

Hebrews

Chapter 3:16-4:13

July 30, 1995

- **Hebrews Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Jesus is greater than the prophets and the angels.
- Chapter 2 Jesus' message is greater than the angel's.
- Chapter 3 Christ is greater than Moses.
- Chapter 4 Christ is greater than Joshua and His rest is superior.

- **Introduction & Review**

It is very apparent that the author of the book is concerned with the eternal condition of some of the recipients of the letter. Although later in the book he speaks confidently about good things for them, here he has declared that those who fall away, that is, return to the lesser things of Judaism, are not really believers. He has argued that if they were, they would hold on to the end.

He has also provided an exhortation to exhort each other daily so that they would not fall to the deceitfulness of sin. We discussed how applicable this teaching was for them and for us today. In the forthcoming sections, the author continues this thought by comparing those who fall away with those who fell away in the desert.

- **Exposition**

Hebrews 3:16-4:13

16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?

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

- This section is begun with three rhetorical questions with the answers provided after each. The first question relates to identifying who has rebelled. He responds that it was all who came out of Egypt. This raises an interesting question, "Does that mean each and every without exception; even Moses, Aaron and Joshua?" No. But the exceptions to those who rebelled against God appear to be limited to Joshua, Caleb and implicitly Moses and Aaron. Refer to Numbers 14:11:35
- The second question reveals that the Lord's anger burned against some and as a result they fell dead in the wilderness. This wrath of God was poured out upon all of the men older than twenty by not allowing them to enter into the new land. Those who complained were stuck down and died in the wilderness. Only their children were able to see the new land.

1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. 3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,' although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; 5 and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest."

- The author concludes that because David wrote Psalm 95 hundreds of years later, that obviously the rest had not occurred when the people finally entered into Canaan. This rest from wandering in the desert still did not provide them with the type of rest that David was speaking of, otherwise he would not have written the word "today".
- It is fascinating to see that the message of the gospel is not just a new testament creation. There is continuity between the covenants at many levels. The new covenant was a continuation of the old, not some completely new plan. This means that those in the old testament era who did combine what they heard with belief were Christians. The difference between us and them is that they looked forward to the time of the Messiah and we look back.

6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, 7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

- The conclusion that is drawn is that there must be some other rest that the new promised land did not provide. Although Joshua led the people faithfully into the new land, he did not give them the rest that David spoke of in Psalm 95.

- **A brief survey of the Sabbath**

This is an area where there has been centuries of intense debate, division and contention. Our purpose is not to find lines to draw so that boundaries for fellowship may be established. Rather, our purpose is to honor God the way that He has instructed us to in His Word. Romans 14:1-13

Old Testament Instruction

- As instituted by God, the Sabbath had at least four purposes:
- A restful reminder of God's provision - Exodus 16:22-30
- A reminder of the wonderfulness of God's creation - Exodus 20:8-11
- A sign and a reminder of the Lord's covenant and that the Lord is the one who sanctifies. Exodus 31:12-17
- A reminder of God's redemption of the people of Israel. Deut 5:12-15
- Initially there was only one Sabbath, but later God instituted many observations (holy convocations) - Leviticus 23.

New Testament Instruction

"To abstain, it is true, from swine's flesh, is in itself harmless, but the binding to do it is pernicious, because it makes void the grace of Christ." John Calvin

- Religious observance of a Jewish calendar of festivals and Sabbaths for Christians would be a return to the immature and beggarly elements of the Law. Galatians 4:8-11
- The Festivals and Sabbaths were pictures of the true substance of Christ. Colossians 2:16-17
- The Sabbath was given as a blessing for man. Matt 12, Mark 2
- **The Lord's Day**

This is a term with extremely limited Biblical evidence but is supported by extra-biblical historical documents which seem to confirm that the term was used by the early church. Rev. 1:10, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:1-4

11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (NKJV).

- We are exhorted to examine ourselves to see if we are in the promised rest. The way that we experience the rest is by being in Christ (vs. 14). Those who are in Christ have heard the Gospel and mixed it with faith such that they have believed. This rest is one where we have ceased our attempts to be righteous in ourselves and have been given the righteousness of Christ.
- He provides a stern warning to some of those who received the letter who were being tempted to abandon the faith and commit the same sin that the Israelites did in the desert. Their doing so would only prove their true eternal state. Because the author doesn't know who this may be, he provides the warning to all of them .