

# HEBREWS

(Primary textbook: Holy Scriptures. Primary translation: NIV.)

- III. GOD OFFERS REST TO ALL WHO TRUST HIM (3:1-4:16)
  - A. Jesus is Superior to Moses (3:1-6)
  - B. Psalm 95:7-11 (3:7-11)
  - C. Hold Firm to the End (3:12-15)
  - D. Unbelieving Israelites Fell in the Desert (3:16-19)
  - E. A Sabbath-Rest for the People of God (4:1-5)
  - F. A Sabbath-Rest Remains (4:6-11)
  - G. The Message from God Does Its Part to Save Us (4:12-13)
  - H. Jesus, the Great High Priest (4:14-16)

(This lesson will cover Section E.)

## E. A Sabbath Rest for the People of God (4:1-5)

### 1. What still stands? (v.1)

God still offers His eternal rest to believers. That idea will be expanded beginning at Hebrews 4:3. Some suggest that the first two verses may be better understood as the conclusion of chapter three rather than the beginning of chapter four. In view of the bad experience of the people of Israel, it is very important to be careful that we do not also fall short of this rest.

### 2. Let us be what? That none of you be found to have done what? (v.1)

This is the only place where the New International Version translates the verb “to fear” (Greek: *phobeo*) as to “be careful.” Elsewhere it translates indicating fear, even terror, and sometimes reverence.

Note what one commentator writes: “The phrase, ‘Be careful,’ is a little weak for this verb. Fear is a powerful motive. It is not wrong to be motivated by fear, especially with so much at stake. Jesus taught fear as a motive (Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4-5). It should not be the only motive. Neither should love be the only motivating force. Ideally every feeling of man should be stimulated to give a balanced, holistic response of all we are to whatever God wants us to be.”

### 3. For we have also had what preached to us, just as they did? (v.2)

The Israelites had the Gospel preached to them in the sense of receiving good news. In the Old Testament, God repeatedly offered good news to those who would faithfully walk in His ways. If His people would be faithful, they could be with Him forever in eternal rest.

The ultimate offer is the same. The faith is the same. Only the specific deeds by which God asked us to express that faith are different.

### 4. But what was of no value to them? (v.2)

5. Because those who heard did not do what? (v.2)

The point of the statement in Hebrews is that there must be more than casual response to God's message. Faith must be closely bonded with the message in thorough, minute detail. There is no place here to pick and choose which part of the Bible we want and which we will discard. For the Gospel to have value, it must have faith mixed all through it. It must be trusted in all its parts.

About the Israelites' failure, one man wrote: "The people fell away when the divine voice was still sounding in their ears."

Consider this illustration used by one author: "Food if it is to nourish must go into the blood, and lay itself upon the body. And if the word is to profit it must be transformed through faith, like the juice of food, into the spirit, mind, and will of the man, that the whole man may become as the word is and requires, that is holy, righteous, pure, and good. Hearing alone profits as little as an undigested food in a bad stomach."

6. Now who enters that rest? (v.3)

Christians are believers, fully committed to following Christ. They are on their way toward God's rest. They are now "entering" (present tense showing continuing action) the "rest" which God withheld from the unbelieving Israelites. The entrance has begun, but it is not viewed as completed until they have remained faithful to the very end (note Hebrews 3:14 and 4:1). The people of Israel were also in the process of entering the Promised Land when their sin cut them down. Faith was the issue in the Psalm also, which is quoted again.

7. Just as Who said? So I declared on what? In My what? (v.3)

8. They shall do what? (v.3)

9. And yet what has been finished? Since what point in time? (v.3)

God has prepared a place for those who love Him; it is where He is (John 14:1ff), and it has been so from the beginning. The redemption in Jesus makes that possible, and that has been so from the same point in time. Note Ephesians 1:4-14.

10. For somewhere He has spoken about what? In these what? (v.4)

11. And on what day? Who rested? Rested from what? (v.4)

The text cites Genesis 2:2 to explain that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. The point that is being developed here is that just as God is resting in Heaven, there will come the day when the faithful in Christ will rest with Him, we will share in His rest. So the "rest" that we should focus on is not the rest of Canaan (the Promised Land), nor is it the rest of the Sabbath (the Seventh Day of the week), it is the rest of eternal life with God.

12. And again in the what? He says they shall never enter what? (v.5)

In the incident recorded in Numbers 13-14 God prohibited Israel from entering Canaan. This evidently means that they could not enter Heaven either. Later, in the time of David, God explained that He had sworn that those unfaithful Israelites would never enter His rest.

***"Making Disciples for the Master"***