

Studies in Hebrews

Lesson V

Text: Hebrews 3:7-4: (NIV)

3:7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, **8** do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, **9** where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. **10** That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' **11** So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"^[a]

12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called *Today*, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. **14** We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. **15** As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart as you did in the rebellion."^[b]

16 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? **17** And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? **18** And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed^[c]? **19** So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

4:1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. **2** For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.^[d] **3** Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"^[e] And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. **4** For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work."^[f] **5** And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."

6 It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. **7** Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it *Today*, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."^[g] **8** For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. **9** There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; **10** for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. **11** Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. **13** Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Footnotes: a. Psalm 95:7-11 b. Psalm 95:7,8 c. Or disbelieved d. Many manuscripts say: *because they did not share in the faith of those who obeyed* e. Psalm 95:11; also in verse 5 f. Gen. 2:2 g. Psalm 95:7,8

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Verses 7-11 of chapter 3 quote from Psalm 95:7-11, which becomes the basis for the writer's argument from here through chapter 4. What specific story from the Old Testament does the writer call to mind? (cf. 16-18)
2. Why was that generation not allowed to enter God's "rest" (vv. 10-11)
3. What is one way of preventing a "sinful, unbelieving heart" (vs. 12) in the house of God? (vs. 13)
4. When is the best timing to do the will of God? (vv. 13, 15)
5. Why were some not able to enter the Promised Land? (vs. 19)
6. What promise do we have? (4:1a) What warning contrasts with the promise? (vs. 1b)
7. Saints under the Old Covenant were saved on the basis of what? (vs. 2)
8. On what basis does God allow us to enter into his rest (vs. 3)
9. Now, what is this place of "rest" that the writer is alluding to? (vv. 4-5)
10. What prevents people from enjoying God's rest? (vv. 6-7)
11. How does it relate to the Sabbath of the Jews? How is it different? (vv. 8-11)
12. How do verses 12-13 tie in with the discussion on entering into the rest of God? (vs. 12-13) What is unique about the Word of God? (vs. 12)
13. What appointment do all human beings have to keep? (vs. 13)