

**TIME**  
**“What Day is It?”**  
**Hebrews 3:7, 15; 4:7**

**Big Idea – Today is the day that matters most to everyone.**

Hebrews 3:7 So it is as the Holy Spirit says: “Today listen to what he says.

8 Do not be stubborn as in the past when you turned against God, when you tested God in the desert.

9 There your ancestors tried me and tested me and saw the things I did for forty years.

10 I was angry with them. I said, ‘They are not loyal to me and have not understood my ways.’

11 I was angry and made a promise, ‘They will never enter my rest.’ “

12 So brothers and sisters, be careful that none of you has an evil, unbelieving heart that will turn you away from the living God.

13 But encourage each other every day while it is “today.” Help each other so none of you will become hardened because sin has tricked you.

14 For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ.

15 Remember what it says: “Today when you hear his voice, don’t harden your hearts as Israel did when they rebelled.”

17 And who made God angry for forty years? Wasn’t it the people who sinned, whose corpses lay in the wilderness?

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

Hebrews 4:1-16 God’s promise of entering his rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to experience it.

2 For this good news—that God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn’t share the faith of those who listened to God.

3 For only we who believe can enter his rest. As for the others, God said, “In my anger I took an oath: ‘They will never enter my place of rest,’” even though this rest has been ready since he made the world.

4 We know it is ready because of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day: “On the seventh day God rested from all his work.”

5 But in the other passage God said, “They will never enter my place of rest.”

6 So God’s rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good

news failed to enter because they disobeyed God.

7 So God set another time for entering his rest, and **that time is today**. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: "**Today** when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts."

8 Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come.

9 So there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God.

10 For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world.

11 Let us be diligent to enter God's rest so that no one will fail by following the example of those who refused to obey.

12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

14 So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe.

15 This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.

16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

### **Spiritual Lessons from Israel's in the geography of Israel's experiences.**

To begin with, we must understand that there are spiritual lessons in the geography of Israel's experiences.

Bondage in Egypt represents a sinner's bondage in this world.

Israel's deliverance from Egypt by the blood of Passover lambs and the power of God, represents how a sinner who believes on Christ is delivered from the bondage of sin (Col. 1:13-14).

Jesus Christ is "the Lamb of God" whose death and resurrection have made our deliverance from sin a reality.

It was not God's will that Israel remain either in Egypt or in the wilderness. His desire was that the people enter their glorious inheritance in the land of Canaan. But when Israel got to the border of their inheritance, they delayed because they doubted the promise of God (Num. 13-14). "We are not able" wept the ten spies and the people. "We are able with God's help!" said Moses, Joshua, and Caleb.

Because the people went backward in unbelief instead of forward by faith, they missed their inheritance and died in the wilderness. It was the new generation that possessed the land and entered into their rest.

Canaan represents to Christians today our spiritual inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:3, 11, 15-23), not heaven.

(It is unfortunate that some of our hymns and Gospel songs use Canaan as a picture of heaven, and "crossing the Jordan" as a picture of death. Since Canaan was a place of battles, and even of defeats, it is not a good illustration of heaven! Israel had to cross the river by faith (a picture of the believer as he dies to self and the world, Rom. 6) and claim the inheritance by faith. They had to "step out by faith" (Josh. 1:3) and claim the land for themselves, just as believers today must do.)

So, wilderness wanderings represent the believers who will not claim their spiritual inheritance in Christ, who doubt God's Word and live in restless unbelief. Does not mean "lose your salvation"

To be sure, God is with them, as He was with Israel; but they do not enjoy the fullness of God's blessing. They are "out of Egypt" but they are not yet "in Canaan."

With this background, we can now better understand one of the key words in this section—rest (Heb. 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3-5, 8-11).

The writer mentioned two different "rests" found in Old Testament history: (1) God's Sabbath rest, when He ceased from His Creation activities (Gen. 2:2; Heb. 4:4); (2) Israel's rest in Canaan (Deut. 12:9; Josh. 21:43-45; Heb. 3:11).

he saw in these "rests" illustrations of the spiritual experiences of believers today.

The Sabbath rest is a picture of our rest in Christ through salvation (Heb. 4:3; see Matt. 11:28).

The Canaan rest is a picture of our present rest as we claim our inheritance in Christ (Heb. 4:11-13; note the emphasis on the Word of God).

The first is the rest of salvation; the second is the rest of submission.

But there is a third rest that enters into the discussion, that future rest that all believers will enjoy with God. "There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). This word for rest is the Greek word sabbatismos—"a keeping of a Sabbath"—and this is the only place in the New Testament where this word

is used. When the saints enter heaven, it will be like sharing God's great Sabbath rest, with all labors and battles ended (Rev. 14:13).

Remember, Canaan is not a picture of heaven, but of the believer's present spiritual inheritance in Christ. Believers who doubt God's Word and rebel against Him do not miss heaven, but they do miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today, and they must suffer the chastening of God.

So, in light of all that, what day matters most?

## **1. Not yesterday – Take heed – Hebrews 3:7 - 19**

**Let us take heed** (vv. 7-19). Take heed to what?

To the sad history of the nation of Israel and the important lesson it teaches.

Quotes are from Psalm 95:7-11 - God's response to Israel's tragic spiritual condition. God delivered His people from Egypt, cared for them, revealing His power in many signs and wonders. Israel saw and benefited from it, but the experience did not bring them closer to God or make them trust Him more.

All that God did for them did not benefit them spiritually. In fact, just the opposite took place: they hardened their hearts against God! They put God to the test and He did not fail them; yet they failed Him.

The root of every problem is a problem in the heart.

The people of Israel (except Moses, Joshua, and Caleb) erred in their hearts (Heb. 3:10), which means that their hearts wandered from God and His Word.

They also had evil hearts of unbelief (Heb. 3:12); they did not believe that God would give them victory in Canaan. They had seen God perform great signs in Egypt. Yet they doubted He was adequate for the challenge of Canaan.

When a person has an erring heart and a disbelieving heart, the result will also be a hard heart. This is a heart that is insensitive to the Word and work of God. So hard was the heart of Israel that the people even wanted to return to Egypt! Imagine wanting to exchange their freedom under God for slavery in Egypt! Of course, all this history spoke to the hearts of the readers of this letter because they were in danger of "going back" themselves.

God's judgment fell on Israel in the wilderness at Kadesh Barnea. That entire generation was condemned to die, and only the new generation would enter the land. God said, "They shall not enter into My rest" (Heb. 3:11).

what message does this bring to a believer today?

No believer today, Jew or Gentile, could go back into 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 into the world system's life of compromise and bondage.

especially true during times of persecution and suffering. The fires of persecution have always purified the church because suffering separates true believers from the counterfeit. True believers are willing to suffer for Christ and they hold firmly to their convictions and their confession of faith (see Heb. 3:6, 14).

We are not saved by holding to our confession. The fact that we hold to our confession is proof that we are God's true children.

Vs. 12 – “Beware” Important to take heed and recognize the spiritual dangers that exist.

Vs. 13 – Exhort one another “daily” - Also important that we encourage each other to be faithful to the Lord (Heb. 3:13). “Today”

You get the impression that some of these believers addressed were careless about their fellowship in the local assembly (see Heb. 10:23-25). Christians belong to each other and need each other. Moses, Caleb, and Joshua did try to encourage Israel when the nation refused to enter Canaan, but the people would not listen.

The sin of Israel is stated in Hebrews 3:12—“departing from the living God.” The Greek word gives us our English word “apostasy.” This is the only place this word is used in Hebrews. Does “apostasy” mean abandoning one's faith and therefore being condemned forever? That does not fit into this context. Israel departed from the living God by refusing God's will for their lives and stubbornly wanting to go their own way back to Egypt. God did not permit them to return to Egypt. Rather, He disciplined them in the wilderness. God did not allow His people to return to bondage.

The emphasis in Hebrews is that true believers have an eternal salvation because they trust a living Saviour who constantly intercedes for them. But the

writer is careful to point out that this confidence is no excuse for sin. God disciplines His children.

Remember that Canaan is not a picture of heaven, but of the believer's present spiritual inheritance in Christ. Believers who doubt God's Word and rebel against Him do not miss heaven, but they do miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today, and they must suffer the chastening of God.

Best thing to do about yesterday is to make sure there was a time in your life when you accepted and received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

## **2. Not tomorrow**

Tomorrow might never come.

## **3. Not some day**

"Someday" is just an extended tomorrow.

## **4. Today**

Today is the first day of the rest of your life.

Hebrews 4:7 So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is **today**. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: "Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts."

### **Let us fear (vv. 1-8).**

Believers today may enter and enjoy their spiritual inheritance in Christ. We must be careful lest we fail to believe God's Word, for it is only as the Word is "mixed with faith" that it can accomplish its purposes. The argument in this section is given in several propositions: (1) God finished His work and rested, so that His rest has been available since Creation. (2) The Jews failed to enter into their rest. (3) Many years later (Ps. 95), God said that a rest was still available. That "today" is still here! This means that Joshua did not lead Israel into the true rest, because a rest still remains. (Note that the name "Jesus" in Heb: 4:8, kjv, ought to be "Joshua." "Jesus" is the Greek form of "Joshua.")

The Canaan rest for Israel is a picture of the spiritual rest we find in Christ when we surrender to Him. When we come to Christ by faith, we find salvation rest (Matt. 11:28). When we yield and learn of Him and obey Him by faith, we enjoy

submission rest (Matt. 11:29-30). The first is "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1); the second is the "peace of God" (Phil. 4:6-8). It is by believing that we enter into rest (Heb. 4:3); it is by obeying God by faith and surrendering to His will that the rest enters into us.

### **Let us labor (vv. 9-13).**

"Give diligence" is a good translation of this admonition. Diligence is the opposite of "drifting" (Heb. 2:1-3). How do we give diligence? By paying close attention to the Word of God. Israel did not believe God's Word, so the rebels fell in the wilderness. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

In comparing the Word of God to a sword, the writer is not suggesting that God uses His Word to slaughter the saints! The emphasis is on the power of the Word to penetrate and expose the inner heart of man. The Word is a "discerner" or "critic."

The Israelites criticized God's Word instead of allowing the Word to judge them. Consequently, they lost their inheritance.

Of course, God sees our hearts (Heb. 4:13); but we do not always know what is there (Jer. 17:9). God uses the Word to enable us to see the sin and unbelief in our own hearts. The Word exposes our hearts; and then, if we trust God, the Word enables our hearts to obey God and claim His promises.

**Therefore each believer should be diligent to apply himself to hear and heed God's Word. In the Word we see God, and we also see how God sees us. We see ourselves as we really are. This experience enables us to be honest with God, to trust His will, and to obey Him.**

All of this is possible because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. (The two "He's" in Heb. 4:10 refer to Jesus Christ.) God rested when He finished the work of Creation. God's Son rested when He completed the work of the new creation. We may enter into His rest by trusting His Word and obeying His will. We can do this as we listen to His Word, understand it, trust it, and obey it. Only in this way can we claim our inheritance in Christ.

Before Joshua conquered Jericho, he went out to survey the situation; and he met the Lord Jesus Christ (Josh. 5:13-15). Joshua discovered that he was second in command! The Lord had a sword in His hand, and Joshua fell at His feet in complete submission. It was this action in private that gave Joshua his public victory.

We too claim our spiritual inheritance by surrendering to Him and trusting His Word. We must beware of an evil heart of unbelief.

### **Let us hold firmly (4:14 – 16)**

Hebrews 4:14 So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe.

15 This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.

16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

1. No need in giving up our profession just because we are going through testing and trial (Heb. 4:14).

The word translated "profession" means "confession." These Hebrew Christians were tempted to give up their confession of faith in Christ and their confidence in Him (see Heb. 3:6, 14).

It was not a matter of giving up their salvation since salvation through Christ is eternal (Heb. 5:9). It was a matter of their public confession of faith. By returning to the Old Testament system, they would be telling everyone that they had no faith in Christ (see Gal. 2:11-21). This kind of unbelief would only bring reproach to Christ's name.

Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, is enthroned in heaven and is ministering mercy and grace to those who come for help. Mercy means that God does not give us what we do deserve; grace means that He gives us what we do not deserve.

No Old Testament high priest could minister mercy and grace in quite the same way. When an Israelite was tempted, he could not easily run to the high priest for help; and he certainly could not enter the holy of holies for God's help. But as believers in Jesus Christ, we can run to our High Priest at any time, in any circumstance, and find the help that we need.

2. No need to go back because we can come boldly into the presence of God and get the help we need (Heb. 4:16).