

# Hebrews 03 - Jesus is Superior to Moses;

## Warning #2: The Danger of Disobedience

### I. Doctrinal Section of the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 1:1—10:18)

#### (3) Christ is superior to Moses (Heb 3:1—4:13)

(A) Similarities between Christ and Moses (3:1-2)

(B) Differences between Christ and Moses (3:3-6)

(C) The Hebrews are warned against disobeying God (Heb 3:7—4:13)

(a) Rebellion at Kadesh Barnea (3:7-11)

(b) Consequences of unbelief (3:12-19)

(i) Departure from God (3:12)

(ii) Hardening of the heart (3:13-16)

(iii) An act of rebellion (3:17)

(iv) Loss of blessings (3:18-19)

### Hebrews 3

#### (3) Christ is superior to Moses (Heb 3:1—4:13)

(A) Similarities between Christ and Moses (3:1-2)

**1 Therefore, holy brothers *and sisters*, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession: Jesus;**

**1** Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;

**1** Therefore, holy brothers, partners in a heavenly calling, keep your focus on Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.

**1** Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

- "Therefore" - a Pauline pointer to all that went on before (Heb 2:6-18) with the argument of Heb 3:1-4:13; he had the entire destiny and mission aspect of Jesus Christ in focus

- "...holy brothers *and sisters*" - the readers are saved. Here he speaks of a "heavenly calling" which brings a heavenly inheritance.

— Although the original receivers of this epistle were in need of correction and admonition, the author still regarded them as fellow Christians and brothers in the faith.

- "...partakers" - *metochoi*, another proof the author is writing to believers (Cf. 3:14; 6:4; 12:8)

- "...heavenly calling" - the effectual calling to salvation, of which the original audience/readers were "partakers" of
- "...consider" - to make a careful study or investigation of
- They had already made their confession, but after they had confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, the next step, as Jesus said in Matt 11:29, was to learn of me. They needed to gaze on Him, the Messiah, not on the Levitical system that was trying to pull them back.
- "...Apostle and High Priest" - this is the only place where these two titles are used of Jesus
- "Apostle" - represents God to man; the author is using this title in a different sense than the Twelve Apostles. He is using it in the sense of a Messenger through whom a new dispensation came into being and by whom a covenant was made.
- This was true of both Moses and Jesus (John 1:17): through Moses, the Mosaic Covenant was made and the Dispensation of Law was brought in. Through Jesus, the New Covenant was made and the Dispensation of Grace was brought in.
- "High Priest" - represents men to God; in this sense, Jesus is like Aaron
- These two titles are given to Jesus: Apostle, which makes Him like Moses; and High Priest, which makes Him like Aaron. The apostolic theme will be developed in 3:1—4:13; the high priestly theme will be developed in 4:14—7:28.

- 2 He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.
- 2 He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.
- 2 He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was in all God's household,
- 2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.
- This verse should tie directly to v1 rather than a separate statement
- The idea is that Moses is the highest example of human faithfulness, building on Num 12:7
- Jesus was greater in faithfulness than Moses because even Moses failed occasionally, but Jesus never failed. Jesus was faithful to God the Father who appointed Him to this position.
- The idea is that Jesus is *now* faithful, not that He *was* in the past. He is faithful now just as Moses was in the past.
- Moses was faithful in that he never withheld God's Word from either Israel nor Pharaoh. He was faithful in erecting the Tabernacle (Ex 40:16).
- Although there are places one can find that Moses made serious mistakes (Ex 2-4; Num 20), overall Moses was a faithful apostle (Num 12:7).
- We can see Moses' faithfulness in how he served regarding God's "house," the tabernacle, and regarding God's "household," Israel. He served exactly as God had instructed Him (Cf. Num 12:7; 1 Sam 2:35; 1 Chr 17:14).

- Jesus Himself notes that Moses wrote of Him (John 5:46)
- *This validates Moses as author and also that Moses was speaking by the Spirit of God of none other than the Meschiach, our Lord and Savior.*

(B) Differences between Christ and Moses (3:3-6)

- 3 For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.
- 3 For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.
- 3 because he is worthy of greater glory than Moses in the same way that the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.
- 3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.
- We can see the difference between Jesus' superiority and Moses' by comparing the Builder with the building itself. No matter how grand a building may be, its creator gets more glory than the building itself.
- Although Moses was faithful to the House of Israel, Jesus built the House
- Moses served faithfully in the system of worship the tabernacle represented, but Jesus designed that system of worship
- He is arguing here that the Builder has more honor than the house itself

There is probably no man, other than Jesus Christ Himself, that God has honored more than Moses. The name of Moses appears more times in the Bible than any other proper name (except for Jesus and David): 847x total, 762x in the OT; 85x in the NT. From God's Hand upon him as a babe, miraculously preserving him from his enemies, to God personally digging his grave and burying him. Moses also honors God greater than any other man (John 8:28-29). In each case there is a parallel, and obviously a substantial superseding. It was important to convince the Jewish readers that Jesus is greater than Moses because the entire Jewish religion came through Moses. Christianity came through Christ.

- 4 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.
- 4 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.
- 4 After all, every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.
- 4 For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.
- A powerful testimony of Jesus' deity: since God built everything, and Jesus built God's house, Jesus is God

5 Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a **servant**, for a testimony of **those things** which were to be spoken *later*;

5 Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later;

5 Moses was faithful in all God's household as a servant who was to testify to what would be said later,

5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

- "...servant" - *therapon*, "to heal"; it emphasizes Moses as ministering to the moral and spiritual needs of Israel

— Moses was faithful "in all his house," but his position in the house was a servant

- "...those things" - something that would serve as a model for a later time

— Moses' ministry was preparatory for the coming of the Messiah

6 but **Christ was faithful as a Son over His house**—whose house we are, **if** we hold firmly to our confidence and the boast of our hope.

6 but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

6 but the Messiah was faithful as the Son in charge of God's household, and we are his household if we hold on to our courage and the hope in which we rejoice.

6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

- Moses, as a servant, was faithful *in* God's house; Christ, as a Son, was faithful *over* God's house

— Jesus will not serve as a servant...He will reign as a King. He is no longer God's servant, but God's Son.

— He is seated, not standing like a servant (no chairs in the tabernacle); He is the Owner of all things, not One who makes preparation for things as Moses did.

- Three houses (mentioned 7x):

- House of Israel; a *redeemed* people (Ex 14:31; 15:13)
- Household (or family) of God
- House of God - as the Spirit indwells you

- "...Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house" - this "house" implies much more than the house of Israel as it includes us. We also speak of "House of David," "House of Aaron" and we really mean the family line in the tribal sense.

- "...if" - here and in v14, it's a misinterpretation to take the "if" clauses and interpret them as conditional statements that if the believer doesn't do something, their soul is going to slip out of the grace of God and they will end up in hell.

— These verses are not an admonition to stay saved or prove that one was truly saved to begin with. However, to interpret Hebrews correctly, you have to understand that it was written to a believing audience. It was not written to non-believers (Cf. Heb 3:1).

— We should understand these "if" clauses as exhortations to not drift back into Judaism in order to avoid:

- Immaturity (Heb 5:11-14)
  - Every minute they spent in the institutions of Judaism without paying attention to the new, full revelation that has come in Christ, they are shut off from spiritual maturity because they shut themselves off from NT doctrine and teaching.
  - If they regressed back to the Law, they could never get to spiritual maturity in Christ. This was one of the main consequences for regression back into Judaism.
- Loss of reward
  - Another consequence for them regressing back to Judaism and the Mosaic Law was the loss of rewards
  - The author warns of losing our privilege of serving as priests in the present (in v7-19, he warns of losing some of our privileges as heirs in the future)
- Divine discipline (Heb 12:5-11)
  - Whom God loves, He disciplines

— This does not mean that believers are saved only *if* they just hold on to the end. That would mean salvation is attained by works, not by faith. The point here is that the continuance in faith is the evidence that a person actually believed. Lack of continuance in faith does not mean the person is not saved; it only means that the person does not have the evidence that faith exists.

— So the "if" clauses in these verses do not pertain to loss of salvation. What they pertain to is that if these Jewish believers did not hold fast to their beliefs and practice, and refrain from going back into Judaism and under the Law, they would experience temporal problems in their lives, not the least of which are lack of growth (immaturity), loss of reward, and possibly divine discipline.

- The role of an apostle is faithfulness. Christ was faithful to testify of His Father's glory, not His own. Even as a child we see that He was about "His Father's business" (John 9:4, Matt 26).

— The Israelites had this initially (Ex 19:6), but lost it when they built the golden calf (Ex 32). After that, God limited the privilege of being priests to the Levites, who remained faithful when the other Israelites apostatized (Ex 32:26-29; Num 3:12-13).

— Today, it is possible for us to forfeit the privilege of functioning as a priest in the future (1 Peter 2:5).

— This verse forms the background for the 2nd warning passage (Heb 3:7–4:13).

(C) The Hebrews are warned against disobeying God (Heb 3:7—4:13)

The comparison between Christ and Moses leads to a follow-up comparison of their followers. The conduct of the Israelites in the wilderness is used to challenge the NT readers to a closer walk with God.

The background to this section is Num 13-14: the sin of Kadesh-Barnea, which was a crucial turning point in the history of Israel. The Israelites had finished one year of journeying in the Wilderness, a great portion of the Mosaic Law had been given, and the Tabernacle had been built. They were now at the oasis of Kadesh-Barnea, on the border of the Promised Land. Before the conquest, Moses sent 12 spies to survey the territory. When they returned 40 days later, Joshua and Caleb declared that with God, Israel could take the Land. The other 10 claimed that, due to the numerical superiority and the military strength of the Canaanites, it would be impossible to conquer the Land. The masses of the people decided to follow the majority vote. There was widespread revolt against God and Moses, and the Israelites came close to the point of killing Moses and Aaron until God intervened.

### **Five Major Warnings**

1. The Danger of Drifting (2:1-4)
- 2. The Danger of Disobedience (3:7—4:13)**
3. The Danger of Stagnation: Failing to Progress Toward Maturity (5:11—6:20)
4. The Danger of Willful Sin (10:26-39)
5. Warning against Indifference (12:25-29)

***All of the warning passages in Hebrews involve actions in relation to the Word of God.***

### **Why the Warnings?**

God, in His love and mercy, saw fit to move the author of Hebrews to warn his readers; the author loved the recipients enough to warn them of impending danger. God wanted future readers also to understand that grave danger accompanies apostasy. Remember, the original recipients were Christians—each warning will substantiate that fact. The correct interpretation of the book hinges on the answer to one question: “Were the people addressed believers or unbelievers? Saved, unsaved or half saved?” Two dozen times the author includes himself in the warnings and admonitions. Does God urge an unconverted, half-saved professor to hold fast his false profession (10:23)?

What are these believers going to lose, forfeit, or suffer? Not “salvation” (John 10:28-29), but rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We cannot escape this by applying it to others:

***The burden of Hebrews is not the rescuing sinners from hell—it is the bringing of sons to glory.***

(a) Rebellion at Kadesh Barnea (3:7-11)

**7 Therefore**, just as the **Holy Spirit says**, "**TODAY** IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,

**7** Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice,

**7** Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice,

**7** Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice,

- Context of the words quotes Ps 95:7b-11...

- "Therefore" - points to the application: in light of the fact that the Son is superior to Moses, they must not apostatize through disobedience

- "...Holy Spirit says" - the writer ascribes the Psalm to the Holy Spirit, not to David

— The verses just prior (Ps 95:6-7a) are a call to bow down and worship the Lord

— Trinity attributed: 1:1 to the Father; 2:3 to the Son; 3:7 to the Spirit

- "...TODAY" - stresses the urgency of immediate action

**8 DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS ON THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS,**

**8** Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness,

**8** do not harden your hearts as they did when they provoked me during the time of testing in the wilderness.

**8** Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

- "DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS" - the most prominent phrase used by the author of Hebrews to describe the sin of the Israelites (3:8,13,15; 4:7)

— Although this expression is often associated with the heart of Pharaoh (Ex 4:21; 7:3,13,22; 8:15,19,32, et al), in Ps 95 it describes the hearts of the Israelites in the wilderness

— Both the Hebrew word and the Greek equivalent in the LXX denote a "hardening" of the will (stubbornness) against listening to and obeying the Lord (Deut 9:6,13; Neh 9:16-17,29; Jer 7:26; 17:23; 19:15)

— The application here is to not apostatize through disobedience; do not do to this One what they did to Moses

- "...AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME" - *parapikrasmos*, "the provocation"; the children of Israel had rebelled and murmured previously, but this instance was so unique that it was referred to as "The Provocation" in Ps 95

— This rebellion sprang from hard hearts that would not surrender their selfish desires, expectations, plans and pride to God's will (Ex 17:1-7; Num 13:30-14:10,22-23,28-32; 20:1-13)

— Used only 3x in the NT, all three times in this chapter (v8,15-16)

— Altogether the children of Israel provoked God 10x (Num 14:22-23), but the turning point was at Kadesh-Barnea

Ps 95:7c-11 -

7c Today, if you will hear His voice,

8 Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, As on the day of Massah in the wilderness,

9 "When your fathers put Me to the test, They tested Me, though they had seen My work.

10 "For forty years I was disgusted with that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways.

11 "Therefore I swore in My anger, They certainly shall not enter My rest."

Ps 95 makes reference to two earlier situations (Ex 17:1-7; Num 20:1-13)

- This marked the beginning and toward the end of the wilderness journey
- The writer of Hebrews drew a parallel between the wilderness generation and his readers by applying Ps 95

9 WHERE YOUR FATHERS PUT ME TO THE TEST, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.

9 Where your fathers tried *Me* by testing *Me*, And saw My works for forty years.

9 There your ancestors tested me, even though they had seen my actions

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

10 "THEREFORE I WAS **ANGRY** WITH **THIS GENERATION**, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS';

10 "Therefore I was angry with this generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they did not know My ways';

10 for 40 years. That is why I was indignant with that generation and said, 'They are always going astray in their hearts, and they have not known my ways.'

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

- "...ANGRY" - displeased, vexed, incensed; He was angry with the generation that came out of Egypt because they always went astray in the hearts and they did not know His ways

- "...THIS GENERATION" - based on the context of the passage, refers to those who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years during the Exodus (Cf. Matt 24:34)

— The author is drawing a parallel between the wilderness generation of Jews and the generation of Jews of his day



## Jewish Exegetical Principles

The author's pattern of using extended expositions of OT passages is surprisingly rare among other NT writers. The author also sought to re-orient OT texts to the situation of his readers by using common rabbinical practices without violating or altering their actual sense to their original audience. The usage of the OT by the author of Hebrews shows that the writer believes that God still speaking to His people through the OT. The same God who inspired Ps 95 to call people to faith inspired the author of Hebrews to expand His meaning to faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Hillel's exegetical rule known as *Gezera Shawa* ("verbal analogy") is shown by appealing to the "rest" in Gen 2:2 in order to explain the "rest" in Ps 95. The author followed the Midrashic practice of selective editing in his citation of Ps 95:10: by changing the demonstrative pronoun from "that [*ereine*] generation," as found in the LXX, to "this [*taute*] generation" (3:10), he was able to apply more forcefully the warning of Ps 95 to his readers' situation. This minor modification produces a rhetorical effect without altering the meaning of the original verse. Another example is the author's repeated use of "today" (*semeron*) from Ps 95:7 in order to modernize the OT text as well as stress the urgency of its warning to his audience (3:7,13,15; 4:7). [Sources: Gleason, Randall C., *The Old Testament Background of Rest in Hebrews 3:7-4:11* in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July–September, 2000, p. 283. Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G.: *The Messianic Jewish Epistles: Hebrews, James, First Peter, Second Peter, Jude*. 1st ed. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2005.]

11 AS I SWORE IN MY ANGER, 'THEY CERTAINLY SHALL NOT ENTER MY **REST**.'

11 As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'

11 So in my anger I swore a solemn oath that they would never enter my rest."

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

- The Israelites angered God so thoroughly that He swore on His own name they would not enter the Promised Land. God made up His mind, and He would not repent (Num 14).

- In the historical sense they were wandering in the wilderness, a 40-year spiritual detour...

- The author reminds his readers of the fate of the Israelites when they failed to continue believing God at Kadesh Barnea. The purpose was to help them realize the serious consequences of that behavior, and to motivate them to faithfully persevere in the apostles' teaching.

— In v6, the author warned of losing our privilege of serving as priests in the present. Now he warned of losing some of our privileges as heirs in the future.

— The passage appeals to the readers not to become discontented because of their suffering, and not to let discontentment give way to open rebellion—lest they, like their forefathers, lose the blessings of the privileges that now were available to them as believers.

- God took an oath(!). Over a million were saved out of Egypt. Only two who were adults at the time of the oath "inherited" the land (Moses wasn't one of them!).
- When Israel ultimately crosses the Jordan, they do anything but "rest": they had wars, and failures... (Note: don't allegorize crossing the Jordan as death or entering heaven...)
- "...REST" - *katapausis*, Canaan Rest (3:11,18; 4:1,3 [2x],5,10-11); see note: **"Rest" in Heb 3:7-4:13** below.
- There are at least a dozen references, in this chapter and the next, to the word *rest*, but it does not always mean the same kind of rest
- The conquest of the Promised Land was viewed as a form of rest (Deut 3:20; 12:9; 25:19; Joshua 11:23; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1).

### **Application: Don't Forfeit Your Inheritance**

Because of the Israelites failure to have faith that God could lead them into the Promised Land and conquer their enemies, the Exodus Generation that came out of Egypt would not be allowed to enter the Land. They had to continue wandering for 40 years until every person, except Joshua, Caleb, and those under the age of 20 died in the Wilderness. Forty years later, it would be a new nation, a new generation that would enter the Promised Land under Joshua. This new generation that had not been born as slaves in Egypt but as freemen in the Wilderness. The Jewish generation that left Egypt for the Land, the Exodus Generation, would not enter the Promised Land. They had reached the point of no return and their decision was now irrevocable. The judgment was one of physical death outside the Land.

The application of this section is that these believers are in a similar danger. They could make an irrevocable decision and also be subjected to physical death. The principle in Scripture is that once a point of no return is reached, the offenders are subject to divine judgment. This judgment is physical, not spiritual; it does not mean loss of salvation. In fact, Num 14:20 says that the people repented, and even says that God forgave their sin. It did not affect anyone's individual salvation, but the physical consequences of their sin needed to be paid. Once a point of no return is reached, no matter how much repenting one does thereafter, the fact of coming physical judgment cannot be changed. That is what happened in this case. Even Moses had to die outside the Land because of a specific sin he committed. Although this did not affect his individual salvation, he had to pay the physical consequences of his sin.

The point is that a redeemed people can lose blessings intended for them because they do not continue in faith to enjoy them. Israel had been redeemed from slavery in Egypt, but they lost out on the blessing of the Land because they did not continue in faith. They failed to enter into Canaan Rest.

## **"Rest" in Heb 3:7–4:13**

In Hebrews, three words are used for "rest":

1. Canaan Rest - *katapausis*, means to cease struggling with the enemy (3:11,18; 4:1,3 [2x],5,10-11; Cf. Deut 3:20; 12:9; 25:19; Joshua 11:23; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1)
  - It has to do with the subjection of one's mind, one's will, and one's heart to God's power. This type of rest enables the believer to conquer sin.
2. Creation Rest - *katapauo*, emphasizes a completed work, a cessation of activity. It was forfeited after the Fall, but provided again in the Kingdom. God finished His creation work, then rested (4:4,8,10).
  - There is a present aspect to Creation Rest: it is a type of salvation or redemption rest. It means to trust in the finished work of the Messiah and not to return to the works of the Law.
  - There is also a future aspect to Creation Rest: it is the final facet of salvation when the believer gets to Heaven or the Messianic Kingdom. It is the rest a believer enters into when he dies, his work on earth is finished, and he goes to Heaven.
3. Sabbath Rest - *sabbatismos*, refers to a spiritual rest. It symbolizes the spiritual rest of spiritual maturity. This is the type of rest the author is encouraging them to enter (4:9).

There are many interpretations of what this "rest" means in this passage, and all have some level of Scriptural support. However, many conservative scholars take the "rest" of Heb 3:7–4:13 to anticipate the coming messianic kingdom age. Reasons for this interpretation follow:

1. In 4:1, the "promise" to enter God's rest remains for those who receive it. The "promise" implies that it is futuristic in application.
2. Ps 95, the basis for the entire warning section and the source of the admonition concerning rest, is an Enthronement Psalm, which tells the story of a divine kingdom which is yet to be set up on earth. In other words, the theme of the Enthronement Psalms is clearly eschatological and anticipates the rule of the Lord on the earth (Ps 93:1-2; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). The "rest" of Ps 95 must therefore anticipate the kingdom.
3. The concept of "rest" as noted in 4:9 was used in Jewish literature to refer to the kingdom age.
4. The OT refers to the kingdom age as being a time of rest (Ps 132:12-14; Is 11:10; 14:3; 32:18; 34:15)
5. The "rest" spoken of in Ps 95 clearly involved Israel's dwelling in the Land, thus the promised rest cannot be divorced from settlement in the Land.
6. Heb 4:8 speaks of another prophetic "day." This is clearly a period of time, and is explained in 4:9 as the Sabbath rest.

7. The "rest" was prepared from the foundation of the world (Heb 4:3-4) just as the kingdom was (Matt 25:34). This explains why Christ was employed in healing on the Jewish Sabbath in John 5. The ultimate Sabbath had not yet come so Christ with His Father was working to bring in that ultimate Sabbath or kingdom age. The idea of the Sabbath being the millennial age dates back to the Epistle of Barnabas in the early second century.

(b) Consequences of unbelief (3:12-19)

(i) Departure from God (3:12)

12 Take care, brothers and sisters, that there will not be in any one of you an evil, **unbelieving** heart that **falls away** from the **living God**.

12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

12 See to it, my brothers, that no evil, unbelieving heart is found in any of you, as shown by your turning away from the living God.

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

- This is an exhortation to apply this lesson from the past (Cf. 1 Cor 10:6-11); unbelief is sin (Deut 9:7,24)

- "...unbelieving" - *apistias*, more than unbelief; disbelief, refusal to believe; in the genitive case describing the evil heart marked by disbelief

- "...falls away" - *aphistemi*, to cause to withdraw, to remove; to stand off, to stand aloof; to desert, withdraw from one; to fall away, to become faithless (2 Thess 2:3). This is the origin of the English word "apostasy."

— *aphistemi* and *apostasia* do not by themselves indicate whether believers or unbelievers are in view; this must be determined from the context in which it is used

— Some Christians view apostates as "backsliders," but the apostates in view here are not average backsliders, but very serious backsliders

— No believer today is able to go back to the Mosaic legal system since the temple is gone and there is no priesthood. But every believer is tempted to give up his confession of Christ and go back to the world system of compromise and bondage.

— "departing" - the negative side of "hold fast" in v6

— This "departing" was a willful withdrawal from service as believer-priests and worship in the priestly house of 3:1-6

- "...living God" - Father (Matt 16:16); Son (1 Tim 4:10); Holy Spirit (2 Cor 6:16). The "Living God" dwells in you (1 Cor 3:16).

— The rebellion he warns against consists of departing from a living, dynamic person, not from some dead doctrine. Jews might respond that they served the same God as

Christians, so they would not be departing from God if they went back to Judaism. However, to reject God's highest revelation is to depart from God.

(ii) Hardening of the heart (3:13-16)

13 But **encourage** one another every day, as long as it is still called "**today**," so that none of you will be hardened by the **deceitfulness of sin**.

13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

13 Instead, continue to encourage one another every day, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin,

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

- "...encourage" - *parakaleo*, "to come alongside in order to help." The Holy Spirit is given the term *Paraclete* or Comforter (John 14:16). There the word is used as a noun; here as a verb.

— Exhorting one another daily is the solution to counteract the hardening and deceitfulness of sin; the antidote for developing a hard heart is a caring, encouraging community of believers.

— The Holy Spirit comes alongside and helps. Believers are also to come alongside each other and help, especially if they see another believer in trouble or drifting spiritually.

— Does this mean that any of us could fall away? Are we vulnerable?

- "...today" - means right now: while you still have opportunity...

— Tomorrow is the day when idle men work, and fools repent

— Tomorrow is Satan's today; he cares not what good resolutions you form, if only you schedule them for tomorrow

- "...deceitfulness of sin" - the Greek shows that this is a *specific* sin

— If the readers see a brother about to apostatize from the faith, they must come alongside and help him.

— This sin is deceitful because it tricks them into thinking this is the best way out of their present situation (being persecuted for their faith)

— The antidote for developing a hard heart is a caring and encouraging community of believers

— If a sinner continues in their sin, they may conclude that sin does not matter, as the Israelites did at Kadesh Barnea. Their unbelief in that situation was the 10th instance of unbelief since the time they left Egypt (Num 14:22). This is sin's deceitfulness...they may think that because God does not punish the sinner immediately, sin does not really matter. However, sin matters very much.

- The author encouraged his readers to continue to walk with God to help them avoid rationalizing that their sins don't matter because of the cross
- Regular fellowship is a great help to Christians; being reminded from the Word that failing to continue to trust God will bring bad consequences. Mutual encouragement in godliness is something we all need frequently so we do not become hardened to sin.
- One of the aspects of sin, the judicial aspect, has been taken care of for you at the cross at Calvary. Sin was judged there. Your sins were nailed to the cross. No longer do your sins stand between you and God. You have been "justified" (Cf. Eph 4:22; Matt 13:22; 2 Thess 2:10; Col 2:8; 2 Peter 2:13).

There are two sides to the cross. We have the privilege of access to Him, and He has the benefit of fellowship with us. He benefits too, as it gives Him a way to be able to deal with us without being encumbered by our unrighteousness.

See [Inheritance](#) for a complete study on the believer's inheritance in the kingdom, and an explanation of the Calvinism vs Arminianism debate.

14 For we have become **partakers** of Christ **if** we keep the beginning of our commitment firm until the end,

14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

14 because we are the Messiah's partners only if we hold on to our original confidence to the end.

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

- This verse explains the reason and need for exhortation (and fellowship with other believers)...

- "...partakers" - *metachoi*, one who shares in, companion, comrade; partner (in a work, office or dignity)

- "...if" - see notes on v6

— The issue in discussion is not the retention of salvation based upon the persistence of our faith, but that the possession of salvation is evidenced by the continuation of faith

— This clause does not mean believers become sharers if they hold fast long enough

— The perfect tense is used and, therefore, it means the readers have already become partakers of Christ. Yet, how can someone else recognize that they have already become partakers of Christ? If they hold steadfast unto the end, if they maintain their faith to the end, it will prove that they really were partakers of the Messiah.

— They were already partakers, but continuing to do so unto the end would be the final evidence of it

- Even though we are already “partakers” of a heavenly calling (v1), we can only partake of all that God wants us to enjoy, in the future with the Messiah, by persevering.
- Conversely, we can lose the privilege of partaking with Christ fully if we stop trusting and obeying God
- By the same token, we can lose the privilege of serving as priests by proving unfaithful (Luke 19:11-27; 2 Tim 2:12)

15 while it is said, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME.”

15 while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.”

15 As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as they did when they provoked me.”

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

- The penalty for hardening your heart can be seen in the example of the wilderness wanderings, a 40-year spiritual detour

— To understand the warnings in Hebrews, we must understand that the author is drawing parallels between the behavior of God’s people in the past (Israel) and the behavior of God’s people in the present (the Church)

— At Kadesh Barnea, upon the report of the spies, Israel failed due to unbelief (Num 13)

— The entire generation (except for Joshua and Caleb) passed away before they could enter the land (Num 14)

The allusions to Num 14 are significant because they indicate that unbelief is not a lack of faith or trust. It is the refusal to believe God. It leads inevitably to a turning away from God in a deliberate act of rejection.

- What must we hold “steadfast unto the end”?
- How do we become a *metachoi*?

## **Inheritance in the OT**

- Inheritance came to the firstborn son by virtue of his birth
  - Whether he actually secured it depended upon his obedience and the father’s choice
  - The term firstborn carries more meaning than just being born first
  - There are many examples in the OT of the firstborn losing their inheritance

Favored —> First Born

Abel —> Seth / Cain Shem —> Japheth Isaac —> Ishmael Jacob —> Esau Ephraim —> Manasseh Judah/Joseph —> Reuben Moses —> Aaron David —> all his brothers (Eliab was firstborn) New Covenant —> Old Covenant Last Adam (Jesus Christ) —> First Adam (Adam)

Why did God interrupt the concept of the “first born” for all of the patriarchs? To demonstrate Jesus as the “firstborn” who brings the hopes and promises of the nation to realization. He is the firstborn who redeems the world (Cf. Ex 4:22). He is the firstborn who rules His Kingdom (all creation) as the son of David (Cf. Ps 89:27; 2 Sam 7:12-14). All previous history pointed to him and waited for him. The “firstborn” is the promised Messiah of Israel who rules and reigns over His creation. When Paul called Jesus the “firstborn” in Colossians, he was declaring Jesus to be the Savior.

### **Inheritances Forfeited**

- Land of Canaan
  - Defined as an Inheritance (Deut 15:4; 19:14; 25:19; 26:1)
  - Merited by obedience (Ex 23:30; Deut 2:31; 11:11-24; 16:20; 19:8-9; Joshua 1:6-7; 11:23)
- Exodus Generation - promised an inheritance, failed to obtain it at Kadesh-Barnea (Num 13-14)
  - Israel was God's “firstborn son” - their “title” or “position” used in Ex 4:22-23
  - Yet only 2 of over 2 million took possession of their inheritance (doesn't include those under 20 who also inherited)
- Moses was excluded due to his disobedience (Deut 4:21-22)
- Esau - sold his inheritance for a bowl of stew (Gen 25:29-34)
- Reuben, Jacob's firstborn son (Gen 38; 1 Chr 5:1-2)
  - Disavowed because of illicit relation with father's concubine
  - Simeon and Levi - next in line from Reuben—disavowed because of their heinous crime at Shechem
  - Judah - 4th in line; in the lineage of Christ
  - Joseph - rec'd double-portion; favored as firstborn from Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife
- David warns Solomon that conditions were based upon obedience (1 Chr 28:8)
- Generation of Israelites, enslaved to Babylon (Lam 5:2)

### **Inheritances Merited**

- Abraham (Gen 17:14)
- Caleb (Num 14:24)
- Joshua (Joshua 14:8-9)



Num 21:20-23:

20 And the Lord said, I have **pardoned** according to thy word:

- "...pardoned" - the Lord pardoned their sin; He forgave them

21 **But** as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

- "But" - footnote coming...

22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

23 Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

- So they are forgiven, but they are disinherited—they will not inherit the land

### The Two-Part Oath

1. The first is the declaration that God "pardoned" them "according to [Moses'] word" (Num 14:20)

- This can only mean that the people were forgiven of the iniquity of the sin they had just committed (Num 14:19)

2. In the same breath the Lord uttered the second part of His oath, denying them entrance into the land (Num 14:23)

Lesson: God is jealous about sharing His glory. Those to whom He shows great and mighty works and His glory should take heed.

They were believers; their justification is not at issue (Cf. 1 Cor 3:15). Judgment, not mercy, will emanate from the Bema Seat with a just recompense of reward—positive or negative as appropriate (Cf. Matt 18:23-35; 24:42-51; 25:14-30; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 12:1-12,41-48; 19:11-27).

16 For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?

16 For who provoked *Him* when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt *led* by Moses?

16 Now who heard him and provoked him? Was it not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?

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

- The author now gives the interpretation of the lesson by asking three questions:

1. Who were the provokers? Who provoked God in “the provocation”? — the very ones whom God rescued from Egypt, who started off in faith for the Promised Land, but missed the Land and life of rest because of unbelief. It was the ones whom God rescued who provoked Him.
  - If we fail to believe that Jesus has defeated and will continue to defeat our enemies, we too will fail to enter into all the blessing that can be ours in heaven.
  - Only 2 (out of over 2 million) inherited the land (plus those under 20 at the time). Those under 20 were exempted: 58 year olds and under entered 38 years later. And even Moses wasn't one of them
  - The people repented and God forgave their sin, but the physical consequences of their sin had to be paid (Num 14:20)

(iii) An act of rebellion (3:17)

17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness?

17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

17 And with whom was he angry for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned and whose bodies fell dead in the wilderness?

17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

2. Who was it that sinned? - the provokers (v16)

- They sinned and suffered the consequences, however it was a one-time sin: they unbelief manifested itself throughout the 40 years of wilderness wanderings and, consequently, their bodies fell in the wilderness
- Note that the consequence was physical judgment, not spiritual judgment: Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because of a sin he committed. He was punished by physical death outside the Land, but he was not punished spiritually by loss of salvation.
- The same was true of Aaron, Miriam, and many others. The punishment was physical death; it was not spiritual death.
- While Joshua and Caleb were sinners, they were not guilty of a specific act of disobedience worthy of death. They were allowed to enter the Promised Land alive.

(iv) Loss of blessings (3:18-19)

18 And to whom did He **swear** that they would not enter His **rest**, but to those who were **disobedient**?

18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?

18 And to whom did he swear that they would never enter his rest? It was to those who disobeyed him, was it not?

18 And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

3. To whom did He say they would not enter into rest? — the provokers, the same group as the answer to questions 1 & 2. Disobedience brought rejection, and it was this group who disobeyed.

- "...swear" - God couldn't change the consequences because He swore an oath

- "...rest" - *katapausis*, Canaan Rest (3:11,18; 4:1,3 [2x],5,10-11; Cf. Deut 3:20; 12:9; 25:19; Joshua 11:23; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1): Israel's conquest and possession of the Promised Land under Joshua. It points to a place of blessing. This is a picture of the kingdom rest.

- "...disobedient" - *apeitheo*, not to allow one's self to be persuaded; to refuse or withhold belief and obedience; not to comply with is translated as "obey not" in Rom 2:8; 10:21

— The concept of "believing" and "obeying" is the same Greek word in several of Paul's letters

19 And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

19 So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of their unbelief.

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

- The conclusion: the wilderness generation, who was rescued out of Egypt by God, was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because of unbelief (disobedience)

— Rebellion meant the loss of promised blessings, however notice that Israel did not lose their status as a redeemed people, but they did lose the blessing of the Promised Land and a life of peace and rest in the Land.

## Summary

- They were a redeemed people (Ex 14:31; 15:13)
  - Saved by the blood of the Passover Lamb
  - Delivered out of Egypt
  - Crossed the Red Sea
  - Saw Pharaoh's army drown
  - Fed on quail and manna from heaven daily
- Denied their inheritance due to unbelief (3:19)

To summarize his argument of v16-19, the Exodus Generation that was redeemed from Egypt failed to enter into the Promised Land because they failed to continue in faith. Their failure underwent a three-stage progression: first, they fell into unbelief. Second was that unbelief led to active disobedience. Third was that active disobedience led to open sin. This sin brought an irreversible judgment: 40 years of wandering and physical death outside the Land. That was true of the Exodus Generation. Now, the generation to whom the Book of Hebrews was written is in a similar situation that entails a similar danger. It had been almost 40 years since the Messiah died. The judgment of 70 AD will occur at the end of these 40 years. Many died after the 40 years in the wilderness. If the readers of this epistle go back into Judaism, they, too, will die a physical death.