out of nothing, especially when God is the subject. However, the grammar does not necessitate it here and proof of *creatio ex nihilo* finds support elsewhere in the Scriptures. The purpose of this paper is not to argue for or against different interpretations of Genesis 1:1-3 including Gap Theory. However, this paper presupposes that Genesis 1:1-3 is a threefold introduction to the narrative. Genesis 1:1 is an overarching summary statement for what is to follow. Genesis 1:2 begins with a waw-disjunctive clause with the perfect tense, which should be seen as supplemental and therefore is providing background information before the start of the narrative. Genesis 1:3 then begins with the normal waw-consecutive that is often found to begin a narrative section.

79 The phrase *Tōhū wābōhū* is also of debate on its meaning and the word pair is only found in two other places, Jeremiah 4:23 and Isaiah 34:11. Kenneth Matthew’s defines the word pairing based off Deuteronomy 32:10, “*Tōhū wābōhū* has the same sense in Genesis 1, characterizing the earth as uninhabitable and inhospitable to human life.” This seems to be a just definition of the phrase as the creation narrative ends with mankind being created and living in the land. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 131.

80 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 17.

81 The biggest proponent of this theory is John Walton. He gives compelling evidence to understand Genesis 1 as functional creationism. However, despite what Walton suggests, one does not need to forsake that Genesis 1 is also describing the creation as *creatio ex nihilo*. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009).

82 Ross and Oswalt, *Genesis, Exodus*, 33.

day.” Following this pattern describes what happens on each day and what God creates and how God orders various things. When one evaluates what happens on these days, especially comparing between days one to three and four to six, there is an aspect of creation/re-creation in it.⁸³ It has already been demonstrated that Psalm 95 follows this creation/re-creation theme.⁸⁴ Understanding both the psalm and the background of Genesis 2:2 with this creation/re-creation theme gives more reason to understand this as how the author of Hebrews understands what is taking place in both passages and provides another reason for the connection between the two passages.

Genesis 1:31 summarizes God’s creative acts and concludes the sixth day. Summarizing God’s creative work, the author writes that God called his creation very good, and then the concluding statement of the sixth day followed. Genesis 2:1 supplies a summary statement and background statement, much like Genesis 1:2. There is now a stillness, there is no speaking or actions taking place, and “all that God has willed and designed for his canvas of the universe is now in its place.”⁸⁵ The verse begins with *וַיִּבְרָא*, a verb in the Pual stem, bringing a passive meaning to the verb and should be understood as the heavens and the earth have been brought to completion along with everything in it. What is translated as “hosts” refers to both the hosts of the heavens and the hosts of earth.⁸⁶ It should be understood as collective and is describing the total makeup of all creation.⁸⁷ Therefore, Genesis 2:1 is a summary verse of all creation up to this point. The narrative continues in Genesis 2:2 to describe what happens on the seventh day.

83 Ibid.

84 Enns, “Creation and Re-Creation: Psalm 95 and Its Interpretation in Hebrews 3:1–4:13,” 256-269.

85 Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 141.

86 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 35.

With a summary statement of creation through day sixth, day seven stands alone and unique as something outside of what has happened in creation. There is a text-critical issue found in verse two, the LXX and Samaritans Pentateuch uses the number “six” in reference to the day instead of seven, which the MT uses. However, there is a simple reasoning behind this. These ancient writings desired to enforce the idea that God did no creating on the seventh day and therefore changed the somewhat ambiguous Hebrew language to demonstrate it. However, the proper way to understand the Hebrew word כָּל־יְמֵי is to understand it as pluperfect, that God had completed his work by the seventh day and that no work had been done on that day.⁸⁸ Changing the word to be “sixth” instead of “seventh” also overlooks the repetition of seven in these verses. There is substantial emphasis being placed on the number seven throughout as something unique or different from the other days.⁸⁹ Genesis 2:2b is the technical quotation in the book of Hebrews, which is, “He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.” The emphasis the author of Hebrews is on God resting from all His work. Therefore, defining what the work is, gives clues to what it means to rest. The work described in Genesis 2:2 is clearly referring to God’s creative work. He has ceased from His creative work and now takes His place

87 E.A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB, 2nd ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 7.

88 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 35.

89 The number seven in the Hebrew Scriptures is a significant theme, it often represents completeness and fullness. In Genesis alone, there are seven words in Genesis 1:1, fourteen in Genesis 1:2, there are seven paragraphs marked by “evening and morning.” Genesis 2:1-3 is three lines of seven words. The words of Genesis are all in multiples of sevens; “God” is used thirty-five times, “land” twenty-one times, “skies” twenty-one times, “light and day” on day two is repeated seven times, “light” on day four is repeated seven times, “God saw that it was good” seven times, and God gives seven divine creative commands. “To suppose that all these appearances of the number seven are mere coincidence is not possible. This numerical symmetry is, as it were, the golden thread that binds together all the part of the section.” For further information on the number seven throughout Genesis and the Old Testament see Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part 1 from Adam to Noah. Genesis I-VI* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961) and Maurice H. Farbridge and Herbert Gordon May, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism: Prolegomenon by Herbert G. May* (New York, NY: Ktav, 1970).

on the throne to reign over creation.⁹⁰ It is not a cessation from all things, but rather the specifics of creative work, to now engage in the normal activities once stability has been achieved.⁹¹

Another emphasis of the text concerning this day is that it does not conclude like any other day. It does not include the phrase “morning and evening the seventh day,” as each day found before. The seventh day is unique to all other days, as it has no end. This is not just a coincidence of the Hebrew text. Instead, the author intends to communicate something special about the seventh day that is different from the others. Samuel Balentine writes,

Unlike the previous days, the seventh day is simply announced. There is no mention of evening or morning, no mention of a beginning or ending. The suggestion is that the primordial seventh day exists in perpetuity, a sacred day that cannot be abrogated by the limitations common to the rest of the created order.⁹²

The breaking of this typical pattern, emphasizes the uniqueness of the seventh day, demonstrating that this day is eschatological, “the sun has not yet set on God’s Sabbath.”⁹³ The culmination of creation ends with God entering his rest after creation, to rule and reign over creation, and it never ends.⁹⁴

Humanity is invited to participate in this seventh-day rest throughout the Scriptures, but this is not a later invitation, the invitation is found here in Genesis. Gleason writes, “If God ceased other activities in order to enjoy Adam, then humankind enters God's rest by ceasing other activities in order to take pleasure in worshipping God.”⁹⁵ Where humanity is invited to

90 Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*, 76.

91 Ibid., 73.

92 Samuel E. Balentine, *The Torahs Vision of Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 93.

93 Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 90.

94 Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*, 778-780.

95 Gleason, “Old Testament Background of Rest,” 296.

participate in God's rest on the seventh day, the continual failure to enter that rest because of sin.⁹⁶ In the story of Adam and Eve, the definition of rest for humanity must follow the definition of rest found in Genesis 2:2 for God. God ceased from all creative activities to now take up his throne and reign over all creation. Adam was invited into this rest to continue in the functions God gave him at creation, but because of sin, he is punished and is excluded from entering that rest. Therefore, rest is only achieved once sin has been dealt with, and the relationship between man and God has been restored so that humanity can return to function as God has intended. From Genesis, the function of humanity is that He has been created in God's image, giving the right to rule over all the earth and fulfill his purpose to be fruitful and to faithfully steward or have dominion over the creation God has placed him in.⁹⁷ The fruitfulness is the blessing that God pours out on all creation, the uniqueness, however, is that man is told to "subdue and rule the earth, thereby fulfilling his role as God's image-bearer on earth."⁹⁸

Definition of Rest from Quoted Passages in Hebrews 3–4

From the passages above, several aspects of rest can now be defined. From Psalm 95, God has rested from his works and has invited humanity to join him in rest. In other words, there is still an opportunity to enter God's rest for those who worship God. In the Psalm, rest belongs to God, τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου, "the rest of mine," or "my rest." The rest is linked to the temple and Sabbath, where God entered His rest on the seventh day at the completion of His creative

96 The story of Adam, Cain, Noah, Israel, etc. each fail to enter the rest that has been promised to them because of their own action. The very point that the psalmist of Psalm 95 makes in warning his audience to respond properly to God to enter. By responding with a hardened heart, ultimately unbelief, they fail to enter the rest that is promised. Humans are invited to participate in this rest, see Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*, 778-780.

97 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 31.

98 *Ibid.*, 33.

works to rule and reign over creation. The hardening of hearts is how one is disqualified from entering God's rest. The wilderness generation of Numbers 14 serves as an antitype and defines that the hardening of hearts is a refusal to believe or have faith in God. Based on Psalm 95 and Genesis 2:2, rest is more than the entrance to the Promised Land. It is an eschatological rest where humanity has been invited to dwell with God forever in His sanctuary or presence.

Significant Contributions to Rest Outside of Quoted Passages

Significant Old Testament Passages on Rest

Through the study of Psalm 95 and Genesis 2, rest, Sabbath, and temple are linked together and influence the author of Hebrew's understanding of rest. Therefore, the development of those ideas through the Old Testament is necessary to identify how the author of Hebrew thinks about rest. As discussed in the background section of the three passages that Hebrews uses, he is familiar with the Old Testament and, therefore, could be influenced by other Old Testament passages. A thorough treatment of every Old Testament text is not possible in a paper of this size, so only a few passages that make a significant contribution to understanding rest will be addressed.

One of the first passages that one thinks about when discussing the Sabbath is the commands for Israel to keep the Sabbath. The two passages that the Sabbath law is found are Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. In Exodus, the command is given, and similar links to Genesis are found. God is again the example of rest and is the owner of the rest.⁹⁹ The seventh day is unique from all other days. The point of this command is for humanity to recognize that time does not belong to them but to God and is a gift from the Creator.¹⁰⁰ In Exodus, the motive

⁹⁹ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 459.

¹⁰⁰ Ross and Oswalt, *Genesis, Exodus*, 444.

behind the Sabbath is “the seventh day must be set apart because God ceased his creative work on that day, and therefore human work also should cease.”¹⁰¹ In Deuteronomy 5:12, the law is given again, this time with added information. Once again, the Hebrew word *šābat* is used, like in Exodus 20:8-11, as well as in Genesis 2:2. The purpose given to keep the Sabbath in Deuteronomy is different than in Exodus. The purpose is to celebrate deliverance from bondage by abstaining from labor and resting.¹⁰² William Dumbrell writes, “the “re-creation” of a people has come to supersede that primal event as the one most packed with theological significance.”¹⁰³ In reference to the Sabbath of Yahweh found in both passages, Matitiahu Tsevat, writes that the phrase should be translated as “a Sabbath that belongs to Yahweh.”¹⁰⁴ The Sabbath now, not only speaks about creation and cessation but about rest and redemption.¹⁰⁵

The next passage that may bring some clarity to the definition of rest as the author of Hebrews understands it, is Leviticus 16:29-31; 23:26-32, which discusses the Day of Atonement.

101 Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 150.

102 Ibid.

103 William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation a Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1984), 122-123.

104 “This phrase is so important, it’s easy to miss its centrality... Just as in the 7th year of release man desists from utilizing the land for his own business and benefit, so on the sabbath day he desists from using that day for his own affairs. And just as the intervals in regard to the release year and the jubilee years are determined by the number seven, so too is the number seven determinative for that recurring day when man refrains from his own pursuits and sets it aside for God. In regular succession he breaks the natural flow of time, proclaiming, and that the break is made for the sake of the Lord. This meaning which we have ascertained from the laws finds support Isaiah 58: “If you restrain your foot on the sabbath so as not to pursue your own affairs on My holy day...” Man normally is master of his time. He is free to dispose of it as he sees fit or as necessity bids him. The Israelite is duty-bound, however, once every seven days to assert by word and deed that God is the master of time. ... one day out of seven the Israelite is to renounce dominion over his own time and recognize God’s dominion over it. Simply: Every seventh day the Israelite renounces his autonomy and affirms God’s dominion over him in the conclusion that every seventh day the Israelite is to renounce dominion over time, thereby renounce autonomy, and recognize God’s dominion over time and thus over himself. Keeping the sabbath is acceptance of the kingdom and sovereignty of God.” Matitiahu Tsevat, *The Basic Meaning of the Biblical Sabbath* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972), 435-455.

105 Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 152.

The Day of Atonement was a special Sabbath day that happened each year on the tenth day of the seventh month. The pattern and connection between seven and Sabbath have already been established. Many scholars point out the influence of the Day of Atonement in the New Testament, especially in Hebrews.¹⁰⁶ Some scholars believe that the Day of Atonement in Christ is the central theme of the entire book of Hebrews.¹⁰⁷ Before the author of Hebrews turns his focus to rest, Hebrews 2:17 begins the author's thought into atonement and priest. Following the section on rest in Hebrews, Jesus is presented as the great high priest in Hebrews 4:14-16, with the connection to the previous section with the author's use of "therefore." The author of Hebrews discusses the priesthood of Jesus further in chapters five, six, seven, and eight. In chapters nine and ten, the author of Hebrews moves to sacrifice and atonement. It is then evident that the author of Hebrews may be thinking about the Day of Atonement in Hebrews 3-4. The connection to Leviticus 16 is furthered by the lexical connection of שְׁבִיעִי "seventh," מְלָאכָה "work," שַׁבָּת "Sabbath," and שָׁבוּת "rest" to Genesis 2:2 as well as throughout Hebrews 3-4. Leviticus 16 continues the common understanding of ceasing from work, a day of rest, but the focus is now entirely on the atonement of sins for the purpose of residing with God.

Significant Early Jewish Writings on Rest

Many other works develop the theme of rest further outside the Old Testament. Some are included in the Jewish canon, while others are Second Temple writings. While not all writings can be said to have a bearing on the author of Hebrew's understanding of rest, they certainly

¹⁰⁶ Leon Morris, "The Day of Atonement and the Work of Christ," *The Reformed Theological Review* 14 (1955): 13.

¹⁰⁷ Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, New American Commentary, vol. 3A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 225.

enlighten how contemporaries to the author of Hebrews view rest. A great example of this found in *Joseph and Aseneth*. Beale writes concerning *Joseph and Aseneth*,

In *Jos. Asen.* 8:9, where Joseph prays to God for Aseneth: “Renew her by your spirit...and let her enter your rest (*katapausis*) which you have prepared for your chosen ones, and live in your eternal life for ever and ever. Here, the *katapausis* is “not a state of body or mind, but a place in heaven prepared for the saved” (*OTP* 2:213nf2).¹⁰⁸

Most scholars agree on a date of origin of *Joseph and Aseneth* in the late Hellenistic or early Roman times, post LXX/OB C 1st BCE to early C2nd CE.¹⁰⁹ With the dating of Hebrews also being ambiguous Hebrews could fall before the completion of this work, it cannot then be determined if the author of Hebrews is a predecessor, contemporary, or successor to this writing. However, the work of *Joseph and Aseneth* being close in date with the book of Hebrews does open the possibility for *κατάπαυσις* to be understood as a heavenly place by the author of Hebrews because contemporaries of his time thought about rest in this manner. The link of rest with the heavenly place of God moves evidence even further away from understanding rest as the mere entrance into the Promised Land.

The dating of the *Odes of Solomon* is undoubtedly past the date of the book of Hebrews; most scholars place the writing sometime towards the end of the second century.¹¹⁰ In three different places, rest is discussed as it pertains to this paper. In Ode 11.12 and 25.12, rest is discussed as being immortal and eternal. Ode 16.12 is a repetition of the creation account.

108 Beale, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 954.

109 Angela Standhartinger, “Recent Scholarship On Joseph and Aseneth (1988-2013),” *Currents in Biblical Research* 12, no. 3 (2014): 374.

110 Michael Lattke, Harold W. Attridge, and Marianne Ehrhardt, *The Odes of Solomon: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 7.

The *Mishnah Tamid* is a liturgical text from the late Second Temple period used in worship at the Temple.¹¹¹ The letter to the Hebrews has substantial evidence of being a Second Temple letter.¹¹² In the *Mishnah Tamid*, Psalm 92 concludes with this statement, “A Psalm, A Song for the Sabbath. A psalm, a song for the time to come, for the day that is all Sabbath and rest in eternal life.”¹¹³ It is evident that during the Second Temple period that the Sabbath and rest has become a reference to eternal life. Seeing Jewish writings during the Second Temple period, understanding rest as eternal life gives precedence to understanding the author of Hebrews to understand rest in the same manner. Beale writes concerning 2 Baruch is a reflection on the destruction of the temple in AD 70 that rest has an eschatological bent and “in the kingdom joy will be revealed, and rest will appear.”¹¹⁴

Definition of Rest Outside of Quoted Passages

The few Old Testament passages outside those quoted by the author of Hebrews move rest to be understood in light of redemption. The redemptive understanding of rest is prevalent in the passages on the Day of Atonement, which plays a vital role throughout the book of Hebrews. The early Jewish writings give substantial evidence that in Second Temple Judaism, as well as the few centuries following, that rest is now understood as eschatological. The rest was not only eschatological but is heavenly and eternal. Therefore, rest is the eschatological heavenly place of

111 Peter L. Trudinger, *The Psalms of the Tamid Service : A Liturgical Text from the Second Temple*, (Leiden: BRILL, 2003), 1.

112 The dating of the letter to the Hebrews is discussed in the section of background in the Exegesis of Hebrews.

113 Peter L. Trudinger, *The Psalms of the Tamid Service : A Liturgical Text from the Second Temple*, 17.

114 Beale, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 958.

God, where the people of God experience eternal redemption from sins and dwell in God's presence forever.

Exegesis of Hebrews 3:7-4:11

Background

Determining the historical background of Hebrews is about as complicated as building a puzzle missing all the edge pieces. The only agreement between scholars on the authorship, audience, or date of the letter is that they do not know anything for certain. However, a brief treatment of these background issues will be helpful, at least for the general context in interpreting Hebrews.

Authorship

The authorship of the letter to the Hebrews has been widely debated for centuries. “but who wrote it, only God knows,” as Origen once remarked.¹¹⁵ Before Origen's concluding remarks, he indicates a belief that the ideas are Pauline, but the writing is not.¹¹⁶ Origen lived from AD 185-254, and an earlier church father commenting on the authorship issue lived from AD 150-215. Specifically, Clement of Alexandria attributes the work to Paul but believes that Luke translated it into Greek from Hebrew.¹¹⁷ Despite this, almost no modern scholar attributes the composition to Paul.¹¹⁸ Internal evidence does not support Pauline authorship, as the author identifies himself as a second-generation Christian and a brother of Timothy (Heb 2:3; 13:23).

115 Cited in Allen, *Hebrews*, 32.

116 Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1993), 5.

117 Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 5.

118 *Ibid.*, 3.

There are many other possibilities for authorship that scholars have proposed over the years. Few of them cannot be dismissed, including Barnabas, Apollos, and Luke. Tertullian attributes the work to Barnabas, but because of an absence of authentic writings by this early Christian, this is speculative at best.¹¹⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson gives a strong argument for Apollos to be the author.¹²⁰ Some scholars take Clement and Origen's statements and advocate for Lukan authorship.¹²¹ Allen is one of the biggest proponents of this view.¹²² If one argues for authorship to come from another biblical author, then Luke would be the best proponent for authorship of Hebrews. What is evident about the author of Hebrews is that he writes in the most beautiful Greek of the New Testament. Many scholars believe him to be a Hellenistic Jewish Christian who was influenced by the ideas of Philo, another Hellenistic Jew.¹²³ The author's Jewish understanding of temple practices is extensive. While the authorship of the letter to the Hebrews cannot be known with absolute certainty, Lukan authorship is the most likely, in my assessment.

Date

The dating of the book is almost as hard to determine as authorship. However, because of the knowledge of the letter by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, the date must be before AD 150 and after the death and resurrection of Jesus, of course. In the letter of 1 Clement, Hebrews

119 Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 15.

120 Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012) 43.

121 Allen, *Hebrews*, 30.

122 For a substantial work on Lukan authorship see David L. Allen's revision of his 1987 doctoral dissertation, David L. Allen, *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010).

123 William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47A (Dallas: Word, 1991), 1.

is cited throughout, and the time of writing of 1 Clement has been traditionally dated AD 96.¹²⁴ Therefore, it is reasonable to place the letter's composition between AD 45 and AD 90.¹²⁵ Because of the author's message focuses on the Jerusalem temple and implies that the animal offerings are still being made during the time of the letter, most scholars assign it a date before the fall of the temple (AD 70).¹²⁶ Depending on how one understands Hebrews 12:4, the persecution could be the Claudian persecution in AD 49, the Neronian persecution of AD 65, or the Domitian persecution of AD 81-96.¹²⁷ If one takes the lack of reference to Paul in Hebrews 13 and the lack of mention of the destruction of Jerusalem or its temple as clues to the dating, then a date between AD 67-70 could be feasible. Although I take the dating to be quite narrow between AD 67-70, for arguments made in this thesis, one does not need to be so specific, because any date between AD 45 and AD 90 works with the arguments in this paper.

Audience

Regarding the audience of the letter, it is evident that they are familiar with Greek as well as the content of key sections of the Scriptures, what we now call the Old Testament.¹²⁸ For this reason, the traditional view is that they are Jewish Christians.¹²⁹ Lane believes the group to be a small group, no more than twenty, with social and religious roots in a Jewish community that

124 Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 38.

125 Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 1.

126 Guthrie, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, 31. Although some have pointed out that the author of Hebrew's is more focused on the Levitical cultus directly on the Old Testament, not necessarily the contemporary Temple. Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 31.

127 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 21.

128 Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 23.

129 Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, 21. Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 22.

participated in worship at a synagogue with Hellenistic cultural influences—hence a Greek-speaking audience.¹³⁰ Most scholars believe that the audience is comprised of Christians who are ethnically and/or religiously Jewish.¹³¹ Based on internal evidence of the letter, this audience has adhered to teachings about Jesus for some time and are tempted to return to Judaism apart from faith in Jesus.¹³² Ellingsworth summarizes, “It is therefore best to conclude that the first readers were a predominantly but not exclusively Jewish-Christian group, well known to the writer, but not including all members of a local Christian community, or its leaders.”¹³³

In the end, the view of this author is that the author of Hebrews is a contemporary of Paul or the next generation after Paul, written sometime between AD 67-70 to a group of Jewish Christians who know the Old Testament well. More specifically, Luke is most likely the author, and he wrote the letter after the death of Paul and before the destruction of the Temple (AD 67-70) to a group of Jewish Christians who were tempted to return to Judaism.

Influence

The author of the letter to the Hebrews follows both Hellenistic rhetoric and rabbinic Midrash to express his arguments. A Hellenistic practice that the author of Hebrews uses is *a minore ad maius* or in Hebrew *qal wehomer*, meaning an argument from lesser to greater.¹³⁴ This line of reasoning is that if something is true about a minor case, then in a greater case, it is likewise true and applicable. The use of *qal wehomer* is used throughout the letter of Hebrews to demonstrate Jesus is supreme, having first place in everything (Heb 1:1-14). Randall Gleason

130 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, liv.

131 Ibid.

132 Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 34.

133 Ellingsworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 27.

134 Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 31.

notes that the author of Hebrews also uses one of Hillel's exegetical rules, known as a verbal analogy, in quoting Genesis 2:2.¹³⁵

Many scholars see a connection between the author of Hebrews and Platonism.¹³⁶ In general terms, Platonism contrasts the phenomenal world, which is the material world that is visible and transient, with the noumenal world, which is changeless and invisible because it is spiritual in nature.¹³⁷ The spiritual is more permanent than the physical, while the noumenal or physical is a copy or shadow. However close the author of Hebrews is to Platonism, he stands in contrast to its understanding of the afterlife because of the influence of Scripture and his understanding of eschatology in God's fulfillment of his promises.¹³⁸

The connection between the author of Hebrews and Philo is another that many scholars have noted over the years.¹³⁹ Spicq's works on the parallels between Hebrews and Philo have proven that the author of Hebrews was well acquainted with Philo's writings, but Ronald Williamson demonstrates that Hebrews is in several aspects in conflict with the ideas of Philo.¹⁴⁰ Although the author of Hebrews is familiar with Philo and his teaching, the author of Hebrews writes with a Christological understanding, often in disagreement with Philo, who was not a Christian.¹⁴¹ The primary influence of Philo on the author of Hebrews is evident in the latter's

135 Gleason, "Old Testament Background of Rest," 283.

136 Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 17.

137 *Ibid.*, 18.

138 See Charles K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Studies in Honour of C. H. Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube, 363-393 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).

139 Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, cvii.

140 Robert W. Thurston, "Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews." *Evangelical Quarterly* 58 (1986): 133.

141 *Ibid.*, 138.

method of interpreting Scripture and his use of the LXX. However, the significant difference between the two is that Philo developed his themes Platonically, while the author of Hebrews developed them eschatologically.¹⁴²

In the letter to the Hebrews, the author employs typology when describing the wilderness generation, mostly as an antitype. A basic definition of typology is a “historical correspondences retrospectively recognized within the consistent redemptive activity of God.”¹⁴³ The first characteristic of typology is that the author uses historical events, actions, and people and is “based on the assumption that God follows consistent patterns in dealing with His people.”¹⁴⁴ The second is that typology requires legitimate historical and theological correspondences.¹⁴⁵ This is vital. Otherwise, the author's interpretation would not be consistent with the original type. In the case of the passages cited in Hebrews, the “spiritual conditions of persons and events appealed to in earlier redemptive history must genuinely correspond to their contemporary counterparts identified by the author.”¹⁴⁶ The final characteristic of typology is the aspect of escalation, meaning that what is true of the original audience or situation is escalated and applies even more so to the audience or situation the later author is discussing.¹⁴⁷ This is often seen in messianic prophecies in the Gospels and is prevalent throughout the letter to the Hebrews via his arguments of lesser to greater. The author of Hebrews is not the only biblical author to use

142 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, , cviii.

143 R. M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture A Study of Hermeneutical τύπος Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 94.

144 Gleason, “Old Testament Background of Rest,” 285.

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid.

147 Ibid.

typology with the wilderness generation as Paul does something similar in 1 Corinthians 10. In summary, the author sought to reorient Old Testament texts to the situation of his readers by using standard Jewish practices of interpretation without violating or altering the actual sense of the texts to their original audience.¹⁴⁸

The Jewish method of interpretation called “midrash” is also extensively used by the author of Hebrews. Daniel Boyarin defines midrash as a “radical rereading of the canon, in which potentially every part refers to and is interpretable by every other part.”¹⁴⁹ Boyarin demonstrates in his work that Hebrew is midrash, not pesher, allegory, or rewritten Bible.¹⁵⁰ One aspect of midrash is the “catena,” a chain of biblical verses throughout the Old Testament collected to serve a particular point.¹⁵¹ The possibility of catena traditions indicates that the author of Hebrews may be aware of a document or tradition that links passages about rest together, or perhaps he is creating his own catena based on the connection that rest has with creation and kingdom themes. Either way, he gives his commentary on the meaning of these Old Testament texts in the letter. Attridge, Johnson, and Lane all recognize that Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3-4 is midrash.¹⁵² The point of midrash is to use every part of the linking passages to pose a single hermeneutical question and then give its answer. In Hebrews 3-4, the question is this: what is rest?

148 Gleason, “Old Testament Background of Rest,” 283.

149 Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 16.

150 See Daniel Boyarin chapter on “Midrash in Hebrews/ Hebrews as Midrash” in Gabriella Gelardini and Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews in Contexts*, (Boston: Brill, 2016), 16-29 for examples.

151 Gelardini, *Hebrews in Contexts*, 16.

152 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 104.; Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 126.; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 83.

Exegesis of the Passage

To define rest in Hebrews 3:7-4:11, one must start with previous parts of the letter to the Hebrews, for several themes are introduced in Hebrews 1:1–3:6 that are significant in the passage of this study. Even from the earliest verses, the author emphasizes that God has spoken through various means before, but now speaks through His Son (Heb 1:1–4). The underlying question through the entire letter is whether the audience listens to what the Son says since this person (Jesus) is the divine revelation of God incarnate. The author believes that God is the supreme reality, the source and goal of all life, and God sustains the universe through His word (Heb 11:3).¹⁵³ The end of the author’s description of rest also emphasizes the power of God’s word, concluding that it is a living and powerful Word, and there is nothing hidden from this God who speaks to his people (Heb 4:12-13). The logic assumed throughout Hebrews, culminating in Hebrews 11, is that, although God rested on the seventh day from His works, His power and presence continue within creation, and He enters into personal relationships with humans and communicates with them.¹⁵⁴ Although the prophets and Scripture have spoken in the past, they point to and lead up to the reality of Jesus, God’s supreme communication, in the present. Johnson writes, “Scripture speaks most truly about the Messiah Jesus, who has ‘come into the world’ (1:6; 10:5), and speaks to the present generation living in the ‘today’ of Psalm 94 (Hebrews 4:7) and the ‘days that are coming’ of Jeremiah (8:8).”¹⁵⁵

In Hebrews 3:1-6, Jesus is compared to Moses. The point of the comparison is not that Moses was unfaithful, but that Jesus’ faithfulness is not merely as a servant of God but as the

153 Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 45.

154 Ibid.

155 Ibid., 45-46.

Son of God. However, a neglected point in many commentaries is that both Moses and Jesus are considered faithful over the house or “household” of God, meaning either the place of God’s presence or the family or people. There is no question that the author of Hebrews is interested in the Jerusalem temple elsewhere and in demonstrating Jesus is greater than all aspects of the temple system, but Jesus does not replace the temple. Instead, he is providing a way to enter the heavenly Temple (Heb 8:5, 9:24). The keyword in this passage is οἶκος. Scholars primarily see two different understandings of this word. The first is seen as a community, the people of God.¹⁵⁶ However, the idea of the community does not exclude the possibility that it is also the “house” of God in the sense of the place where he is present and worshiped by his people.¹⁵⁷ Understanding οἶκος as referring to the temple also has support from the temple-building theme of Hebrews 1:5 and the resting place of Hebrews 3:11, “since οἶκος θεοῦ is freely used of the sanctuary in the LXX, e.g., Gn. 28:17, 19 [and] with the theme of Moses’ sanctuary as a type of heaven (8:1–6; cf. Ex. 25:40).”¹⁵⁸ In verse 6, the author of Hebrews refers to his audience as the household of God, and they are a part of that household if they persevere. Then there is a transition to the author’s long quotation of Psalm 95, his definition of rest.

In Hebrews 3:7-11, the author quotes Psalm 95:7-11 and thus begins his second warning. The quotation of the passage assumes that the one who speaks Psalm 95 is the Holy Spirit, and he is speaking presently as the present verb λέγει indicates.¹⁵⁹ The psalm is still a prophetic exhortation, even after centuries. Psalm 95 has been treated above using the LXX, as that is

156 Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 45.

157 Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 197.

158 Ibid.

159 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 85.

primarily the version the author of Hebrews uses.¹⁶⁰ The main ideas from the psalm and the narrative in Numbers 14 are that God has spoken, and His people have an opportunity to enter His rest or promised land and kingdom, but hardening their heart towards God results in exclusion from God’s rest. The author of Hebrews says the Holy Spirit is speaking presently, as God did with the wilderness generation, as God did with the psalmist’s audience, and now with his first-century audience. This latest audience is hearing God’s words and now has a fresh opportunity to respond with trust in God’s revelation, unlike the wilderness generation that did not heed the Lord. Robert Rayburn writes, “Each generation is commanded to ‘enter My rest.’”¹⁶¹ However, if they fail to listen and instead harden their hearts, they will not enter God’s rest.

The author then begins his exegesis of Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3:12-19. This initial section is an exhortation and reapplication of the exhortation of Psalm 95. Following the exhortation is a series of questions and answers that the author of Hebrews draws on for his argument.¹⁶² The author uses connections to previously mentioned words and then introduces new words to connect his argument to other passages of the Old Testament.

In verse 12, the author warns his audience not to have “an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.” The imperative βλέπετε to begin this section introduces a sharp warning to the audience to be careful. There is no question that καρδία πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας is

160 Although the author of Hebrews diverges from the LXX in some places, the meaning remains unchanged. The only significant change from the LXX to the author’s quotation is in the use of *dio* it represents an interpretive interjection by the author. In other words, it was *because of* their faithlessness that God grew angry. See Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 113.

161 Robert Rayburn, *Yesterday, Today and Forever The Narrative World of Ps 94 [Ps 95] as a Hermeneutical Key to Hebrews*, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2019), 116.

162 *Ibid.*, 120.

referring to the hardened heart of the wilderness generation of Psalm 95. The hardening of one's heart in Numbers 14 and Psalm 95 means to willfully disobey God by failing to listen to God's word and is considered the highest degree of sin in the Old Testament. The term ἀπιστίας is often associated with not listening to God's voice and is linked to a lack of faith, but it is in these contexts a refusal to believe God.¹⁶³ Following this is the construction ἐν τῷ plus an infinitive, which, as Ellingsworth notes, should be understood as epexegetic, not consecutive, meaning 'leading you to fall away from the living God.'¹⁶⁴ The phrase θεοῦ ζῶντος is generally understood in a positive sense as "the God who gives life."¹⁶⁵ Falling away from "the God who gives life" is connected with ὑστερηκέναι "come short of" in Hebrews 4:1, where those who fail to persevere, will not experience the God who gives life and thus will experience death.¹⁶⁶ The audience whom the author of Hebrews is warning might have the same disposition as the wilderness generation. They are not immune to apostasy.

While the warning is present and the audience of Hebrews could theoretically commit apostasy, Hebrews 3:13 demonstrates that the community has a role in caring for each member of the community so that they will not fall away.¹⁶⁷ It is imperative, he tells them, to encourage one another every day, "as long as it is still called 'today'" (Heb 3:13), to not have a hardened heart towards God and his revealed Word. The author of Hebrews quotes one word from the psalm to make his point: "today." The author uses "today" to convey urgency and availability to the idea of rest. "Today" is no longer the today of the past Israel but the today of the present

163 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 86.

164 Ellingsworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 222.

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid.

167 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 87.

Israel, a people to which God is still speaking, only now through the Son or Word who is the heir of God's kingdom and the image of this creator God (Heb 1:1–3).¹⁶⁸ The apostasy committed by the wilderness generation resulted in the loss of ability to enter the Promised Land, though perhaps “not their covenant status as the people of God.”¹⁶⁹ Although he is correct in understanding the context of Numbers 14, he has misapplied the meaning of God's rest in Psalm 95, the more significant background of the passage. Psalm 95 moves the location of rest for Israel away from the Promised Land and to an eschatological rest that is yet to be fulfilled. As is conventional with typology, there is an aspect of escalation, so while the wilderness generation failed to enter the Promised Land, the development of rest by the psalmist indicates that the rest is an opportunity to be with God in His Temple since the text is a call to worship.

Hebrews 3:14, using the word γὰρ, provides the grounds for the warning. The majority view of the meaning of μέτοχοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ (“partakers of Christ”) is that Christians share with Christ in the blessings associated with entering God's rest.¹⁷⁰ Persevering “until the end” to “become partakers of Christ” (3:14) is seen as a parallel with “entering His rest” (4:1) so that being identified with Christ at the end of the age is inextricably linked to “entering His rest.”¹⁷¹ This close parallelism demonstrates that Christ has already achieved the rest being described, and those who identify with Him at the end will be permitted to enter His rest, whatever that entails. Daniel Lanzinger writes, “the person who entered first is Jesus: as he went into the inner part of the heavenly sanctuary as a ‘forerunner for us.’”¹⁷²

168 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 87.

169 Allen, *Hebrews*, 265.

170 Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 226.

171 Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*, 784.

What does it mean, then, for Jesus to enter this rest that others might follow as partakers? The “rest” that God offers is about enjoying the privileges and responsibilities of the kingdom. Only by heeding God’s words can humans be restored to their place as rulers. That is what Jesus did perfectly as the new Adam (Heb 5:8; 10:12). Hebrews 3:15 repeats the quote of Psalm 95:7 connecting that the way one holds firm is by not hardening their hearts.

Then, beginning in Hebrews 3:16, the author of Hebrews poses a series of questions and answers to apply the passage. The background for the events mentioned is found in Numbers 14, “For who provoked Him when they had heard?” (Heb 3:16). The question is answered with a reference to the wilderness generation led from Egypt by Moses (Num 14). After being liberated from their Egyptian slavery, the wilderness generation should have known better than to provoke God.¹⁷³ However, instead of listening to God to enter the Promised Land, they doubted, complained, and rebelled against his revealed will in numerous ways, including his will of Moses as speaker for God.

The next question in Hebrews 3:17 is this: “And with whom was He angry for forty years?” The answer to this question is the first generation of Israelites at Kadesh Barnea since they died in the wilderness and never entered the Promised Land. In Hebrews 3:18, the question is now, “And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest?” The answer is the same: those who were disobedient, those who rebelled against Yahweh in the wilderness. The author is not concerned with the connection between the Promised Land and God’s rest that is similar but less geographically bound. This will be done in Hebrews 4:1-11. Instead, he is interested in

172 Daniel Lanzinger, “‘A Sabbath Rest for the People of God’ (Heb 4.9): Hebrews and Philo on the Seventh Day of Creation.” *New Testament Studies* 64, no. 01 (2017): 107.

173 Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 229.

demonstrating why the wilderness generation failed to enter the kingdom and presence of God that was promised to them.

The author concludes this section by explaining to his audience that the failure to enter God's rest is based on unbelief or a failure to listen to God. The wilderness generation serves as an antitype of whom not to follow.¹⁷⁴ Hebrews 3:12-19 is thus an explanation to the audience of how they might potentially fail to enter God's rest and, therefore, that they must hold fast to Jesus. The audience can fail to enter God's rest by failing to listen to God's Son, who now speaks to them like Moses spoke to the wilderness generation. What is consistent between the wilderness generation and the author's audience in this section is that unbelief led to exclusion from God's rest, and for the audience, this consequence remains valid in the present.¹⁷⁵

After telling his audience that they can fail to enter God's rest in the same way that the wilderness generation failed to enter the Promised Land, he turns his attention to defining rest through the use of *midrash*. In Hebrews 4:1-11, he further explains rest using Genesis 2:2 and the end of the wilderness journey when Joshua brought the people into the Promised Land. Hebrews 4:1-5 focuses on the idea of rest, beginning, and ending with a statement of entering God's rest (Hebrews 4:1, 5).¹⁷⁶ The next section starts with a "therefore" to demonstrate a shift in thought. Hebrews 4:6-11 concludes the next frame, which is a call to listen, following the rhetoric of Psalm 95 again.

174 Harold W. Attridge, "'Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest' the Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11." *The Harvard Theological Review* 73, no. 1/2 (1980): 283.

175 Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 98.

176 Rayburn, *Yesterday, Today and Forever The Narrative World of Ps 94 [Ps 95] as a Hermeneutical Key to Hebrews*, 141.

The first aspect of rest given in Hebrews 4:1 is that a rest still remains for those who are faithful.¹⁷⁷ That the rest remains is a logical deduction based on the opening words of the quoted Psalm: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (Psalm 95:7).¹⁷⁸ The author’s appeal to the fear of falling short or missing out is an example of a *pathos* argument meant to evoke emotion as well as use reason (*logos*) to persuade his audience rhetorically.¹⁷⁹ The author’s point in this first verse is to communicate to his audience the real danger of failing to enter God’s rest. At the same time, the invitation remains open to enter it.¹⁸⁰

In Hebrews 4:2, the author uses εὐηγγελισμένοι, not to refer to the good news about Jesus but the promise of rest in the promised land.¹⁸¹ The promise of rest is the good news.¹⁸² The author again appeals to his previous argument that the wilderness generation failed to enter rest because of unbelief. Even though they heard the message about rest, it was not beneficial to them because they did not believe God. The author clarifies how one enters that rest, the rest of God: It is through belief (Heb 4:3). The occurrence of πίστις in both vv. 2 and 3 means effectively hearing the ‘good news’ in accordance with God’s promise (Heb 6:12; Rom 4:13). It then implies obedience (Heb 3:18) and holding fast to the living God (Heb 3:12; 4:12; 10:39) as the meaning of faith in this passage.¹⁸³

177 Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 123.

178 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 97.

179 Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 124.

180 Allen, *Hebrews*, 273.

181 *Ibid.*, 274.

182 Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 241.

183 *Ibid.*, 244.

The author of Hebrews now connects his thoughts on rest by quoting Genesis 2:2 in Hebrews 4:4. The connection between Psalm 95 and Genesis 2:2 has already been addressed previously, noting a lexical connection (*καταπαύω*) as well as a theological connection (the Temple and creation themes). The author confirms this connection by immediately quoting from Psalm 95:11 again. The minor changes the author of Hebrews makes to the citation of Genesis is to bring clarity. In Genesis 2:2, he adds Ὁ θεός to provide a specific subject to εἶρηκεν (“has said”).¹⁸⁴ By referring to Genesis 2:2 to bring clarity to rest, the author of Hebrews makes the point that the conditions for rest have existed since the time of creation (Day 7). Not only has rest existed, but the failure of the wilderness generation “to enter the promised rest does not abrogate the reality and presence of that rest.”¹⁸⁵

The author concludes his first points about rest in Hebrews 4:5. Ellingsworth gives a summation of the author's points in Hebrews 4:3-5: that there remains a place of rest available that Psalm 95:11 proves, God's rest has existed from the time of creation that Genesis 2:2 proves, and the rest in both passages must be the same.¹⁸⁶ The main “point is simply that both Genesis 2:2 and Psalm 95:11 witness to the continued existence of God's *κατάπαυσις*.”¹⁸⁷ As mentioned previously, Jesus has also entered that same rest. Therefore, the rest that God, Jesus, and believers enter must be the same. From Genesis 2:2 and the thematic development of rest throughout the Old Testament, it is not merely a cessation of work or passive inactivity but a reigning with God and working in His kingdom.

184 Ellingsworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 248.

185 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 99.

186 Ellingsworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 245.

187 *Ibid.*, 249.

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve, created in the image of God, had shared dominion over creation and were able to work with royal authority as representatives of God's kingdom (Gen. 1:26-28). Genesis 1:26 does not define what the image of God is, but that to be human means to bear the image of God.¹⁸⁸ The relationship between humanity and God is characterized by the mandate to exercise dominion over all living creatures and reflects royal language.¹⁸⁹ The work described before their disobedience is entirely different from the work after the fall. In some ways, their punishment in Genesis 3:17 is that after the fall, humans will need to toil to get food, among other negative results. Human work, relationships, and reproduction becomes harder and painful (Gen 3:17-18). Before the expulsion from Eden, Adam, and Eve's tending to the garden was simple, secure, and all fruit was readily available (Gen 2:15-16).

The difference before and after the fall may give a clue to defining rest. After day six and the beginning of seven, creation has now been completed, and God can now reign over His creation. By being created in the image of God, Adam is also able to partake in this seventh-day rest by co-reigning with God. The fall causes a separation from God and man, where Adam no longer reigns with God because the image has been broken. The fall does not remove the image of God from humanity like some theologians hold, but rather the image has been broken and marred because of sin and must be brought back to a restored state.¹⁹⁰ Instead, what is lost in the fall is the ability for man to have communion with God, his righteousness, his conformity to the will of God, and mortality.¹⁹¹ The New Testament often refers to the restoration of the image of

188 Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 137.

189 Ibid., 138.

190 Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Image of God." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129, no. 515 (1972): 245.

191 Ibid., 245.

God (1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). Since the fall, all of humanity now shares in the image of Adam, one where the image of God is broken. Therefore, sin must be dealt with so that the image of God may be restored. Jesus, as second Adam, living a sinless, perfect life, becomes an atoning sacrifice for humanity where sin is decisively dealt with (Rom 5:12-21 Heb 9:28, 10:12; 1 Jn 2:2). It is through the person of Jesus that the image of God is restored and where humanity can once again reign with Christ as co-heirs, who is the heir over all things. (Rom 8:17; Heb 1:2). It is then clear that the author of Hebrews understands that Jesus is the way to rest and that the rest is being able to function fully in the image of God as co-reigning with God like intended in the beginning.

The “therefore” in Hebrews 4:6 makes a deduction from the previous point, namely, that there is still an available rest, and his audience can enter it. Hebrews 4:6 is almost a reiteration of Hebrews 4:2, where εὐαγγελισθέντες is present again, demonstrating the same point about this good news. The promise of rest is open, but the wilderness generation, who also heard the good news, “failed to enter because of disobedience.” The author now moves to prove that the rest is still available to his audience. In Hebrews 4:7-8, the author uses David and Joshua to make his argument. By using the terms associated with the “today” of Psalm 95:7, the author seeks to prove that because David—the author of the psalm according to the Greek superscription—talked about a day of rest in his time, which was long after the time of the wilderness generation, then the opportunity for rest must have remained open. The argument is that David would not have talked about a day of rest after the conquest if the conquest had fully secured that rest for the people of God.¹⁹²

192 Attridge, “‘Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest’ the Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11,” 280.

The author furthers this idea pointing out that they did not secure this rest in Joshua's time because there is "another day," referring to the day of the psalm. This is not to say that Joshua did not experience rest in a partial sense, as he found security within the borders of Israel's kingdom. Instead, the author is using typology to demonstrate that the Promised Land was not God's complete rest. If it were, then the psalmist would not have written about another rest so long after, regardless of the date of the psalm.¹⁹³ According to Hebrews, Joshua was unable to lead the people into God's promised rest, and the author of Hebrews understands David's words as prophetic, that a new generation has the chance to enter. The author re-reads Israel's history and applies the patterns of the past to the first-century audience, following the lead of Psalm 95.¹⁹⁴ Will his audience listen to God, or will they rebel like the wilderness generation and try to return to "Egypt," Judaism apart from Jesus? Johnson writes, "The author argues that the "rest" of which God spoke in [LXX] Ps 94:11 (Heb 3:11) was not the promised land of Canaan but a share in God's own way of existing."¹⁹⁵ This is not to say that the rest provided for the wilderness generation was not rest, but that it was not complete ultimate rest. The author of Hebrews is in line with Platonism on this thought. This is seen throughout the letter, with the earthly object being only a shadow of the real, heavenly entity. In the author's mind, true rest can only be from God. Therefore, in using Genesis 2:2, the author moves to the real rest of God, Sabbath rest.

The σαββατισμὸς ("Sabbath rest") of Hebrews 4:9 is now mentioned. It is not merely the entrance into Canaan. It is the rest that God created and entered on the Sabbath at the conclusion

193 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 101.

194 Matthew Thiessen "Hebrews and the End of the Exodus," *Novum Testamentum* 49, no. 4 (2007): 369.

195 Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 122.

of creation. The word σαββατισμὸς is only found here in the New Testament and is not found anywhere else in the LXX or the New Testament. It is possible that the author of Hebrews coins this Greek term from the Hebrew *shabbat*, making his understanding of rest to be connected to the seventh day rest of Genesis 2:2. The author uses σαββατισμὸς to summarize his full idea of rest that has been delivered in Hebrews 3:7-4:11. Jody Barnard explains σαββατισμὸς this way: “it is the Sabbath into which God himself entered at creation, and is, therefore, the state that believers may experience in the immediate presence of God, a nuance that is also attested in the Jewish scriptures (e.g., Exod 33:14; Isa 66:1).”¹⁹⁶ The experience of God’s presence is understood in a “now and not yet” framework that the author of Hebrews often uses. Believers can experience God’s presence now through Jesus’ sacrifice spiritually (Heb 4:16, 10:19; Eph 3:12), but it is only a shadow of the future presence of being both spiritually and physically in the presence of God in the new heaven and new earth, once the promise is fully received (Heb 9:28, 10:36, 11:39; Rev 20:6). The reception of that promise is again through faith, a common theme throughout Hebrews, especially in Hebrews 11-12, and is the criteria for entrance into rest in Hebrews 4:3.

In Hebrews 4:10, the author makes two more implications of rest before he concludes his exhortation. The first is that the opportunity to enter the rest is present, meaning one can experience the rest presently. The aorist tense of εἰσελθὼν is only used four times in Hebrews, and the other three concern Christ’s entrance into heaven. This is interesting for our author because he always describes the rest in a future sense otherwise. If one understands εἰσελθὼν as an already completed action, there seems to be a problem. To reconcile the problem, one must

¹⁹⁶ Jody A. Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews: Exploring the Role of Jewish Apocalyptic Mysticism in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 181.

understand the idea of the “now” and “not yet.” The biblical authors often write about a future reality that can be currently experienced, but not fully experienced until the future. The author of Hebrews follows suit in this thought in Hebrews 2:8, “For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.” In the passage, Jesus has already had all things subjected to him, but the reality of the subjecting has yet to be seen or manifested fully. In the same way, those who listen to God’s word (Son), who is now speaking, can enter σαββατισμὸς now but do not enter it fully just yet.

The second implication of rest in Hebrews 4:10 is that however God rested from His works, it is the same for humanity. One cannot see this as merely a cessation of labor. Rather, as Psalm 95 and Genesis 2:2 emphasize, the works are the works of creation. If God rested from His work of creation, what did he do after finishing? He took His place as king over creation to rule and reign. As discussed above, Adam and Eve were invited to partake in this seventh-day rest, but sin separated them from God, and therefore they did not rest with God for long, and they were kicked out of the garden, the place where God’s presence was manifested. The Day of Atonement may be in view for the author now, where the rest from works for humanity is the reconciliation of humanity back to God. For the author, atonement is entirely effected through Christ. A further connection to the Day of Atonement in the following section is connected to the author’s idea of Jesus as a great high priest (Heb 4:14). For humanity to be restored to the image of God and receive rest, sin had to be dealt with. Humanity is given the opportunity to find rest from sin in Christ, which allows for those in Christ to enter into God’s rest. The rest is a place without the corruption of sin, where God reigns over creation with humanity forever. However, Hebrews 4:11 continues the warning of the section: if one does not listen to the words spoken by

God, like the disobedient wilderness generation, then like them, there is no rest to enter. Gleason writes,

However, if they refuse to trust in God's life-sustaining presence mediated by Jesus Christ, their High Priest, they could forfeit the joy of God's presence as a "resting place" for worship and Sabbath celebration. Instead, God's presence would become to them a place where sins are exposed (4:12-13), punishment is given (3:17; 10:29-31), rewards are lost (10:35-36), and discipline is received (12:4-11).¹⁹⁷

The rest is only found in the person of Jesus Christ when one listens to and obeys the words spoken by the Son, who is speaking now (Heb 1:1-4). Therefore, the author of Hebrews concludes his thoughts on rest and the warning to his audience to strive to enter it with Hebrews 4:12-13, a description of the living word of God who judges and sees all things, a reminder that God has and is currently speaking and will hold those who hear accountable for how they respond to his redemptive communication.

Definition of Rest according to Hebrews

The points that the author of Hebrews makes about rest are as follows: There is a promised rest available to his audience today. Entrance into God's rest is conditional. To enter God's rest, the audience must strive to enter it and must encourage one another in the pursuit because one can fall short of attaining the rest.¹⁹⁸ More specifically, one fails to enter God's rest by refusing to believe in what God has said—the wilderness generation of Israelites serves as an antitype or disobedient example of this. Christ, by being completely obedient as the Son, has entered the place of rest, providing how one can join Christ in that rest presently, but a full experience of rest is yet in the future.¹⁹⁹ The rest is thus to be understood in an eschatological

197 Gleason, "Old Testament Background of Rest," 302.

198 Attridge, "'Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest' the Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," 281.

199 Lanzinger, "'A Sabbath Rest for the People of God' (Heb 4.9): Hebrews and Philo on the Seventh Day of Creation," 107.

sense, and as Hofius argues, that rest is tied to a locale, specifically the heavenly temple and heavenly Jerusalem.²⁰⁰ This heavenly temple and Jerusalem is where those in Christ will be united with him in their resurrected bodies free from sin to enjoy His presence forever. Those in Christ presently have the opportunity to rest from their works or the labor of their sin, into the restored image of God to co-rule with Christ now, but more fully in the future (Rev 22:5). Rest must be seen more as a sharing in dominion with God rather than understood as merely doing nothing.

Conclusion

Summary of Position

To understand the theme, according to the author of Hebrews, rest should not be limited to merely one nuance but rather should be understood as an intricate motif with cumulative, theological nuances.²⁰¹ Therefore, each nuance should be combined into a holistic definition of rest, since the author of Hebrews relies on several aspects of rest in order to make his appeal in Hebrews 3–4. Naturally, to interpret rest as the author intended in Hebrews 3:7–4:11, it was also essential in this study to understand how rest was developed throughout the Old Testament and in Second Temple Judaism.

To summarize the definition of rest from the Old Testament passages that the author of Hebrews explicitly quotes, rest is an eschatological rest where humanity has been invited to dwell with God forever in His sanctuary. This rest began on the seventh day, where God rested from the works of creation and now dwells in his temple, where he rules over his creation and

200 Attridge, “‘Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest’ the Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11,” 283.

201 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130, no. 518 (1973), 147.

has dominion. Humanity was created in the image of God and to rule with God over creation, and dwell in His rest. However, sin resulted in a fracture of the image of God, prohibiting humanity from entering God's rest. From other Old Testament and Jewish writings rest is understood as the eschatological heavenly place of God, where the people of God experience eternal redemption from sins and dwell in God's presence forever. Israel upon entering the Promised Land was to have dominion of the land with God, experiencing God's rest. However, Israel failed much like Adam and co-ruling with God was never achieved. The author of Hebrews understands rest as eschatological—awaiting final fulfillment—therefore matching the way certain Old Testament passages speak of rest. The author uses this portrayal of rest to convey several aspects of his message to his audience. The opportunity to enter God's rest is available to his audience, through belief in the promise to enter. Christ has already entered the rest through his faithfulness over God's household (Heb 3:6), and those who are united with Christ now have the opportunity to enter God's rest. Unlike Adam and Israel, Jesus has entered the full rest through complete obedience to the will of God and sits on the throne where he rules over creation (Heb 1:3; Eph 1:20-23; Phil 2:8-11; Rev 5:12-13).

Furthermore, the early Christian audience has an opportunity to partake in the rest in the present, but final fulfillment will happen in the future "day." Since Christ has achieved rest, those in Christ can now share in his rulership as co-heir and share in the dominion that was offered to Adam in Genesis 2:2. The warning to his audience is that entering God's rest is conditional. In other words, like the wilderness generation of Israel, unbelief in the promises of God results in failure to enter the rest. Therefore, it is paramount for his audience to trust God's promises not only individually, but as a community, so they may share in the dominion of God's creation.

For Christians Today

Using the same interpretive approaches as the author of Hebrews, the rest is still available to believers today. The question remains: Will we listen to the promises of God in His Word, or will we have a hardened heart like the wilderness generation and fall to unbelief in God? There are more and more stories daily of those who have denounced their faith in Christ, demonstrating that people can indeed fall away from trusting God. As a community, we must encourage one another to strive to enter the rest God offers, to persevere in faith, to continue to believe in the promises of God, so that none may miss out on enjoying God's presence.

Through Jesus, humanity is able to be restored back to image of God and in so doing, live as God created us: to rule and reign with him over creation. To enter God's rest means to share in his dominion. This is not merely ruling over creation in the New Heaven and New Earth but extending the kingdom presently. Jesus demonstrates how this dominion is lived out through having an attitude of humility (Phil 2:6-11). Jesus teaches about the kingdom throughout the Gospels that those who are poor in spirit inherit the kingdom (Matt 5:3). To find life, we must lose it (Matt 10:39), and to be first one must become last (Mark 9:35). This upside-down kingdom is brought through serving one another (Mark 10:42-45; Gal 5:13; 1 John 4:7). Rest is currently experienced through Christ when one takes up his yoke (Matt 11:29). The living out of the rest now found in Christ is found in the two commands given by Jesus, to love the Lord your God with everything we are and love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt 22:37). Rest is experienced through relationships we have with God and one another and its enjoyment is only found through being united with Christ.

Further Study

If rest in Hebrews 3–4 is dwelling in God’s presence for all eternity and redemption from sin, then those believers that fail to enter that rest have missed out on salvation. Further research needs to be done on whether the audience of Hebrews is composed entirely of believers or some mixture of Jews who are not all believers in Jesus, and more work needs to be done on whether rest plays a crucial role in defining what is lost in the other warning passages of the book. My study contributes to developing a biblical theology of rest as a sharing in God’s dominion, but further research needs to be completed when it comes to this theme in other books of the New Testament, especially Matthew and Revelation, to see if the other biblical authors hold this definition of “rest.” The implications of defining rest as a sharing with God in the dominion of his creation must also be evaluated throughout the Bible.

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