

Session 8 While It Is Called Today

Before the Silence: A Study of Hebrews

Session 8 | Hebrews 3:7-19

Hear His Voice And Enter His Rest (Hebrews 3:7-19)

Session 7 presented Christ as the Son over His own house and warned the Hebrews to hold fast their confidence and hope. Hebrews 3:7-19 explains why that warning is urgent. The Holy Ghost takes Israel's wilderness history and addresses another generation facing its own opportunity to hear God.

The passage moves in three parts:

- **Hebrews 3:7-11** - The Holy Ghost warns Israel from Psalm 95 not to repeat the wilderness rebellion.
- **Hebrews 3:12-15** - The Hebrews must take heed, exhort one another, and respond while it is still called **"To day."**
- **Hebrews 3:16-19** - The wilderness generation proves that unbelief can keep a privileged generation from entering God's rest.

Hebrews 3:7-8 - Hear His Voice To Day

*Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,
Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:*

Exegesis

- **"The Holy Ghost saith"** presents Psalm 95 as the Spirit's present speech, not merely an ancient record.
- **"To day"** makes the warning immediate. The addressed generation has an opportunity to hear, but the opportunity is not promised indefinitely.
- **"If ye will hear his voice"** means more than receiving sound. Biblical hearing includes yielding to what God has said.
- **"Harden not your hearts"** identifies the central danger: deliberate inward resistance to God's voice.
- **"As in the provocation"** points to Israel's wilderness rebellion after deliverance from Egypt but before entrance into the promised land.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Psalm 95:7-11** - The direct source of the quotation. A worship psalm turns into an urgent warning to hear God's voice.
- **Exodus 17:1-7** - At Massah and Meribah, Israel tested the LORD and questioned whether He was among them.
- **Numbers 14:1-11** - Israel refused to enter the land after the

spies' report, provoking the LORD through unbelief.

- **Acts 7:51** - Stephen charges Israel with resisting the Holy Ghost as their fathers did, closely paralleling Hebrews' warning.

Text And Translation Notes

- The KJV prints **"To day"** as two words. It means today, but the form helps emphasize the immediate time of decision.
- **"Provocation"** means rebellion that provoked God, not merely irritation.
- **"Temptation"** here means Israel's testing of God, not God tempting Israel to sin.

Theological Insights

- Hebrews treats Israel's history as a prophetic warning pattern. What happened to the fathers may be replayed by a later generation facing God's word.
- The warning follows the presentation of Christ as Son. Greater revelation brings greater accountability.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** treat Psalm 95 as a decorative illustration. The Holy Ghost is speaking through it.
- It does **not** make hearing a merely intellectual exercise.
- It does **not** allow the Hebrews to assume that national privilege guarantees entrance into the promised rest.

Hebrews 3:9-10 - They Saw My Works And Erred In Heart

When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

Exegesis

- **"Your fathers"** directly connects the Hebrew audience with the wilderness generation.

- They **tempted** and **proved** God even though they had seen His works. Their problem was not lack of evidence.
- **"Forty years"** marks a generation characterized by repeated unbelief despite sustained divine provision.
- God was **"grieved with that generation."** The warning concerns a corporate, generational crisis expressed through individual hearts.
- **"They do alway err in their heart"** locates their wandering

inwardly. They experienced God's acts but refused His ways.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Numbers 14:22-23** - Men who saw God's glory and miracles still refused to hearken, and therefore would not see the promised land.
- **Deuteronomy 29:2-4** - Israel saw the signs and wonders, yet lacked a heart to perceive and eyes to see.
- **Psalms 78:40-42** - Israel repeatedly provoked God and forgot His power in the wilderness.
- **John 6:30-36** - People who had already seen Christ's sign demanded another sign and still did not believe.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Err”** means to wander or go astray. The word fits both Israel's literal wilderness wandering and its spiritual condition.

- **“Ways”** means God's revealed paths and dealings, not merely a list of regulations.

Theological Insights

- Miracles do not automatically produce faithful hearing. Israel saw God's works and still hardened the heart.
- Greater privilege brings greater accountability. The generation addressed in Hebrews had received God's climactic speech in His Son.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say Israel lacked sufficient evidence.
- It does **not** reduce the problem to occasional confusion; the generation persistently wandered in heart.
- It does **not** teach that outward participation in God's people guarantees inward faithfulness.

Hebrews 3:11 - They Shall Not Enter My Rest

So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

Exegesis

- **“So”** joins the oath to the generation's persistent unbelief.
- **“I swear in my wrath”** is a solemn divine oath of judgment, not a momentary emotional outburst.
- **“They shall not enter”** is definite exclusion from the opportunity that had been set before that generation.
- **“My rest”** begins with entrance into Canaan but opens into the fuller kingdom-rest argument developed in chapter 4.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Numbers 14:28-35** - God swears that the unbelieving generation will fall in the wilderness rather than enter the land.
- **Deuteronomy 1:34-36** - Moses recounts the LORD's oath that the generation would not see the good land, with Caleb excepted.
- **1 Corinthians 10:6, 11** - Israel's wilderness experiences became prophetic examples written for the admonition of a later generation upon whom the ends had come.

- **Hebrews 4:7-9** - Joshua's historical entrance into Canaan did not exhaust the rest that remained in God's purpose.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Swear”** is older English for **swore**.
- **“Rest”** should not be reduced to inner calm. In Hebrews it is tied to Israel's land, inheritance, and kingdom hope.

Theological Insights

- Paul uses Numbers 14 and Deuteronomy 1 as more than a moral illustration. Through Psalm 95, Israel's wilderness crisis becomes a prophetic pattern confronting another generation of Israel.
- A privileged generation can miss its offered inheritance through unbelief.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** make God's oath arbitrary; it follows prolonged unbelief after divine speech and visible works.
- It does **not** make **“rest”** merely a feeling of peace.
- It does **not** teach that God's covenant promises to Israel have been canceled.

Hebrews 3:12 - An Evil Heart Of Unbelief

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Exegesis

- **“Take heed”** turns the wilderness history into a direct warning to the Hebrews.
- **“Brethren”** keeps the warning within the Hebrew community addressed by the letter.
- **“In any of you”** shows how corporate danger works through actual individual hearts.
- **“An evil heart of unbelief”** defines Israel's unbelief morally.

The chosen nation had received God's covenant, word, works, and blessings; refusing Him was covenant rebellion, not innocent uncertainty.

- **“Departing from the living God”** describes a deliberate standing away from the God who speaks, judges, and fulfills His promises.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Numbers 14:11** - After redeeming Israel and showing signs among them, the LORD asks how long the people will provoke Him and refuse to believe.
- **Amos 3:2** - Israel's unique relationship with God brings

unique accountability: **“therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”**

- **John 15:22-24** - After Israel’s leaders heard Christ’s words and saw His works, they had no cloak for their sin.
- **Hebrews 10:38-39** - Hebrews later contrasts drawing back with believing unto the saving of the soul.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Departing”** is willful standing away, not an accidental drift.
- **“Living God”** adds covenant seriousness. This is not departure from an institution only, but from God Himself.

Theological Insights

- For one outside Israel’s covenant standing, unbelief remains tragic and ruinous. Here the sharper charge of **evil** belongs to

Israel’s covenant responsibility and rejection of known privilege.

- The warning applies the wilderness pattern to the generation living before Jerusalem’s coming judgment.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** turn the verse into a generic warning that a member of the present body of Christ can lose salvation.
- It does **not** reduce Israel’s unbelief here to mere intellectual uncertainty. In this covenant setting, it is a heart refusal of the God whose word, works, and blessings Israel had received.
- It does **not** establish that Scripture can never call any Gentile conduct evil; the point is Israel’s special culpability in this passage.

Hebrews 3:13-15 - While It Is Called To Day

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;

While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Exegesis

- **“Exhort one another daily”** gives the positive response to verse 12. The Hebrews must actively urge one another away from unbelief.
- **“While it is called To day”** makes the opportunity urgent and limited. Response must occur while God’s call is still present.
- Sin hardens through **deceitfulness**, making unbelief appear reasonable, safe, or respectable.
- **“Partakers of Christ”** is conditioned by **“if we hold.”** The context concerns participation in Messiah and His kingdom hope, not grace-age salvation secured by endurance.
- Verse 15 repeats Psalm 95 because the warning still demands a response before Paul analyzes the wilderness generation in verses 16-19.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Hebrews 10:24-25** - The Hebrews must consider and exhort one another as the day approaches.
- **Luke 19:41-44** - Jesus weeps because Jerusalem did not recognize the time of its visitation and warns that its opportunity will end in judgment.
- **Matthew 24:13** - Endurance unto the end appears in Israel’s kingdom and tribulation setting.

- **Romans 11:25-29** - A generation’s blindness and lost opportunity do not revoke Israel’s election or God’s covenant calling.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Exhort”** means to urge, appeal to, or come alongside with serious speech; it is stronger than casual encouragement.
- **“Stedfast”** means firm and unwavering.
- **“While it is said”** closely reflects the temporal Greek construction *en tō legesthai*, “during its being said.” Some translations use “as it is said,” which is possible, but the teacher should not lose the sense that the warning remained active only while God continued to call that time “Today.”

Theological Insights

- For the generation first addressed, **“To day” is now yesterday**. Its opportunity to hear the Son and enter the offered kingdom rest did not remain open indefinitely; that generation passed under judgment as the wilderness generation had.
- The loss of that generation’s opportunity did not cancel God’s covenanted future for Israel.
- Hebrews envisions mutual endurance. The brethren are responsible to urge one another while response remains possible.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** make exhortation casual encouragement; the danger requires urgent appeal.
- It does **not** make final salvation in the present dispensation depend upon holding fast.
- It does **not** turn the expiration of that generation’s **“today”** into the expiration of Israel’s national promises.

Hebrews 3:16-18 - Who Failed To Enter?

For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

Exegesis

- The repeated questions force the reader to identify the guilty generation from Israel's own Scriptures.
- **"When they had heard, did provoke"** shows that rebellion followed revelation. They were not judged for ignorance.
- **"Howbeit not all"** preserves the remnant distinction. Caleb and Joshua believed God even when the majority did not.
- The people who came out of Egypt had experienced national deliverance, yet many still died short of the promised land.
- Verse 17 calls their conduct **sin**, and verse 18 identifies its root as unbelief.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Numbers 14:6-9, 30** - Joshua and Caleb urged Israel to believe and were named as exceptions who would enter the land.
- **Numbers 26:64-65** - At the later numbering, none of the former generation remained except Caleb and Joshua.

- **Psalm 106:24-26** - Israel despised the pleasant land and believed not God's word, so He lifted up His hand against them.
- **Jude 5** - The Lord saved the people out of Egypt and afterward destroyed those who believed not.

Text And Translation Notes

- **"Howbeit"** means nevertheless or however.
- **"Carcasses"** is deliberately severe language for physical death under divine judgment.
- **"By Moses"** means under Moses' leadership, not by Moses' independent power.

Theological Insights

- The remnant principle appears again: an unbelieving majority may bring generational judgment without erasing the faithful remnant.
- Deliverance from Egypt and outward association with God's people did not guarantee entrance into rest.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say every Israelite who left Egypt shared the same unbelief; the passage explicitly says **"not all."**
- It does **not** identify deliverance from Egypt with entrance into the promised rest.
- It does **not** present God's judgment as an empty threat.

Hebrews 3:19 - They Could Not Enter Because Of Unbelief

So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Exegesis

- **"So we see"** states the conclusion established by Scripture and Israel's history.
- **"They could not enter"** describes inability created by God's oath after persistent refusal. The opportunity could not be recovered on their own terms.
- **"Because of unbelief"** is the chapter's final emphasis and explains the rebellion, sin, hardening, and exclusion from rest.
- The conclusion prepares Hebrews 4:1: the promise of entering rest requires an urgent response while opportunity remains.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Numbers 14:39-45** - After unbelief closed the opportunity, Israel tried to enter presumptuously and was defeated.
- **Deuteronomy 9:23** - Moses says Israel rebelled and believed not the LORD when commanded to possess the land.
- **Hebrews 4:1-2** - The word preached did not profit the wilderness generation because it was not mixed with faith in those who heard.

- **Romans 11:20** - Israel's unbelief is again presented as the cause of being broken off from covenant privilege.

Text And Translation Notes

- **"Could not"** does not mean God failed to make entrance possible. Persistent unbelief brought an oath that closed the opportunity.
- **"Unbelief"** is the chapter's final word in the KJV, giving it special force.

Theological Insights

- Hebrews 3 is not merely a comparison between Moses and Jesus. It asks whether Israel will hear the Son and enter the rest set before the nation.
- Unbelief can turn extraordinary privilege into judgment when a generation refuses God's appointed word and time.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** teach that Israel was excluded because God was unfaithful to His promise.
- It does **not** treat unbelief as passive neutrality in this covenant setting.
- It does **not** allow entrance to be forced after God's offered opportunity has closed.

Teaching Summary

- The Holy Ghost uses Psalm 95 to make Israel's wilderness history a present and prophetic warning to another Hebrew generation.
- The wilderness generation saw God's works and heard His voice, yet hardened its heart and was excluded from rest through unbelief.
- The Hebrews must take heed and exhort one another while God still calls the opportunity "**To day.**"
- For the generation first addressed, that "**today**" eventually became yesterday, but its lost opportunity did not cancel God's covenanted future for Israel.
- Hebrews 3:7-19 warns Israel to hear the Son, refuse hardening, hold fast its confidence, and enter the kingdom rest set before it.