Significance for Adventist Theology

The Letter to the Hebrews

FÉLIX H. CORTEZ, SEPTEMBER 21, 2020
Significance for Adventist Theology

The Letter to the Hebrews

FÉLIX H. CORTEZ, SEPTEMBER 21, 2020
Significant Teachings

• Theology of the Sabbath
• Jesus’s Priestly Intercession in the Heavenly Sanctuary
• The New Covenant
• Creation
The Theology of Sabbath in Hebrews
So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God

Heb 4:9
Heb 1-2: Jesus has been enthroned
Heb 5-7: Jesus has been appointed high priest
Heb 8-10: Jesus has mediated a new covenant
Heb 1-2: Greater than the angels

Heb 5-7: Greater than Aaron

Heb 8-10: Greater than Moses
What does Jesus provide?

- **King**: Hebrews 1–4
  - Rest
- **Priest**: Hebrews 5–7
  - Perfection
- **Mediator**: Hebrews 8–10
  - Access
Ps 95:7–11

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years.
Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.’
As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’”

Hebrews 3:7–19

Warning: The desert generation could not enter because of lack of faith. Exhort one another!

Heb 4:1–12

Encouragement: The promise is still available. Let’s make every effort to enter!
The Israelite desert generation

- **Saw** God’s deliverance with powerful “signs and wonders”  
  (Exod 7:3, 9; 11:9; Deut 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 34:11).
- **Heard** God’s voice at Sinai  (Exod 19-20; Deut 5:22)
- **Made** a covenant with Him  (Exod 24).
- **Experienced** God’s care: the cloud  (Exod 13:22; 40:36-38; Num 9:16-22), water from the rock  (Exod 17:1-7; Num 20:2-13), food from heaven  (Exod 16, Num 11), and his judgments on the rebellious  (Deut 11:1-7).
- They **rebelled** at the edge of the promised Land  (Num 14).
• The audience ...

• had experienced God’s “signs and wonders” (Heb 2:3-4; 6:4-5),

• had heard God’s voice (Heb 1:1-2; 12:18-29),

• had received a new covenant (Heb 8-9),

• were at the edge of the promised land (Heb 10:36-39; 12:25-29).

• They were being tempted reject Jesus, the leader God had appointed for them (6:4-6; 10:26-31).
Sabbath provides the **structural protection** against apostasy both in the personal and communal realms

- **Personally**, we remember the creator and the redeemer and His work
- **Communally**, we meet to encourage one another
What is God’s rest in the OT?

**LAND**

The land of Canaan (Deut 12:10; Exod 33:14; Deut 25:19; Jos 1:13, 15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1)

**TEMPLE**

The sanctuary (1 Kings 8:56; 2 Chron 6:41; Ps 132:8, 13–14; Isa 66:1)

**SABBATH**

The Sabbath (Exod 35:2), which was connected with creation (Gen 2:2; Exod 20:11), deliverance from slavery (Deut 5:12-15), and atonement (Lev 16:31).
What is God’s rest in Ps 95?

**TEMPLE**

Ps 95:1–3: Invitation to enter the temple to worship God

**SABBATH**

Ps 95:4–7a: Invitation to worship God as the creator

**LAND**

Ps 95:7b–11: Warning from the desert generation who could not enter the rest = land
What is “my rest” in Hebrews?

MY REST

Hebrews 3:7–19
The Land

Heb 4:1–11
The Sabbath

Heb 4:14–16
The Sanctuary
What is “my rest” in Hebrews?

MY REST

Heb 1–4
The Sabbath
We enter through faith

Heb 5–10
The Sanctuary
Through the veil into God’s presence

Hebrews 10–13
The Land
The heavenly homeland, the city with foundations
What is “my rest” in Hebrews?

- The Sabbath rest of Heb 4,
  - recast in chaps. 8–10 as the heavenly sanctuary,
  - and as the heavenly inheritance in Heb 11–13,
- functions in the argument of the letter as a symbol of all the benefits of the new covenant that Jesus has made available to us by grace.
• The Sabbath and the land are only the physical structure that make the rest possible.

• **Land**: God gave them the land in order to be with his people (how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself, Exod 19:4; also 33:14).

• **Garden of Eden**: God sanctified the Sabbath in order to be with his people.

• **Sabbath**: Is a day of holy convocation. A day where we meet with God. The sign of the covenant (Exod 31:13).
• A “sabbath rest” (σαββατισμός).

• For our author, **Sabbath observance** (4:9) **embodies the blessings of the new covenant** that faith in Jesus’s sacrifice makes available to us.
  • Sign of the new covenant

• It stands in **complete opposition** to the later identification in some church fathers of Sabbath observance as the epitome of the old covenant practices that had passed away.
• A "sabbath rest" (σαββατισμός).

• Just as the Sabbath was given to Adam and Eve to rest but was holy to God, the land was given to Israel as an inheritance but God retained final possession of it.
  • Israelites could not do with the land just as they pleased or devote it to idolatry because the land belonged to God (Lev 25, esp. v. 23).

• In the same way, the Sabbath was created for us but God retains possession of it.
  • It is a way to protect it.
A “sabbath rest” (σαββατισμός).

Sabbath rest does not only memorialize God’s victories in the past, but also celebrates God’s promises for the future.

The two things that God calls His rest refer to places, in space and time, He has separated to meet with us.

This tells us about who God is.
What is “my rest” in Hebrews?

- The rest God experienced in Eden (4:3–5).
  - We can experience that rest through faith (4:3)
  - We can enter it “Today”, which is a new day of opportunity (4:6–7)

- Israel did not enter the rest because “land” is not the same as “rest” (4:8)
  - The Sabbath and the land are the framework that make possible the rest

- It is a symbol of the promises of the new covenant (4:9–16)
  - Sabbath concretizes the experience of salvation
  - Sabbath anticipates the experience of the new age
Jesus’s Intercession in the Heavenly Sanctuary
Heb 1-2: Jesus has been enthroned

Heb 5-7: Jesus has been appointed high priest

Heb 8-10: Jesus has mediated a new covenant
What does Jesus provide?

- **Hebrews 1–4**
  - Rest

- **Hebrews 5–7**
  - Perfection

- **Heb 8–10**
  - Access

**JESUS**
For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ...
... so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ...
We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Heb 6:16-20
Vs. 17
God swore an oath

Vs. 18
Two unchangeable things

Vs. 19
An anchor that goes within the veil

Vs. 20
Jesus as our Forerunner

Ps 110:4
Abrahamic Covenant
Davidic Covenant

Anchored in the throne of God
Abrahamic Covenant
Davidic Covenant
Ps 110:4 “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

This is sworn to Jesus at the ascension but intended for us.

“Said Moses before the Holy One, blessed be he, ‘Lord of the age, Had you taken the oath to them by heaven and earth, I might have said that just as heaven and earth shall be null, so your oath will be null. But now that you have taken your oath by your great name, just as your great name lives and endures forever and ever, so your oath endures forever and ever.’” b. Ber. 32a
Gen 22:16–18 “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

- The Davidic Covenant makes possible the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

- Melchizedek only appears in connection to Abraham (Gen 14) and David (Ps 110)
Vs. 19 An anchor that goes within the veil

- God’s oath is a guarantee for us
  - Ps 89:34–37
  - Exod 32:9–14

Anchored in the throne of God
Jesus embodies God’s oath for us

- There is no veil between God and Jesus. He is our perfect representative
- Through the cross, there is no veil for us (Matt 27:51). We have confident access
- Jesus confirms that the promises are real. He is our forerunner.
- Just like the oath confirmed the promises given to Abraham (6:13–16), Jesus’ ascension to heaven confirms God’s purpose of salvation for human beings.
Jesus and Believers

• Both Jesus and the believers are described as God’s children (2:11–12, 17; 3:1, 12; 10:19; 13:22).

• Jesus made it possible for believers to become children (2:10–18; 9:15–22).

• The Son tasted death “for all” (υπέρ παντός, 2:9),

• Appears before the face of God “for us” (υπέρ ημών, 9:24),

• Lives to make intercession on behalf of his siblings (υπέρ αυτών, 7:25).

How does this happen?

How does His death and righteousness apply to me?
Jesus and Believers

- Though the Davidic covenant was established with promises of eternal favor to the Davidic lineage, God explicitly preserved the right “to punish him [i.e., the Davidic King] with a rod” should he forsake his law (2 Sam 7:14; cf. Ps 89:30–32).

- Thus, the Mosaic covenant did not cease to exist; instead, God’s covenant with David engrafted the monarchy into the existing (Mosaic) covenantal relationship between God and the nation.

- God legitimizors the Davidic king as Israel’s proxy.
  - The King was the representative of the nation, or embodied the nation regarding God’s promises.
GOD → ISRAEL
GOD → DAVID'S SCION → ISRAEL
The Mosaic covenant required the faithfulness of all Israel to receive God’s protection.

Joshua 7: the sin of Achan (vv. 1, 11–13). When the offender was punished, the covenantal relationship was restored (Josh 7:24–8:1).

The Davidic covenant, however, secured God’s covenantal blessings upon Israel through the faithfulness of one person, the king:
“I will make for you [sg.] a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you [sg.] rest from all your [sg.] enemies.” (2 Sam 7:9b-11a, emphasis mine; cf. 1 Chr 17:9-10b)

“Concerning this house that you are building, if you [sg.] will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them, then I will establish my promise with you, which I made to your father David. I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel. (1 Kgs 6:12-13, emphasis mine)
“The Davidic covenant did away with the necessity that all Israel—to a man—maintain loyalty to YHWH in order to merit his protection.” (Gileadi, “The Davidic Covenant,” 160.)

The Davidic covenant renewed the Mosaic covenant under “better promises” by providing a covenant mediator.

“With David, however, the ‘if’ has disappeared.... In this astonishing promise, Yahweh has signed a blank check to the David enterprise and has radically shifted the theological foundations of Israel.” (Brueggemann, First and Second Samuel, 257.)
“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

–Rom 8:1
“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.”

–1 Cor 15:22
GOD

ADAM

HUMANITY
GOD → Israel
GOD → Humanity
“The Saviour's glance seems to penetrate heaven as He pours out His soul in prayer. ... He asks for the witness that God accepts humanity in the person of His Son. Never before have the angels listened to such a prayer. They are eager to bear to their loved Commander a message of assurance and comfort. But no; the Father Himself will answer the petition of His Son. Direct from the throne issue the beams of His glory. The heavens are opened, and upon the Saviour's head descends a dovelike form of purest light,—fit emblem of Him, the meek and lowly One - DA 111.6 - DA 112.1”
“And the word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” embraces humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. With all our sins and weaknesses, we are not cast aside as worthless. “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” Ephesians 1:6. The glory that rested upon Christ is a pledge of the love of God for us - DA 113.1”