

Session 9 Let Us Therefore Fear

Before the Silence: A Study of Hebrews

Session 9 | Hebrews 4:1-7

The Promise Of Entering His Rest (Hebrews 4:1-7)

Hebrews 4 continues the warning of chapter 3. The wilderness generation heard God's promise but failed to enter because of unbelief. Their failure did not cancel God's promise, and David's later word "**To day**" proved that an opportunity to enter His rest still remained.

The argument moves through three periods:

- **Creation** - God finished His works and rested the seventh day.

- **The wilderness** - An unbelieving generation was barred from entering the promised rest.
- **David's later day** - Long after the wilderness generation, God spoke through David and appointed another opportunity called "**To day**."

The chapter is not changing subjects from chapter 3. It develops the meaning of God's **rest** and applies the wilderness warning to the Hebrews' own opportunity.

Hebrews 4:1-2 - Let Us Therefore Fear

*Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.
For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*

Exegesis

- **"Therefore"** carries forward the conclusion of Hebrews 3:19: Israel could not enter because of unbelief.
- **"Let us fear"** commands sober vigilance. God's promise gives reason for faith, but the wilderness example forbids presumption.
- **"A promise being left us"** means the promise still stands. One generation's exclusion did not exhaust or cancel God's rest.
- **"Any of you"** gives the warning individual force within the addressed Hebrew company.
- **"Come short of it"** means fail to reach the promised goal, as the wilderness generation died short of Canaan.
- **"The gospel preached"** refers broadly to good news. The fathers heard good news concerning the promised land; the Hebrews had received good news concerning the rest then set before them.
- The message did not profit the wilderness hearers because it was not joined with believing response.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Hebrews 3:16-19** - The preceding conclusion identifies unbelief as the reason Israel could not enter.
- **Numbers 13:30-14:4** - Israel heard the promise of the land but believed the evil report and refused to go forward.
- **Numbers 14:39-45** - After the opportunity closed, Israel tried to enter presumptuously and was defeated.
- **Deuteronomy 1:29-35** - Moses connects Israel's refusal with unbelief and God's oath of exclusion.

Text And Translation Notes

- **"Seem to come short"** does not reduce the danger to mere appearance. It means be judged or found to have fallen short.
- The word **"gospel"** does not always identify the same message in every context. Here the comparison must be governed by the promised rest and the wilderness generation.
- **"Mixed with faith"** pictures the spoken word being joined with faith in the hearers so that it becomes profitable.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say the wilderness generation heard Paul's gospel of the grace of God.
- It does **not** teach that hearing truth automatically produces its promised benefit.
- It does **not** permit national privilege to replace personal believing response.

Hebrews 4:3-5 - God Finished His Works And Rested

*For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said,
As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest:
although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*

*For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise,
And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.
And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.*

Exegesis

- Believers enter the rest God provides; unbelief is the dividing issue established by the wilderness example.
- **“My rest”** belongs to God. The argument begins before Canaan because God’s own rest dates from the completion of creation.
- God rested because His works were **finished**, not because He was weary.
- Genesis 2 establishes the principle of completed work and divine rest. Psalm 95 shows that entrance into that rest could still be offered or refused much later.
- Verse 5 repeats the oath to hold creation rest and the wilderness exclusion together in the argument.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Genesis 2:1-3** - God finishes creation and rests on the seventh day.
- **Psalm 95:7-11** - The direct source of God’s oath concerning entrance into His rest.
- **Numbers 14:21-23** - The historical generation that despised

God’s word was excluded from the promised land.

- **Hebrews 3:11** - The full Psalm quotation has already introduced God’s wrath, oath, and rest.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“If they shall enter”** reproduces the oath wording of Psalm 95:11. The KJV renders the same Hebrew construction in the Psalm as **“that they should not enter.”**
- No separate word for **“not”** appears in the Hebrew expression. The emphatic negative is inherent in the abbreviated oath: they certainly shall not enter.
- The wording therefore agrees more closely with Psalm 95 than an English comparison between the KJV passages may initially suggest.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** identify God’s rest merely with inactivity.
- It does **not** make Canaan the beginning or the full extent of the rest under discussion.
- It does **not** present **“if they shall enter”** as an uncertain possibility; it is the wording of God’s oath of exclusion.

Hebrews 4:6-7 - He Limiteth A Certain Day

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Exegesis

- **“It remaineth”** means God’s purpose for His rest still awaits fulfillment. Human unbelief does not defeat His promise.
- **“Some must enter”** expresses the certainty of God’s purpose, not the automatic entrance of every hearer.
- Those first addressed by the land promise failed to enter because of unbelief, but God later appointed another opportunity.
- **“He limiteth”** means God designates or appoints a particular day; it does not mean He shortens an ordinary calendar day.
- **“Saying in David”** treats God as the speaker working through David’s words in Psalm 95.

- **“After so long a time”** is essential. Centuries after Joshua, God still called a generation to respond **“To day.”**
- Hearing God’s voice requires a responsive heart; hardening repeats the wilderness rebellion.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Psalm 95:7-11** - David calls a later generation to hear God’s voice while recalling the fathers who were excluded.
- **Hebrews 3:7-8, 15** - The Holy Ghost has already applied the same **Today** warning to the Hebrews.
- **Joshua 21:43-45** - Israel truly received land and rest under Joshua, making David’s later appeal especially significant.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** make **Today** a guarantee that every offered opportunity remains open indefinitely.
- It does **not** treat Psalm 95 as antiquarian history; God speaks through it to a later generation.
- It does **not** teach that the unbelief of one generation cancels God’s covenanted purpose.

Teaching Summary

- Hebrews 4:1-7 continues the wilderness warning of chapter 3 and urges the Hebrews not to come short through unbelief.
- The wilderness generation heard good news about the promised land, but the message did not profit those who refused to believe it.
- God’s rest begins with His finished creation work, while the wilderness generation shows that unbelief can exclude a gen-

eration from its offered participation.

- Psalm 95 proves that God appointed another **Today** long after the wilderness generation and continued to call His people to hear His voice.
- God’s purpose that some enter His rest is certain, but each addressed hearer must respond in faith rather than repeat the fathers’ hardening.