

Session 10 Let Us Labour Therefore To Enter

Before the Silence: A Study of Hebrews

Session 10 | Hebrews 4:8-13

The Rest And The Reckoning (Hebrews 4:8-13)

Session 9 ended with David's later call, "**To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**" Because David spoke centuries after Joshua brought Israel into Canaan, Joshua's historical rest could not have exhausted God's promise. A Sabbath rest still remained for the people of God.

The passage now brings the warning to its conclusion:

- **Verses 8-10** - Joshua's rest was real but not final; a Sabbath rest still remains.
- **Verse 11** - The Hebrews must be diligent to enter rather than repeat the wilderness generation's unbelief.
- **Verses 12-13** - God's living Word exposes the thoughts and intentions of every heart before Him.

Hebrews 4:8-10 - There Remaineth A Rest

For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

Exegesis

- **"Jesus"** in verse 8 is Joshua the son of Nun. Joshua and Jesus are forms of the same Hebrew name and are represented by the same Greek name.
- Joshua truly brought Israel into Canaan, and Scripture says that the LORD gave Israel rest. Yet David's much later reference to **another day** proves that the promised rest was not exhausted by the conquest.
- **"There remaineth"** places the rest ahead of the Hebrews. God's purpose had not failed, but the fullness of His rest had not yet been entered.
- The word translated **"rest"** in verse 9 is different from the word used earlier in the chapter. It specifically describes a Sabbath rest or Sabbath observance.
- **"The people of God"** follows the chapter's Israelite argument. Israel's Sabbath, wilderness history, land, and covenant hope supply the setting.
- Verse 10 explains the Sabbath pattern: completed work is followed by rest, **"as God did from his."**
- **"He that is entered"** may state a general principle about anyone entering God's rest. It may also point particularly to Christ, whose completed work and heavenly session fit the pattern. The verse does not explicitly identify the singular **"he."**

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Joshua 21:43-45** - The LORD truly gave Israel the land and rest promised to the fathers; Hebrews does not deny that historical fulfillment.

- **Psalms 95:7-11** - David's later **Today** proves that another opportunity to enter God's rest remained after Joshua.
- **Acts 7:45** - The KJV also uses **"Jesus"** when referring to Joshua bringing the tabernacle into the land.
- **Exodus 31:13-17** - The Sabbath was a covenant sign between the LORD and the children of Israel.
- **Hebrews 11:24-25** - Moses chose affliction **"with the people of God,"** where the phrase plainly identifies Israel.
- **Hebrews 10:11-14** - Christ completed His sacrificial work and sat down, supporting the possible Christological reading of verse 10.

Text And Translation Notes

- The Greek text of verse 8 has *Iēsous*. The KJV consistently gives the Greek form **"Jesus,"** while many modern versions use the familiar Old Testament form **"Joshua"** to identify the man intended by the context.
- This is not a difference between Greek manuscripts. It is an English naming decision involving the same name.
- The word in verse 9 is *sabbatismos*, more specifically a Sabbath rest or observance. The KJV preserves the chapter's repeated English word **"rest,"** while translations using **"Sabbath rest"** make the lexical distinction visible.
- **"Ceased from his own works"** describes completed work followed by rest. It should not automatically be imported into Paul's contrast between works and justification.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** say Joshua gave Israel no rest; it says his rest was not the final fulfillment.
- It does **not** identify **"Jesus"** in verse 8 as Jesus Christ.
- It does **not** transfer Israel's Sabbath sign to the Body of Christ or command Sunday observance.
- It does **not** say dogmatically that the singular **"he"** in verse 10 must be Christ, though His finished work fits the pattern.

Hebrews 4:11 - Labour To Enter Into That Rest

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Exegesis

- **“Let us labour”** means to be diligent, earnest, or zealous. It does not describe ordinary employment or meritorious labor that purchases God’s promise.
- **“Therefore”** gathers the argument together: God’s rest remains, God has appointed **Today**, and the wilderness generation provides a warning.
- **“To enter”** confirms that the addressed Hebrews had not yet entered the promised rest in its fullness.
- **“Lest any man fall”** gives the national exhortation individual force. Each hearer must respond to God’s voice.
- **“The same example”** is Israel’s refusal at Kadesh-barnea. The written history provides a pattern that a later generation could repeat.
- Diligence does not compete with faith. Believing God means taking His promise and warning seriously.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Numbers 14:39-45** - After refusing to enter by faith, Israel attempted to go presumptuously and was defeated.

- **Deuteronomy 1:29-35** - Moses identifies unbelief as the reason that generation was barred from the land.
- **Hebrews 3:12, 18-19** - An evil heart of unbelief led to disobedience and exclusion from the promised rest.
- **Hebrews 6:11-12** - The writer again joins diligence with inheriting the promises through faith and patience.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Labour”** translates a word meaning to make haste, give diligence, or exert earnest effort.
- Some translations use **“disobedience”** for the final word. The underlying idea is refusal to be persuaded, which expresses itself in disobedience; the KJV’s **“unbelief”** keeps the stated cause in view.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** teach justification from sin by strenuous human effort.
- It does **not** reduce **“fall”** to the loss of inward peace or personal contentment.
- It does **not** permit fleshly presumption; Numbers 14 distinguishes obedient faith from self-willed action after opportunity had closed.

Hebrews 4:12-13 - The Word Of God Exposes The Heart

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Exegesis

- **“For”** explains why the warning must be heeded: God’s Word is living and effectual, and it exposes the unbelief hidden within the heart.
- **“Quick”** means living. Psalm 95 is not a dead record of an ancient failure; through Scripture, God addresses the later hearers **Today**.
- **“Powerful”** means active or effective. God’s Word accomplishes its searching and judicial work.
- The twoedged sword pictures complete penetration. The Word reaches distinctions hidden from every human observer.
- **“Dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow”** emphasizes depth of penetration. The verse is not primarily presenting a complete diagram of human nature.
- The Word is a **“discerner”**—a competent judge—of both inward reasoning and the intentions behind it.
- Verse 13 moves naturally from God’s Word to God’s sight. The Word exposes because the God who speaks sees every

creature.

- **“Naked and opened”** describes complete and forced exposure. National privilege, outward religion, and verbal profession cannot hide unbelief from God.
- **“Him with whom we have to do”** identifies God as the One with whom the whole matter lies. Every hearer stands before Him as the Judge who sees the heart and before whom the case must be answered.

Closely Relevant Cross-References

- **Psalm 95:7-8** - God’s voice speaks **Today** and tests whether the hearer will respond or harden the heart.
- **Isaiah 55:10-11** - God’s Word does not return void but accomplishes the purpose for which He sends it.
- **Jeremiah 17:9-10** - The LORD searches the heart and tries the inward parts.
- **1 Samuel 16:7** - Man sees outward appearance, but the LORD looks upon the heart.
- **Psalm 139:1-12** - No word, place, darkness, or distance conceals anyone from God’s searching presence.
- **Hebrews 10:30-31** - The Lord judges His people, making it fearful to fall into the hands of the living God.

Text And Translation Notes

- **“Quick”** is older English for alive, as in **“the quick and the dead.”** It does not mean fast.

- **“Powerful”** translates *energēs*, meaning active or effectual; it belongs to the word-family behind the English word **energy**.
- **“Discerner”** translates *kritikos*, one able to judge. The Word does not await man’s criticism; it judges man’s hidden reasonings.
- The word rendered **“opened”** is related to the Greek word for **neck**. Its precise ancient picture is debated, but the central idea is unmistakable exposure.
- **“With whom we have to do”** is older formal English for the person with whom one’s business, matter, or account lies. God is the One who has the matter in hand and to whom the

hearer is answerable.

What The Passage Does Not Say

- It does **not** use **“quick”** to mean rapid.
- It does **not** present the Bible only as inspiring or comforting; in context the Word exposes unbelief before judgment.
- It does **not** settle every question about the relationship of soul, spirit, and body.
- It does **not** allow a hearer to hide behind outward association with God’s people.
- It does **not** separate God from His Word: the speaking God sees and judges what His Word exposes.

Teaching Summary

- Joshua gave Israel a genuine historical rest, but David’s later **Today** proves that a fuller rest remained.
- The remaining *sabbatismos* is a Sabbath rest for the people of God, rooted in Israel’s covenant and kingdom hope.
- Completed work precedes rest, as God ceased from His creation work and as Christ completed His sacrificial work and sat down.
- The Hebrews were commanded to be diligent because the

wilderness generation’s unbelief could be repeated.

- God’s Word is living, effectual, penetrating, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- No creature is hidden from God; every hearer stands exposed before the One to whom an account must be given.
- Verses 8-13 conclude the rest warning. Verse 14 begins the next movement by presenting Jesus the Son of God as the great High Priest.