

## ENTERING GOD’S REST: READING PSALM 95:7–11 IN HEBREWS 3–4

GLENN JADE V. MARIANO

AUP, PHILIPPINES

### Abstract

The theme of Heb 3–4 is the promise of entering God’s rest. Psalm 95:7–11 is the basis of the exposition about exhortation and warning to enter His rest in Hebrews. The inner-biblical and Christological reading of Ps 95:7–11 in Hebrews exemplifies the spatial concept of entering God’s rest, making it more meaningful and relevant to the readers for their faithfulness, encouragement, hope, and realization of such rest today and hereafter. Studies about God’s rest in Hebrews have shown little agreement on the meaning, nature, and implications of “rest” (i.e., *κατάπαυσις* and *σαββατισμός*). This paper exegetically examines the connections between the believers entering God’s rest and Jesus entering the heavenly sanctuary to understand the promise of rest based on Ps 95:7–11 in Heb 3–4. Believers’ entering God’s rest and Jesus’s entering the heavenly sanctuary are closely connected, indicating that *κατάπαυσις* is God’s sanctuary. Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary through His blood and sat down at the right hand of God’s throne as their High Priest and King of the new covenant. To enter God’s rest is to enter His sanctuary. Entering His rest becomes possible through faith in Jesus, who is in God’s presence in the heavenly sanctuary where the believers can confidently worship God and find true rest, happiness, and salvation.

*Keywords:* Rest, entering, today, high priest, sanctuary, throne of grace, domain, covenant

## 1. Introduction

The problem of restlessness and suffering is universal. Many people lack rest and sleep. They suffer from fatigue, exhaustion, stress, sickness, and hospitalization.<sup>1</sup> They need physical and psychological rest, vital to their health and productivity.<sup>2</sup> Yet, from the biblical perspective, they need more than physical and psychological rest. Biblical rest has broader connotations: physical, psychological, temporal, spatial, and spiritual rest. Rest is God's gift for humanity. The creation Sabbath (Gen 2:1–4; cf. Exod 20:8–11) is foundational to all biblical rests. In Matt 11:28–29, Jesus invites wearied and burdened people from the legalistic Sabbath-keeping to come to Him to find and receive rest (ἀνάπαυσις, “rest”) in the context of Sabbath day of rest and salvation.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, the Book of Hebrews talks about the suffering and challenges of God's people. These Christians also face “great conflict of sufferings” (10:32) and “reproaches and tribulations” (v. 33). Thus, they are encouraged to stand firm in faith to be rewarded later (vv. 34–39), like the saints who patiently endure hardships but die in faith even without receiving His promises (11:4–40). Their spiritual journey on earth is full of challenges, which include suffering and death. In the early chapters (Heb 3–4), the Christians are also urged to enter God's rest (κατάπαυσις and σαββατισμός) and the seventh-day of rest is mentioned (4:4).<sup>4</sup> The author of Hebrews expounds that rest is a promise based on Ps 95:7–11. That promised rest is the

<sup>1</sup> Anna Green, “68 Percent of People Feel They Don't Get Enough Rest, Report Finds,” *Mental Floss* (2016), [https://dailystamina.com/blogs/news/no-rest-no-gain-why-resting-is-important-for-your-productivity](https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/86885/68-percent-people-feel-they-dont-get-enough-rest-report-finds#:~:text=A%20recent%20survey%20of%20more%20than%2018%2C000%20people,the%20broader%20impact%20of%20not%20getting%20enough%20rest; Nick Collins, “No Rest, No Gain: Why Resting Is Vital for Your Productivity,” <i>DailyStamina.com: Daily Activity and Energy</i> (2000), <a href=).

<sup>2</sup> “Why It's Important to Allow Yourself to Rest,” *INTEGRIS Health*, April 16, 2021, para. 3, <https://integrisk.com/resources/on-your-health/2021/april/why-its-important-to-allow-yourself-to-rest>.

<sup>3</sup> See discussion in Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Sabbath in the Gospel of Matthew: Part 1,” in *The Sabbath in the New Testament and in Theology: Implications for Christians in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Ekkehardt Mueller and Eike Mueller, *Biblical Research Institute Studies on the Biblical Sabbath* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2023), 2:17–22.

<sup>4</sup> The NT Greek text that is used in this paper is *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

focal point of discussion to provide hope, assurance, salvation, warning, and encouragement amid challenges in life among God's people.<sup>5</sup> It is the ultimate solution to the restlessness of humanity.

Entering the promise of rest is the theme of Heb 3–4. Some studies have dealt with God's rest in Heb 3–4 with various emphases, purposes, and methodologies that explain the meaning, nature, and implications of such rest (temporal and/or spatial sense) with present reality, already-not-yet tension, and/or future realization.<sup>6</sup> There are varied interpretations of the meanings of God's promised rest for His people in Heb 3–4 due to its lack of explicit explanation and insertion in the logical flow of the author's discussion about Jesus's superiority over the angels, Moses, Aaronic priests, sacrifice, etc.<sup>7</sup> George H. Guthrie succinctly outlines three theological interpretations of rest: (a) the eschatological resting place (perhaps the holiest place of the heavenly sanctuary) to be entered at the end of the age;<sup>8</sup> (b) the spiritual rest in connection to the seventh-day Sabbath that can be entered

<sup>5</sup> The words *ἐπαγγελία*, "promise" (4:1; 6:13, 15, 17; 11:9 [2x]); *ἐλπίς*, "hope" (3:6; 6:11, 18, 19; 10:23); and *ἄθλησις*, "struggle" (10:32) are also used in Hebrews.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., John Laansma, "'I Will Give You Rest': The Background and Significance of the Rest Motive in the New Testament," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46.2 (1995): 385–88; Andrew S. Kulikovskiy, "God's Rest in Hebrews 4:1–11," *CEN Technical Journal* 13.2 (1999): 61–2; Lee Irons, "Entering God's Rest by Faith: Realized Eschatology in Hebrews 3:7–4:11," unpublished article (2007): 1–36, [www.upper-register.com](http://www.upper-register.com); Jared C. Calaway, "Heavenly Sabbath, Heavenly Sanctuary: The Transformation of Priestly Sacred Space and Sacred Time in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the Epistle to the Hebrews" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2010), 329–63; Erhard H. Gallos, "*Κατάπαυσις* and *Σαββατισμός* in Hebrews 4" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2011), 62–63; José Adriano, "The Use of Ps 95:7b–11 and Genesis 2:2b in Hebrews 3–4," *Reflexus* 12.19 (2018): 299–315; Leonardo G. Nunes, "Function and Nature of the Heavenly Sanctuary/Temple and Its Earthly Counterparts in the New Testament Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles: A Motif Study of Major Passages" (PhD diss., Andrews University Theological Seminary, 2020), 335–50; Kevin L. Morgan, "*Sabbatismos* in Hebrews," unpublished article (2023): 1–13, [https://www.academia.edu/30335548/Sabbatismos\\_in\\_Hebrews\\_Updated\\_May\\_24\\_2023\\_](https://www.academia.edu/30335548/Sabbatismos_in_Hebrews_Updated_May_24_2023_).

<sup>7</sup> Like for example, Erhard H. Gallos contends that God's rest is the seventh-day Sabbath. He argues against other views on God's rest. He is not satisfied with the interpretation of rest "as justification and salvation, millennial kingdom, divine realm, entering the Most Holy Place, the cosmic pleroma, the new Day of Atonement, or the Calvary rest, nor does the symbolic soteriological process" (Gallos, "*Κατάπαυσις* and *Σαββατισμός*," 198).

<sup>8</sup> See Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to Hebrews*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 163–66.

by the believers at the present life;<sup>9</sup> and (c) the “already” and “not yet” rest which is an “entrance into the new covenant via the great Day of Atonement sacrifice of the great high priest, Jesus.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, there is little agreement on the topic of rest whether such “rest” is a temporal, spiritual, or spatial to be experienced/entered today and/or in the future.

This paper exegetically investigates the meaning of entering God's rest in Heb 3–4 in connection with Jesus's entering the heavenly sanctuary to elucidate the contextual meaning of *κατάπαυσις* and *σαββατισμός*. It proposes that entering God's rest is the same as Jesus's entering the heavenly sanctuary; namely, the promised rest in Heb 3–4 refers to the heavenly sanctuary—the resting place of God—that the believers can spiritually enter today and fully experience at the coming of Christ and beyond. To come up and validate the spatial concept of rest, it analyzes the setting of Ps 95:7–11 in Heb 3–4, which includes the discussion on Hebrews' addressees, theme and purpose, and usage and literary setting Ps 95 in Heb 3–4 to understand the historical and the literary backdrop of the study. It also examines the lexical, contextual, and theological meaning and nature of *κατάπαυσις* and *σαββατισμός* in Heb 3–4 to point out the relationship between believers' entering God's rest and Jesus's entering the heavenly sanctuary. Then, it concludes the study on entering divine rest with some theological implications.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2007), 2752. Gallos contends for this view of Sabbath rest. See Gallos, “Κατάπαυσις and Σαββατισμός.”

<sup>10</sup> Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 2753–54.

<sup>11</sup> This study utilizes the historical-biblical/grammatical method of exegesis. See Ekkehardt Mueller, “Guidelines for the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006), 1:111–34. The historical-biblical method is defined as “the attempt to understand the meaning of biblical data using methodological considerations arising from Scripture alone” (Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen [Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000], 12:94). This study also accepts the seven basic presuppositions of the historical-biblical method of exegesis: (a) “*sola Scriptura*,” (b) “the Bible is the ultimate authority,” (c) “suspension of the compelling principle of analogy,” (d) “suspension ... of the principle of correlation (or natural cause and effect),” (e) “unity of Scripture,” (f) “timeless nature” (i.e., “the message transcends the cultural settings as timeless truth”), and (g) “the Bible *equals* the Word of God” (Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation,” 12:94).

## 2. The Setting of Psalms 95:7–11 in Hebrews 3–4

This section discusses the historical and literary context of entering God's rest in Heb 3–4. It tackles the background of the recipients of the epistolary sermon<sup>12</sup> who are being exhorted to remain faithful to enter that rest. It also analyzes the purpose, theme, and literary setting of Ps 95:7–11 in Heb 3–4 and how divine rest is used in the same context.

### 2.1 Addressees of Hebrews

The author of Hebrews<sup>13</sup> sent his epistolary sermon (Book of Hebrews) to his intended readers in Rome, before AD 70. The title "Hebrews" is applied to Christians (Jews and Gentiles alike). In Heb 3–4, the recipients are juxtaposed with Israel as the new covenant church. They belonged to ὁ λαός τοῦ θεοῦ, "the people of God" (i.e., Israel, 4:9),<sup>14</sup> namely, His οἶκος, "house" (3:6). He exhorted and called them as ἀδελφοὶ (ἄγιοι), "(holy) brethren" (3:1, 12; 10:19; 13:22). Also, the word ἐκκλησία, "congregation, assembly, church" which only occurs in Heb 2:12 and 12:23 is applied and related to these

<sup>12</sup> There is no consensus on the literary genre of Hebrews among biblical scholars. This paper purports the idea that Hebrews is an epistolary sermon. Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough designate the book as a "Sermonic Epistle" to describe its two combined aspects of literary genre (i.e., sermon and epistle) (Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013], 330). On the other hand, Craig S. Keener designates the book as a "letter-essay" — "a written homily or sermon" (Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014], 638).

<sup>13</sup> This paper assumes Pauline authorship of Hebrews with the idea of having an amanuensis such as Luke or other possible writer who was directly connected to Paul. See the various views and discussions on the authorship of Hebrews in, e.g., David L. Allen, *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 8 (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010); David Alan Black, *The Authorship of Hebrews: The Case for Paul* (Gonzalez, FL: Energion, 2013); Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 637.

<sup>14</sup> Gallos contends, "The best reasons seem to support a mixed ethnic background.... The author calls the ancestors — 'fathers' rather than 'our fathers.' The epistle never mentions Jews or Christians, the Temple or circumcision, never makes negative references to Jews or Gentiles, and refrains from divisive references to Jews or Gentiles. The important group to belong to is the λαός of God. If credibility is attributed to R. Brown, then all types of Christianity were a mixture of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts" (Gallos, "Κατάπανσις and Σαββατισμός," 62–63).

brethren. These intended recipients of Hebrews, suffering from tribulations (10:32–33), were exhorted to enter God's rest.

## 2.2 Purpose and Theme of Hebrews

The Book of Hebrews aims to exhort and warn the readers against apostasy in returning to the Jewish temple ritual system that would compromise their Christian confession (see 6:4–8; 10:26–31; 12:2–4, 13, 15–19).<sup>15</sup> Their Christian faith was seriously challenged and undermined by that apostasy (5:11–14; 6:12; 10:25; 12:1–2). Their faith in Christ and His work of salvation was waning, and they were attracted to return to the first covenant cultic system administered by the Levitical priesthood (see chs. 7–10).

The first covenant system was fulfilled when Jesus inaugurated the new covenant and its new ritual system (chs. 8–10) through His death, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement as the High Priest, Mediator, and King.<sup>16</sup> The concept of the cessation of the first covenant is perceived as typological fulfillment. The author exhorted the readers to remain faithful to Christ and His new covenant with its Christ-centered ritual system. Such faithfulness is a prerequisite to entering God's rest for it is explicitly envisaged in the context of Jesus's high priesthood in Heb 3–4 (3:1–6 and 4:14–16).<sup>17</sup>

## 2.3 Usage and Setting of Psalm 95:7–11 in Hebrews 3–4

### 2.3.1 *The Usage of Psalms 95:7–11 in Hebrews 3–4*

The Book of Hebrews surpasses other NT books concerning its direct and indirect quotations of the OT. Among the OT books, the Book of Psalms is often cited and used in the Book of Hebrews as well as in the books of Ro-

<sup>15</sup> See Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews*, NICBC (Peabody, MA: Henrickson, 1990), 11; Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2018), 445.

<sup>16</sup> See Felix H. Cortez, "'The Anchor of the Soul That Enters Within the Veil': The Ascension of the 'Son' in the Letter to the Hebrews" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2008), 324–426.

<sup>17</sup> Some words like πιστός/πίστις (3:2, 5; 4:2), παρηγσία (3:6), σκληρύνω (3:8, 13, 15), παραπικρασμός (3:8, 16; 4:), πλανάω (3:10), ἀπιστία (3:12, 19; 4:11), υπόστασις (3:14), and ἀπειθέω (3:18) are used in connection to the spiritual status of the believers in Hebrews.

mans and 1 Corinthians.<sup>18</sup> In Hebrews, “about one-third of the direct quotations are drawn from the book of Psalms.”<sup>19</sup> Simon Kistemaker states,

It is apparent that in the first century A.D. the writers of the NT Scriptures, as well as Clement of Rome, used the Psalter not only for substantiating ideas, but—what seems even more important—for citing something which was familiar to the eyes and ears of the readers and hearers of their letters.<sup>20</sup>

Hence, the inner-biblical (or intertextual) analysis<sup>21</sup> of Ps 95:7–11 in the context of Hebrews is inevitable and noteworthy in discovering hope and assurance for the Christians today. Psalm 95:7–11 is quoted in Heb 3:7b–11. Then, some of the verses are requoted in Heb 3:13, 15 (v. 7); 4:3b, 5 (v. 11), and 7 (vv. 7–8). The first and the last verses are often quoted in Heb 3–4 as the author emphasizes listening and avoiding the hardening of the hearts by unbelief to enter God’s rest.

<sup>18</sup> Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1961), 13–14.

<sup>19</sup> Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 14. Here is the citation list of the Book of Psalms in Hebrews: Ps 2:7 in Heb 1:5; Ps 97:7 in Heb 1:6; Ps 104:4 in Heb 1:7; Ps 45:6–9 in Heb 1:8–9; Ps 102:25–27 in Heb 1:10–12; Ps 110:1 in Heb 1:13; Ps 8:4–6 in Heb 2:6–8; Ps 22:22 in Heb 2:12; Ps 95:7–11 in Heb 3:7–11; Ps 95:7 in Heb 3:13; Ps 95:7–8 in Heb 3:15; Ps 95:11 in Heb 4:3, 5; Ps 95:7–8 in Heb 4:7; Ps 2:7 in Heb 5:5; Ps 110:4 in Heb 5:6; Ps 110:4 in Heb 7:17; Ps 110:4 in Heb 7:21; Ps 40:6–8 in Heb 10:5–9; Ps 118:6 in Heb 13:6. Here are the passages of Psalms that are often quoted in Hebrews (twice or more): 2:7; 8:4–6; 22:22; 40:6–8; 45:6–9; 95:7–11; 97:7; 102:25–27; 104:4; 110:1, 4; 118:6.

<sup>20</sup> Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> “Inner-biblical hermeneutics” is “the use of earlier Scripture by later Bible writers” (Richard M. Davidson, “Inner-Biblical Hermeneutics: The Use of Scripture by Bible Writers,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach*, ed. Frank M. Hasel [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2020], 3:235). “Intertextuality” is another related term that is used in biblical interpretations. It is originally a secular term used by Julia Kristeva in her secular literary analysis. In 1989, however, the term was redefined and has been used in biblical studies regarding reusing the OT passages in the NT context (Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006], 674). Hence, this study uses both terms (“inner-biblical hermeneutics” and “intertextuality”) interchangeably in analyzing the relationship between the OT and the NT. See further discussion of inner-biblical hermeneutics and intertextuality in Ganoune Diop, “Innerbiblical Interpretation: Reading the Scriptures Intertextually,” in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), 1:135–51.

### 2.3.2 *The Literary Setting of Psalm 95:7–11*

Psalm 95 (Ps 94, LXX) is called a “royal thanksgiving psalm.”<sup>22</sup> The chapter is a worship setting, a “cultic-liturgical service.”<sup>23</sup> William L. Lane explains that this chapter is used for worship service. He states, “The liturgical use of Ps 95 as a preamble to synagogue services on Friday evening and Sabbath morning is well established.”<sup>24</sup> Psalm 95 has two sections: vv. 1–7c (a celebratory song of exhortation) and vv. 7d–11 (Yahweh’s response to the community of the psalmist).<sup>25</sup> In the first section, David (author, Heb 4:7) invites God’s people to come before His presence to joyfully sing, praise, and worship Him with thanksgiving, for He is the Savior, God, King, Creator, and Shepherd. In particular, the section has two main invitation commands (וָּבֹא/δεῦτε, “come” in vv. 1 and 2) followed by a series of exhortatory commands (“Let us ...”) under each main invitation with reasons. Structurally, the section consists of two sequences, but they are not repetitive:

Exhortation (vv. 1–2)

Reasons (vv. 3–5)

Exhortation (v. 6)

Reasons (v. 7a–c)<sup>26</sup>

Hence, the Psalmist’s exhortative invitation is to come to the presence of the Lord God and serve Him as He is the Savior, God, King, Creator, and Shepherd.

In the latter and direct discourse section (Ps 95:7d–11), God is the speaker. Yahweh’s response to the praise of His people is a prophetic word, and thus, it is called “prophetic liturgy.”<sup>27</sup> It has three movements: (a) the exhortation not to harden hearts (vv. 7d–8); (b) the exhortation that provides an example or illustration (vv. 9–10); and (c) the reminder to the community about divine judgment on the rebellious people (v. 11).<sup>28</sup> This section is both a warning and an exhortation concerning the Exodus experience for the exilic people who were looking forward to returning to the promised land.

<sup>22</sup> Martin G. Klingbeil, “Psalms,” *Andrews Bible Commentary (Old Testament)*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2020), 723.

<sup>23</sup> Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 2736.

<sup>24</sup> William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, WBC 47A (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 757.

<sup>25</sup> Klingbeil, “Psalms,” 723; Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 2736.

<sup>26</sup> John Goldingay, *Psalms: Psalms 90–150*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 3:127.

<sup>27</sup> Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 2737.

<sup>28</sup> Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 2737.



God is portrayed here as the Shepherd who guided their ancestors during their 40 year-Exodus toward the land of Canaan. Yet, they hardened their hearts at Meribah and Massah (v. 8; cf. Exod 17:7; Num 20:13) by their unbelief. Hence, in His anger, God did not let them enter the promised land.<sup>29</sup>

Also, the concept of creation and re-creation is evident in Ps 95 (e.g., the creation of the earth, hills, sea, and people, vv. 4–6).<sup>30</sup> “Hebrews 4 uses this psalm and issues a similar warning to hear His voice ‘today’ (v. 7c; cf. Heb. 4:7–8). The promise of the Sabbath rest still remains today.”<sup>31</sup> The author intends to apply the OT passage to the readers of Hebrews, as pilgrims toward the heavenly rest, which corresponds to the pilgrim Israelites toward the promised land.<sup>32</sup>

In sum, Ps 95:1–7c provides the immediate context of Ps 95:7d–11 that is quoted in Heb 3:7–11. The concept of liturgy and worship exhorts the community to come to the presence of God. In Ps 95:7d–11, God warns and exhorts His people to listen to His voice *σήμερον*, “today” and not to harden their hearts against entering His rest. The invitation to God’s presence to worship Him and to enter His rest is closely related based on Ps 95.

### 2.3.3 *The Context of Hebrews 3–4*

The context of Heb 3–4 is connected to the faithfulness and high priesthood of Jesus, “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” (3:1). Jesus’s divinity and kingship (ch. 1) are not only presented in Hebrews but also the superiority of His high priesthood and ministry—the high priest of the new covenant in the order of Melchizedek (chs. 5–7)—and His self-sacrificing act for the forgiveness of sins (chs. 9–10). Such supremacy is the arching theme of Hebrews—“the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as revealer and as mediator of God’s grace.”<sup>33</sup> That is expounded in the book’s central section (8:1–10:18), which is “the heart of the Christological exposition.”<sup>34</sup> The exposition is “the effective sacrifice of the Son as high priest.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Klingbeil, “Psalms,” 723.

<sup>30</sup> See further discussion in Filho, “Hebrews and the Scriptures,” 301–4.

<sup>31</sup> Klingbeil, “Psalms,” 723.

<sup>32</sup> See Filho, “Hebrews and the Scriptures,” 301, 307–8.

<sup>33</sup> See “Theme and Message” in the introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews in NASB (Updated 1995), 1148.

<sup>34</sup> Attridge, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 216; also Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 257–58; Cockerill, “Structure and Interpretation in Hebrews,” 179; O’Brien, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 286.

<sup>35</sup> O’Brien, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 286.

Jesus's sufficient sacrifice and high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary which are predominantly expressed in the central section of Hebrews.<sup>36</sup> The new covenant theme underscores Christ's supremacy.<sup>37</sup>

Hebrews 3–4 is also an integral part of the new covenant theme that deals with the renewal of God's original covenant relationship, promises, and precepts intended for His people for eternity which are being facilitated by the new and perfect ritual system of Jesus Christ the high priest, sacrifice, and mediator of the new covenant.<sup>38</sup>

The section is a theological explanation about faithfulness to enter the promise of rest based on the faithfulness of Jesus, who is mentioned as the "merciful and faithful High Priest" (2:17), "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (3:1), and "a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens" (4:14). Structurally and linguistically, the high priesthood of Jesus serves as the *inclusio*, bracketing the concept of entering God's rest in Ps 95 that is expounded in Heb 3–4. Thus, the exhortation and warning to enter God's rest and the meaning of rest should be understood in the context of Jesus's high priesthood and ministry in the heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews. This concept is elaborated on in the next sections of this paper.

<sup>36</sup> Glenn Jade V. Mariano, "The Newness of the New Covenant: An Exegetical-Intertextual Study of Hebrews 8:7–13" (PhD diss., Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, 2019), 100. Linguistically, the majority (13) of the seventeen occurrences of the term *διαθήκη* in Hebrews appear in its central section (chs. 8–10). David Mark Heath explains the difference between climax, peak, and apex: "Climax as 'the central action of a narrative account,' peak as a high point in 'the main theme of an exposition or exhortation,' and apex as a high point in 'the development of the author's feelings and intensity of emotive expression'" (David Mark Heath, "Chiastic Structures in Hebrews: A Study of Form and Function in Biblical Discourse" [PhD diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2011], 333).

<sup>37</sup> The covenant (old/new) has two main dimensions: moral (legal) and ritual (cultic and liturgical) (Scott W. Hahn, "A Broken Covenant and the Curse of Death: A Study of Hebrews 9:15–22," *CBQ* 66, no. 3 [2004]: 423). The moral dimension deals with the promise and the core principles of the covenant regarding the (a) laws of God to be placed in the hearts, (b) lordship and ownership, (c) knowledge of God, and (d) divine forgiveness for His covenant people (see Jer 31:33–34; Heb 8:10–12). This aspect of the covenant is unchanging and continues from the old to the new covenant. The ritual dimension deals with the priesthood, ritual systems, and sanctuary and its services with typological nature from the old covenant to the new covenant. Its role is to actualize and fulfill the moral dimension. Under the new covenant, Jesus takes the place of the old covenant's priesthood, sacrifices, and services in the real sanctuary (8:1–6). See the discussion of moral and ritual dimensions in Mariano, "Newness of the New Covenant," 138–41.

<sup>38</sup> Mariano, "Newness of the New Covenant," Abstract.

### 2.3.4 Psalm 95:7–11 in the Structure of Hebrews 3–4

Several scholars proposed various structures of Hebrews.<sup>39</sup> Hebrews 4:14–16 and 10:19–25 are the two pillars of the book’s structure (exposition). Jesus, the faithful and great high priest, has gone into heaven or entered into the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>40</sup>

Also, Hebrews’ pattern of combining theological exposition with application or exhortation is evident. There are five major sections of the exhortation/application. David J. MacLeod explains, “Any presentation of the author’s argument must make clear that his expositions lead to exhortations in five major sections (2:1–4; 3:1–4:16; 5:11–6:20; 10:19–39; 12:1–29).”<sup>41</sup> So, Ps 95:7d–11 is discussed in the second exhortation section of Hebrews, which is about Jesus the faithful high priest, and the promise of entering God’s rest (3:1–4:16). Hebrews 3–4 can be outlined with ABA’ structure:<sup>42</sup>

A—Jesus—Faithful High Priest and Apostle (3:1–6)

B—Promise of Entering God’s Rest “Today” (3:7–4:13)

A’—Jesus—Compassionate High Priest and Son of God (4:14–16)

<sup>39</sup> See proposed structures of Hebrews presented in, e.g., Albert Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Subsidia Biblica 12 (Italy, Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1989), 18–42; Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 39–40; O’Brien, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 34; Heath, “Chiastic Structures in Hebrews,” 330–31; David J. MacLeod, “The Literary Structure of the Book of Hebrews,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989):197.

<sup>40</sup> See George H. Guthrie, *The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews*, ePub ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 44–45, 63–73; O’Brien, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 30–1.

<sup>41</sup> MacLeod, “Literary Structure,” 197.

<sup>42</sup> Hebrews 3–4 is logically, thematically, linguistically, and structurally divided by the inferential conjunctions ὅθεν, “therefore” (3:1); διό, “therefore,” “wherefore” (3:7); and οὕτως, “therefore,” “thus” (4:1, 11, 14). Noticeably, the author presents an idea, expounds it with the supporting OT passage(s), and concludes. Then, from that conclusion, he introduces and expounds on another topic, like a string attachment. In other words, the author logically and stylistically presents Jesus’s supremacy with various themes, and yet they are connected. This is the case with Heb 3–4. Hebrews 3:1–6 (with an inferential conjunction ὅθεν, 3:1) is built from chs. 1:1–2:14–18. Hebrews 5:1–10 is the explanation (with an explanatory conj. γάρ, v. 1) of the great high priest in Heb 4:14–16 (οὕτως, v. 14), which is a conclusion of Heb 4:11–13 (οὕτως, v. 11), etc. The linguistic and thematic parallelism between section A and section A’ is also evident concerning the confession (ὁμολογίας) about Jesus: “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession [ὁμολογίας], Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him [God]” (3:1) and “we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession [ὁμολογίας]” (4:14, NKJV).

Sections A and A' serve as the *inclusio* to form a literary unit of Heb 3–4. Both sections begin and end with the *inclusio* markers: “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς, 3:1 and 4:14), “high priest” (ἀρχιερέα, 3:1, 4:14–15), “confession” (ὁμολογίας, 3:1 and 4:14), and “confidence” (παρησίας, 3:6 and 4:16).<sup>43</sup> The author builds up his argument on God’s rest based on the faithfulness of Jesus as the High Priest and Apostle (A, 3:1–6), which is the conclusion of the preceding passage (2:17–18). Since Jesus is more faithful than Moses over God’s house/people, the author exhorts and warns his brethren to remain faithful to enter His rest “today.” At the same time, it is still available lest they become like the ancient Israel who did not enter His rest because of their unfaithfulness.

Section B is the literary unit of Heb 3–4 that expounds the concept of entering God’s rest in Ps 95:7c–11 that calls to faithfulness and avoid unbelief. God’s promised rest is available even “today” (3:7–4:13). It has three logical parts: (a) exhortation to enter God’s rest “today” (3:7–19), (b) entering the remaining promised rest by faith “today” in connection to the seventh-day Sabbath (4:1–10), and (c) final exhortation to strive to enter His rest for the word of God is powerful (4:11–13).

The author quotes the OT passage in connection to the preceding statement: “But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end” (Heb 3:6).<sup>44</sup> When he quotes the passage, he explicitly introduces that it is the Holy Spirit who speaks it (v. 7a). He exhorts and warns the readers about departing from God through unbelief (that causes rebellion) and tells them to exhort one another while it is still “today” (vv. 12–14). Again, he cites Ps 95:7d–8 in v. 15: “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked me.” Then, he explains those who did not enter God’s rest because of unbelief and disobedience (vv. 16–19).

Next, the author concludes and explains that there remains a promise of rest for God’s people (4:1, 9). He exemplifies and qualifies the available nature and meaning of rest in connection to the first seventh-day creation week when God Himself rested from His works (quoting Gen 2:2 in Heb 4:4b) that the people who enter it should also rest from their labor (C, 4:1–10). In this section, he quotes the final verse (Ps 95:11) in 4:3b and 4:4c as he

<sup>43</sup> See further discussion about *inclusios* in Hebrews in MacLeod, “Literary Structure of the Book of Hebrews,” 187–88. Others scholars also see the same *inclusio* in Heb 3–4 as discussed in, e.g., Nunes, “Function and Nature of the Heavenly Sanctuary,” 338–40.

<sup>44</sup> Unless otherwise cited, all quoted scriptural texts are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB95).

explains the remaining promise to enter that rest. Again, he quotes Ps 95:7c–8a in 4:7 about “today,” indicating another chance to enter His rest. This time, he mentions *σαββατισμός* that it is still available for God’s people (v. 9). As they enter it, they should rest as God rested from His works (v. 10). Then, he exhorts the readers to be diligent to enter *κατάπαυσις* so that no one will fall “through following the same example of disobedience” (v. 11); for God’s word is powerful and no one can hide from His sight (vv. 12–13). Finally, in the inferential remarks (A’, 4:14–16), he encourages them to hold fast their confession because they “have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens” (v. 14). “To hold fast our confession [*ὁμολογίας*]” (v. 14) is connected to “Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our [*ὁμολογίας*]” in 3:1 (A, 3:1–6). Hence, entering God’s rest is bracketed by the confession regarding Jesus the faithful High Priest “who has passed through the heavens,” namely, the heavenly sanctuary which is elaborately explained later in Hebrews (as well as in this paper) (see 6:19; 9:11–12, 24).

The use of Ps 95:7c–11 in Heb 3–4 seems to be intentionally inserted to elaborate, exhort, and warn the readers to remain faithful in their confession of faith about Jesus, the faithful and great High Priest who entered the heavens (sections A [3:1] and A’ [4:14]) to enter God’s rest (section B). The logical flow of the discussion about Jesus’s high priesthood from Heb 2:17–3:6 to Heb 4:14–16 is still clear even without the exposition of Ps 95 in Heb 3:7–4:13. Christ’s superior high priesthood, sufficient sacrifice, and intercessory ministry in the heavenly sanctuary before God’s presence are expounded in Heb 5:1–10:39. Since Heb 3:7–4:13 is stated, the concept of entering God’s rest must be understood in the light of Jesus, the faithful and obedient High Priest, who entered the heavens, namely, the heavenly sanctuary, who is now before God’s throne of grace for His people (4:14, 16; cf. 9:11–12, 24). Likewise, the faithful and obedient enter God’s rest. Thus, entering God’s rest and entering the heavenly sanctuary is equated. And the believer/fairful is called to enter the heavenly sanctuary, the throne of God, and find rest.

Hence, the following section discusses the concept of entering God’s rest as His dwelling place (His throne and sanctuary—His domain) about Jesus’s entering the presence of God in the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>45</sup> His rest in

<sup>45</sup> Some studies have already argued that God’s *κατάπαυσις* in Hebrews is related or equated with the heavenly sanctuary or God’s throne/presence (i.e., resting place), for example, O’Brien, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 163–64; Calaway, “Heavenly Sabbath, Heavenly Sanctuary,” 329–63; Nunes, “Function and Nature of the Heavenly Sanctuary,” 338–50.

Heb 4:1–11 is not only a state of being saved (“the bliss of salvation”<sup>46</sup>), resting on the Sabbath day, or eschatological rest. It is more on His dwelling place where the people can enter His presence by faith in Jesus, who entered the heavenly sanctuary by His blood and sat at the right hand of the Majesty (8:1; 9:12, 24) on His throne of grace (4:16) to find real rest, mercy, grace, hope, and happiness now and in the future to come. The logical flow of the author’s exposition is in line with Christ as King, Priest, and Mediator who entered the sanctuary.

### 3. Meaning and Nature of Entering God’s Rest

#### 3.1 Meaning of Rest

In the NT, the Greek noun *κατάπαυσις* is mentioned eight times in Hebrews (3:11, 18; 4:1, 3 [2x], 5, 10, 11) and once in Acts 7:49. The word *κατάπαυσις* is mentioned in Ps 95:11 (εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου, “they shall not enter My rest,” NKJV) that is quoted in Heb 3:11; 4:3, 5. Its other usages are part of the author’s explanation of rest in the passage (3:18; 4:1, 3, 10–11). All these occurrences of *κατάπαυσις* refer to God’s rest. The Greek verb *καταπαύω*, “to cease,” “to (give) rest” (*κατέπαυσεν* [aorist, active, indicative, 3rd person, sing.], “he rested”) is used thrice in Heb 4 (vv. 4, 8, 10) in conjunction to God’s rest: God rested on the Creation Sabbath (v. 4), Joshua could not provide rest to the people, and that is why God speaks of “another day” (v. 8) which is “today,” and those who entered God’s rest should rest from their labor (v. 10) as He did.

Lexically, *κατάπαυσις* (and *καταπαύω*) has two shades of meanings.<sup>47</sup> First, it is the state of cessation of work: “to cease one’s work or activity, resulting in a period of rest—‘to rest, to cease from work.’”<sup>48</sup> Second, it is a place of rest: a metaphor or typology of “the heavenly dwelling of God, which God

<sup>46</sup> William G. Johnsson, “Hebrews,” *Andrews Bible Commentary (New Testament)*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2020), 1831.

<sup>47</sup> They are “state of cessation of work or activity” and “place of rest” (Bauer, BDAG, 3rd ed., s.v. “κατάπαυσις”).

<sup>48</sup> Louw and Nida, *GELNT*, s.v. “καταπαύω; καταπαυσις, εως” (para. 1). Moreover, “καταπαύω and κατάπαυσις appear to differ in meaning from ἀναπαύομαι and ἀνάπαυσις (23.80) in that the emphasis of καταπαύω and κατάπαυσις is more upon the cessation of activity resulting in rest rather than upon the mere restorative character of rest” (Louw and Nida, *GELNT*, s.v. καταπαύω; καταπαυσις, εως” [para. 1]).

has appointed as the eschatological resting place (cf. Jos. As. 8:9) for his people.<sup>49</sup> This second meaning of *κατάπαυσις* as a place of rest is attested in Acts 7:49d (quoting Isa 66:1–2) in the context of Solomon building the temple for God. The passage mentions the resting place of God (ἢ τίς τόπος τῆς καταπαύσεώς μου; “or what is the place of My rest?”), which parallels His heavenly sanctuary/throne (ὁ οὐρανός μοι θρόνος, “the heaven is My throne,” v. 49a).<sup>50</sup>

Some scholars interpret *κατάπαυσις* analogously with *σαββατισμός*, “sabbath rest, sabbath observance”<sup>51</sup> (that only appears once in Heb 4:9). The word *σαββατισμός* qualifies the meaning of *κατάπαυσις* as “Sabbath-like rest”<sup>52</sup> in literal and spiritual senses. Erhard H. Gallos, who interprets God’s rest in Heb 3–4 as the seventh-day Sabbath, argues that “the substitution of *σαββατισμός* for *κατάπαυσις* is meant to define more precisely the character of the rest promised to the people of God.”<sup>53</sup> Jared C. Calaway interprets *κατάπαυσις* as the promised land (space, based on Ps 95), the seventh-day Sabbath (sacred time) of creation (Heb 4:4; cf. Gen 2:2), and the heavenly sanctuary (sacred place/heavenly Sabbath) to be entered at the end of time.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> O. Hofius, “κατάπαυσις,” *EDNT* 2:265.

<sup>50</sup> In his dissertation, Gallos argues, favoring that rest is the creation Sabbath, that no connection between the heavenly city and rest (*καταπαυσις*) is documented in Hebrews (Gallos, “Κατάπαυσις and Σαββατισμός in Hebrews 4,” 192, 198). For him, the rest in Heb 3–4 does not refer to the heavenly place/sanctuary.

<sup>51</sup> Bauer, BDAG, s.v. “σαββατισμός.” Arguably, it is used figuratively in Heb 4:9 as “a special period of rest for God’s people modeled after the traditional sabbath” (Bauer, BDAG, s.v. “σαββατισμός”).

<sup>52</sup> Johnsson, “Hebrews,” 1832; Gallos, “Κατάπαυσις and Σαββατισμός,” 219.

<sup>53</sup> Gallos, “Κατάπαυσις and Σαββατισμός,” 219. See also Gallos’s updated version of his Sabbath rest concept in Erhard H. Gallos, “Sabbath Rest in Hebrews 4,” in *The Sabbath in the New Testament and in Theology: Implications for Christians in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Ekkehardt Mueller and Eike Mueller, *Biblical Research Institute Studies on the Biblical Sabbath* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2023), 2:173–214.

<sup>54</sup> Calaway argues that the author of Hebrews is changing the meaning of *κατάπαυσις* from the promised land (Canaan) in Ps 95 to the seventh-day Sabbath in Heb 3–4 (from space to temporal), that again is understood as the heavenly home/Sanctuary. So, the Sabbath (*κατάπαυσις* and *σαββατισμός*), for him, has a multifaceted meaning. Yet, he emphasizes the creation Sabbath, the one that the wilderness generation failed to enter, that is transformed into the “Today”—the inaugurated age or “day of the Lord” (judgment day), “new Day of Atonement,” and/or sanctuary Sabbath. Neither unfaithful and faithful have not entered it, since it is a future reality. See Calaway, “Heavenly Sabbath, Heavenly Sanctuary,” 329–63. However, this paper argues that *κατάπαυσις* consistently refers to God’s resting place. And *σαββατισμός* refers to the qualitative nature of rest in God’s resting place—the heavenly sanctuary.

He concludes that, "For Hebrews, the Sabbath and the sanctuary become equivalent expressions to enter heavenly life. In both, this spatiotemporal coordination allowed one presently to enter the heavenly realm and approach the enthroned God of creation."<sup>55</sup>

Leonardo G. Nunes purports Calaway's spatiotemporal interpretation of rest in Hebrews. He points out that God's rest is connected to the Sabbath, heavenly sanctuary, and salvation. Unlike Calaway's future reality view, when the believers enter God's rest (now), they are entering the heavenly sanctuary. Nunes concludes that, in Heb 4:14–16, the sanctuary, Sabbath, and salvation meet.<sup>56</sup>

The context determines the meaning of *κατάπαυσις* with *σαββατισμός* in Heb 3–4. O. Hofius explains,

In Heb 4:9 *σαββατισμός* encompasses both sabbath rest and (cultic) sabbath observance. The word is neither identical in meaning nor interchangeable with a *κατάπαυσις* (3:11, 18; 4:1, 3, 5, 10f.); it designates more closely what the people of God should expect when they enter the *κατάπαυσις* of God (cf. 4:9 with v. 6a).... Accordingly, the author of Hebrews understands by *σαββατισμός* the eternal sabbath celebration of salvation, i.e., the perfected community's worship before God's throne.<sup>57</sup>

The word *κατάπαυσις* is closely related to a place of rest, particularly the dwelling place of God—His throne of grace or heavenly sanctuary in general (cf. Isa 66:1–2; Acts 7:49). Peter T. O'Brien explains the distinction between *κατάπαυσις* and *σαββατισμός*: "The resting place (*katapausis*) they are to enter is God's own, where he celebrates his sabbath rest (*sabbatismos*). Together the two terms describe both a place and a state."<sup>58</sup> So, God's rest is the center of worship and praise (cf. Ps 95:1–7). The heavenly dwelling place of God is the ultimate destination of His people where they can finally celebrate the festive Sabbath (*σαββατισμός*).<sup>59</sup> The next section further explain this spatial concept of God's rest.

<sup>55</sup> Calaway, "Heavenly Sabbath, Heavenly Sanctuary," Abstract.

<sup>56</sup> See the discussion of the Sanctuary, *κατάπαυσις*, and Sabbath in Nunes, "Function and Nature of the Sanctuary," 341–50.

<sup>57</sup> O. Hofius, "σαββατισμός," *EDNT*, 3:219.

<sup>58</sup> O'Brien, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 171.

<sup>59</sup> The Sabbath (temporal) and its observance portray the foretaste of heaven where God is. The Sabbath is a means that brings His people to a close fellowship with God and with one another before the throne of grace as they worship Him in Spirit and truth by faith on a weekly basis. In that sense, His people enter His presence sitting on His throne in the heavenly sanctuary where they find joy, peace, and rest as they gather



## 3.2 Entering God's Rest

### 3.2.1 *The Subject of Entering God's Rest*

The main topic of Heb 3–4 is not *κατάπαυσις* in itself. The promise focuses on *entering* God's rest. The lexeme *Σήμερον* and the *entering* into *κατάπαυσις* are the emphases in Heb 3–4. These two complementing subjects in the quotation (first and last verses/phrases) are often repeated in Heb 3–4 as the author discusses the entering to God's rest: *σήμερον* (5x—3:7, 13, 15; 4:7 [2x]) and entrance into the *κατάπαυσις* (8x—3:11, 18; 4:1, 3 [2x], 5, 10, 11). The meaning of *σήμερον* is "God's eternal now, not to be shunted aside for a more 'convenient' time (Acts 24:25). It denotes urgency—a challenge for immediate consideration and response."<sup>60</sup> It does not refer to a specific day of the week, like the Sabbath day. It relates to every day ("from day to day" or "daily") of encouraging each other to refrain from hardening the believers' hearts (3:13) and be able to enter God's rest by faith any time as long as it is "today" (3:18–19; 4:7–8).

The emphasis on entering God's rest is now ("today"). This present entrance into His rest denotes a spiritual entrance. The future reality of entering that rest depends on this present reality ("today") of entering it ("let us be diligent to enter that rest," 4:11). In short, only the faithful can enter His rest now (4:3) and finally enter His rest in the future, while the unfaithful will never enter it because of unbelief (cf. 3:19, 4:1 6). So, entering His promised rest is a process that begins today and will continue until its full realization.

Suppose God's rest refers mainly to the seventh-day Sabbath (temporal) in Ps 95 and Heb 3–4. Entering His rest is only possible every Sabbath day, namely, a believer can only enter His rest once a week (which is contradictory to a daily admonition, 3:13). Since the Sabbath law had been implemented at Sinai until they had settled in Canaan, the Israelites should have already entered or experienced such rest. Even during the NT times, Jews and Christians were keeping the Sabbath religiously; they should have already entered it; and it should not be the main issue in Heb 3–4. However,

and worship on the Sabbath day. Yet the ultimate realization of His rest is yet to come when the people finally gather before His throne of grace in the heavenly sanctuary. Entering His throne now is possible by faith in Jesus because He, as their representative and mediator, entered it by His blood.

<sup>60</sup> Johnsson, "Hebrews," 1830.

God said that they did not enter it, and there is still a promised rest to be entered. Contextually, God's *κατάπαυσις* is not the Sabbath day itself.<sup>61</sup>

Since David mentioned it 500 years after entering the promised land of Canaan, the expression "today" denotes a timeless day or daily (3:13), an unspecified day of the week. "Today" is a day of urgency, exhortation, repentance, faithfulness, and opportunity to enter His rest. It remains open for His people to enter it by faith and cease their unrighteous works in His presence (4:1–11).<sup>62</sup> Therefore, God's rest refers to something beyond Canaan and "the seventh-day" in Heb 3–4. Yet, the essence of *κατάπαυσις* is illustratively connected to the Sabbath day, especially in the sense of God's cessation from His creation (4:4; cf. Gen 2:2).<sup>63</sup> In other words, the Sabbath day is complementary to God's resting place, where the believers can find *σαβατισμός* in His presence.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> See further argument in "Rest" [Heb 4:9], *SDABC* 7:423. This commentary interprets God's rest as a "spiritual rest," supporting Ellen G. White's interpretation of a remaining rest as "the rest of grace" or "the true rest of faith" ("Rest" [Heb 4:9], *SDABC* 7:423).

<sup>62</sup> Contextually, the meaning of "rested from his works" (v. 10) may refer to the works of unrighteousness as the opposite of the works of righteousness. Johnsson puts it this way: "That is, works (labors) are the antithesis of the way of faith; they are the result of a rebellious, wicked heart of unbelief that has been hardened through sin's deceptiveness (3:16), a heart of disobedience (3:18; 4:6, 11) and unfaithfulness." See Johnsson, "Hebrews," 1831.

<sup>63</sup> The *SDABC* explains that "God's resting on the seventh day of creation week is used, in an illustrative sense, of the 'rest' into which God would have Christians enter" ("Rest" [Heb 3:11], *SDABC* 7:414). The "Sabbath rest" is used in a metaphorical sense that represents salvation in Christ with an eschatological fulfillment. Yet, it does not mean that the Sabbath day is already abrogated but it upholds it. See discussion in Kenneth A. Strand, "The Sabbath," in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2001), 506–7.

<sup>64</sup> The temporal Sabbath and its observance portray the foretaste of heaven, where God is. The Sabbath is a means that brings His people to a close fellowship with Him and with one another before the throne of grace as they rest and worship Him in Spirit and truth by faith weekly. In that sense, His people enter His presence, sitting on His throne in the heavenly sanctuary where they find joy, peace, and rest. The ultimate realization of His rest is yet to come when the people finally gather before His throne of grace in the heavenly sanctuary. Yet, entering His throne "today" is possible by faith in Jesus that can be accessed any time, not just limited to a weekly Sabbath, because He, as their representative and mediator, entered it by His blood that transcends human time and space. The exhortation "let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" (Heb 4:16; cf. 10:22) is anytime since Jesus has entered the sanctuary, sat on God's throne, and opened access to it for the worshipers (8:1–2; 9:11–15; 10:19–25).

Moreover, the concept of spatial and spiritual rest (i.e., God's presence or dwelling place) is also embedded in the warning statement in Heb 3:12: ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζῶντος, "to fall away from [ἀπὸ] the living God."<sup>65</sup> Contextually, the verb ἀφίστημι, "to fall away, to depart, to leave, to step aside from" God is related to evil and unbelieving heart (v. 12), hardening by the "deceitfulness of sin" (v. 13), and disobedience and unbelief (vv. 18–19; 4:2, 6, 11). These negative characteristics of Israelites forbade them to enter God's rest, which resulted in leaving His presence and shutting out their actual entrance to the promised land. In contrast, through faith/faithfulness, the believers can enter or have entered God's rest (4:3). Faith is a prerequisite: "Without faith, it is impossible to please" and come to God (11:6). God's presence and His rest are parallel and analogous. Falling away from God is leaving or separating from His rest/presence.

### 3.2.2 Κατάπαυσις as the Spatial Destination

The clause εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου, "they shall [not] enter My rest" (Ps 95:11; Heb 3:11) is repeated several times (8x) with varied expressions as the author elaborates and explains the clause in Heb 3–4 (see Table 1). The verb εἰσέρχομαι, "to move into, to come into, to go into, to enter" (with different inflections) denotes a movement "into a space, either two-dimensional or three-dimensional."<sup>66</sup> It is used 17 times in Hebrews.<sup>67</sup> It is theologically loaded concerning the sanctuary and the priestly works in Hebrews.<sup>68</sup> Its context determines its rightful meaning. In Heb 3–4 alone, the noun κατάπαυσις (as direct object) (8x) always appears with the verb εἰσέρχομαι (11x) that entails the subject of the sentence (personal pronoun—"we/they").<sup>69</sup>

Noticeably, the verb εἰσέρχομαι goes with the prepositional phrase εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου (with variations) in all instances with κατάπαυσις as the direct object of entering. The verb εἰσέρχομαι plus the transitive preposition εἰς (acc.—"into from without") denotes a spatial movement from outside into

<sup>65</sup> The preposition ἀπό, "from" (gen.) is a spatial preposition. It denotes separation from place or person. In the passage, it is separation from God through apostasy.

<sup>66</sup> Louw and Nida, *GELNT*, 2nd ed., s.v. "εἰσέρχομαι."

<sup>67</sup> Heb 3:11, 18, 19; 4:1, 3 (2x), 5, 6 (2x), 10, 11; 6:19, 20; 9:12, 24, 25; 10:5.

<sup>68</sup> Several scholars have argued for the theological significance of εἰσέρχομαι with a local sense in connection to the high priest/s and the sanctuary in Hebrews. See, e.g., O'Brien, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 164; Calaway, "Heavenly Sabbath, Heavenly Sanctuary," 310–315; Nunes, "Function and Nature of the Sanctuary," 346;

<sup>69</sup> Heb 3:11, 18, 19; 4:1, 3 (2x), 5, 6 (2x), 10, 11.

an inner place. Hence, *κατάπαυσις* is a spatial resting place of God,<sup>70</sup> the ultimate destination of the believers that is promised and pointed out in Hebrews. This spatial interpretation of rest is further discussed in the next section of this paper.

### 3.2.3 *Jesus Opens the Way to Enter God's Rest*

The object of faith to enter God's rest is related to the gospel that is being preached to the readers and even to the wandering Israelites (*εὐαγγελίζω*, "to tell/announce the good news," 4:2, 6).<sup>71</sup> In the NT, Jesus Christ is the core gospel message.<sup>72</sup> In Hebrews, Jesus, His life, and works are the good news of salvation. His supremacy is preached in various ways as the Son of God, Apostle, High Priest, and Davidic King. In the immediate context of Heb 3–4, Jesus became like His brethren in all things to suffer for the remissions of their sins, to become a merciful and faithful high priest, to aid them from temptation, and to sympathize with their weakness (2:17–18; 4:14), etc.

Table 1: *The Expressions to Enter God's Κατάπαυσις in Hebrews*

Text	Expressions
Heb 3:11	εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου, "they shall not enter My rest"
Heb 3:18	μὴ εἰσελεύσῃ εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ, "they would not enter His rest"
Heb 4:1	Φοβηθῶμεν οὖν, μήποτε καταλειπομένης ἐπαγγελίας εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ, "therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest"
Heb 4:3a	εἰσερχόμεθα γὰρ εἰς [τὴν] κατάπαυσιν οἱ πιστεύσαντες, "for we who have believed enter that rest"

<sup>70</sup> See O'Brien, *Letter to Hebrews*, 164.

<sup>71</sup> The verb *εὐαγγελίζω* is only used twice in Hebrews (4:2, 6) in the participle: *εὐγγελισμένοι* (4:2) and *εὐγγελισθέντες* (4:6). In Heb 4:2, the participle *εὐγγελισμένοι* is a periphrastic perfect indicative. Perfect "emphasizes the completeness of the evangelization that has taken place, and thus leaves no room for any excuse that evangelization had been inadequate or deficient (Hughes)" (Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998], para. 37256). Hence, the good news about the Messiah had been preached completely even to those wandering Israelites. However, they rejected it because of unbelief and disobedience.

<sup>72</sup> Louw and Nida, *GELNT*, s.v. "*εὐαγγελίζω*."

Heb 4:3b	εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατὰπαυσίν μου, “they shall not enter My rest”
Heb 4:5	εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατὰπαυσίν μου, “they shall not enter My rest”
Heb 4:10	ὁ γὰρ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν κατὰπαυσιν αὐτοῦ, “for the one who has entered His rest”
Heb 4:11	σπουδάσωμεν οὖν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς ἐκείνην τὴν κατὰπαυσιν, “therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest”

Entering God’s rest for His people becomes a reality through Jesus, the High Priest, who entered into the heavenly sanctuary, which is αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν (sing.), “the heaven itself” (9:24). The heavenly sanctuary itself is part of the heavens (pl.), not the entire heaven.<sup>73</sup> The phrase “heaven itself” is mentioned in contrast to the earthly sanctuary (“copy of the true one” [i.e., heavenly sanctuary], 9:24) in relation to the heavenly place where Jesus entered into when He passed through the heavens (pl.)—not the earthly one made by men. God’s rest and His throne of grace in the heavenly sanctuary are logically, structurally, and contextually connected and parallel. This connection is also seen in the three consecutive inferential hortatory commands in Heb 4:11, 14, and 16:

1. “Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest [κατὰπαυσιν]” (v. 11).
2. “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession” (v. 14).

<sup>73</sup> In Heb 4:14, the phrase τοὺς οὐρανοὺς (pl.), “the heavens,” represents the location of God’s sanctuary where Jesus, the high priest, passed through or entered into. “The heavens” are the places where the throne of God (ὁ θρόνος τῆς χάριτος, “the throne of grace”) is located as stated in v. 16. In Heb 8:1–2, Jesus, the great high priest, is depicted as sitting “at the right hand of the throne of Majesty in the heavens [οὐρανοῖς], a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.” The throne of grace/Majesty is in the heavenly sanctuary. Both the heavenly sanctuary and the throne of grace are in the heavens. So, when Jesus passed through the heavens, He entered into the more perfect sanctuary through His blood (9:11–12), “into the inner veil” (6:19), and sat “at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (8:1; cf. 10:12). The places heavens, sanctuary (two-partite holy place), and throne of God denote from general to specific areas in heaven. Comparatively, similar expressions/words are mentioned (e.g., “throne,” “heaven/s,” “sanctuary”) to point out that Jesus entered the sanctuary as the “heaven itself” (9:24), which is God’s dwelling place (spatial).

3. "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" (v. 16).

Verse 11 (and vv. 12–13, B') concludes the preceding verses about the promise of rest (3:1–10). It is an exhortation to enter God's rest while it is open diligently. Verses 14–16 (A') are the bracketing conclusion of the section (Heb 3–4) built on vv. 11–13. The admonition to hold fast the confession refers to the confession of faith and hope in Jesus, "the Apostle and High Priest" (3:1; 10:23). Verse 16 is thematically parallel with v. 11 in the sense of moving to a place: "let us be diligent to enter [God's] rest"<sup>74</sup> and "let us draw near to the throne of grace." The verb *προσέρχομαι*, "to move toward, to approach, to come near to," denotes moving "toward a reference point,"<sup>75</sup> namely, toward the throne of grace. In other words, the author of Hebrews invites the readers to approach God's throne with confidence that the heavenly temple's door is wide open to welcome them.<sup>76</sup> Jesus opened access to the heavenly sanctuary for His people when "he has passed through [διεληλυθότα]<sup>77</sup> the heavens" (v. 14).

The admonitions suggest entering God's rest *now* in Heb 3–4 with future hope. The full realization still awaits in the future. His faithful people can now enter the throne of grace with confidence (by faith—spiritual entrance)<sup>78</sup> because Jesus, their High Priest, is in the very presence of God and sitting at the right hand of His throne, mediating on their behalf (1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). But when He comes for the "second time for salvation . . . to

<sup>74</sup> The subjunctive *σπουδάσωμεν* (aor., subj., act. of *σπουδάζω*, "to be in a hurry, to make haste, to be in earnest, to concentrate one's energies on the achievement of a goal, to endeavor") "is hortatory expressing a command ('let us')" (Rogers and Rogers, *New Linguistic and Exegetical Key*, para. 37314).

<sup>75</sup> Louw and Nida, *GELNT*, s.v. "*προσέρχομαι*."

<sup>76</sup> Johnsson, "Hebrews," 1834.

<sup>77</sup> The perfect verb *διεληλυθότα* (act. part. from *διέρχομαι*, "to pass through, to go through") "indicates that he [Jesus] has passed through the heavens and is still there" (Rogers and Rogers, *New Linguistic and Exegetical Key*, para. 37346).

<sup>78</sup> Profound examples of "already-not-yet" experiences of God's people that is connected to faith are expounded in Heb 11–12, but not in Heb 3–4. In Heb 12:18, 22–24; 13:14, the believers are portrayed as that they "have come" (*προσεληλύθατε*, perf. ind. act.) already to the untouchable place, namely, "to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel."

those who eagerly await Him” (9:28), they will fully experience such entrance to His rest in a face-to-face fellowship.

Furthermore, the clause εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου, “they shall not enter My rest” is comparatively parallel with the following phrases in other passages:

1. εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος, “one which enters within the veil” (6:19).
2. εἰσῆλθεν ἐφάπαξ εἰς τὰ ἅγια, “He entered the holy place” (9:12).
3. οὐ γὰρ εἰς χειροποίητα εἰσῆλθεν ἅγια Χριστός . . . ἀλλ’ εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν, “for Christ did not enter a holy place . . . but into heaven itself” (9:24).
4. ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὰ ἅγια, “the high priest enters the holy place [sanctuary]” (9:25).<sup>79</sup>

The majority of the remaining occurrences of εἰσερχομαι in Hebrews (6x—6:19, 20; 9:12, 24, 25; 10:5) refers to the entrance of Christ into the heavenly sanctuary to secure eternal redemption through His blood (6:19, 20; 9:12, 25). One refers to the entrance of the Levitical high priest to the earthly sanctuary yearly (9:25). Then, one refers to Jesus’s entrance to the world (10:5) to fulfill God’s will concerning the sacrifices and offerings of the old covenant to establish the new covenant by His once for all sacrifice (see 10:1–10). Through His sufficient sacrificial blood, He entered the heavenly sanctuary before the presence of God and sat on His throne as High Priest, King, and Mediator (1:3; 8:1–2; 9:12, 24; 12:2). These substantial pieces of evidence strongly suggests that God’s κατάπαυσις is parallel to His throne and/or sanctuary.

Additionally, Heb 10:19–25, structurally and linguistically parallel to Heb 4:14–16 (and 3:1–6), reiterates and clarifies the concept of entering God’s rest as His dwelling place. Hebrews 10:19 explicitly states that the believers can enter into the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus: “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus.” The present active participle ἔχοντες (from ἔχω, “to have, hold”)

<sup>79</sup> Regarding the interpretation of τὰ ἅγια as the whole sanctuary (with two apartments), see the discussion in Alwyn P. Salom, “*Ta Hagia* in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, *Daniel and Revelation Committee Series* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1989), 4:219–27; A. Ganoune Diop, “Does Hebrew 9:8 Refer to the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary?” in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl, *Biblical Research Institute Studies* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 2:412–15.

denotes "a continual possession"<sup>80</sup> of confidence to enter, namely, the εἰσόδος, "entrance" of the sanctuary. This assurance gives the believers free access to God's sanctuary even at the present time.<sup>81</sup> Such access to the sanctuary becomes possible through the sacrifice of Jesus, as "a new and living way," which He inaugurated (v. 20); thus, He also became "a great High Priest over the house of God" (v. 21).

The following exhortations in Heb 10:22–25 (cf. 4:11, 14, 16) reveal the attitudes and characters of those who have the confidence to enter the presence of God in the heavenly sanctuary because of Jesus's blood and high priesthood:

1. *Draw near to God with a sincere heart*: "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (v. 22).
2. *Hold fast the confession of hope*: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (v. 23).
3. *Motivate to love one another and encourage them to continue assembly meeting*: "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (vv. 24–25).

Therefore, the promised rest in Heb 3–4 refers to the heavenly dwelling place of God (sanctuary) where His throne of grace is located (4:16). It is the resting place where Jesus does His highpriestly ministry. This place is still open for the believers. To enter it and "draw near" to Him (10:22), they need to be faithful, confident, and diligent (4:11) through the blood of Jesus.<sup>82</sup>

## 4. Conclusion

The entering into God's rest is the same as Jesus's entering the heavenly sanctuary as the promise of rest, based on Ps 95:7–11 in Heb 3–4. The inner-biblical and Christological reading of Ps 95:7–11 in Heb 3–4 provides the basis for the ongoing availability of entering God's rest as spatial rest for His people with a salvific sense. The author of Hebrews warns them against

<sup>80</sup> Rogers and Rogers, *New Linguistic and Exegetical Key*, para. 38283.

<sup>81</sup> O'Brien, *Letter to Hebrews*, 363.

<sup>82</sup> So, this paper agrees with the conclusion of O'Brien, Calaway, Nunes, and other scholars (though with different explanations) regarding God's rest as His domain or resting place/sanctuary in Heb 3–4.



unbelief and apostasy and exhorts them to remain faithful and confidently strive to enter His rest while it is still “today.” God’s *κατάπαυσις* and *σαββατισμός* in Heb 3–4 should be understood in the context of Jesus’s supremacy, faithfulness, high priesthood, and entrance to the heavenly sanctuary to be in God’s presence. Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary through His blood and sat down at the right hand of God’s throne as the High Priest, King, and Mediator of the new covenant, applying the benefits of His atoning sacrifice on the cross to the believers to boldly approach and worship Him.

Jesus is the bridge to understanding the relationship between God’s *κατάπαυσις* and His sanctuary: Christ in His sanctuary. He is the key that unlocks the entrance to God’s heavenly rest. Therefore, believers’ entering God’s rest and Jesus’s entering the heavenly sanctuary are parallel, suggesting that *κατάπαυσις* refers to God’s throne/sanctuary, the center of His governance and salvation—the ultimate destination of His people. Through faith in Jesus—the anchor of their souls (6:19), the author and perfecter of their faith (12:2)—the believers can now boldly come to the throne of grace (spiritual entrance) to worship God and find true spiritual rest, salvation, hope, mercy, and grace in times of need (4:16). To enter His rest can be fully experienced at the second coming of Jesus and beyond when His people will dwell in the final resting place with God face to face to celebrate *σαββατισμός* for eternity.