

SOME HARD QUESTIONS WE NEED TO CONSIDER (vv. 16-19)

¹⁶ Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

For the writer of Hebrews, unbelief is not a theological category. It is a matter of implicit trust in God.

1. How did Israel demonstrate their unbelief?
2. How do we demonstrate our unbelief?
3. In light of these observations, how would you describe belief?

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LOOK TO JESUS

AN UNBELIEVING HEART | HEBREWS 3:7-19

Have you ever found yourself on the verge of something so big that you let your doubts get the best of you and timidly walked away? If you have, that was probably a defining moment—one of those moments you will look back on for the rest of your life wondering what might have been.

That was certainly the case for the nation of Israel at Kadesh Barnea. You can read their story in Numbers 13 and 14. The desert lay behind them, the promise land was so close they could practically taste it. They had already seen God deliver them from the grip of the most powerful nation on the face of the earth. They simply needed to trust him to deliver their enemies into their hand and give them the land.

They sent twelve men ahead of them. They explored the land and found it to be every bit as rich as God promised, but the people living in the land and their fortified cities loomed even larger than the promises of God. In fact, the people turned on God. They accused him of leading them into the wilderness only to see them perish by the sword in the land of Canaan. They were about to appoint a new leader to lead them back to Egypt, when God intervened and assigned them to an even worse fate. They would languish away in the wilderness until a new generation was ready to trust God and act on his promises.

A CALL TO WORSHIP AND A WORD OF WARNING (vv. 7-11)

⁷ So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. ¹⁰ That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ ¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

1. The writer of Hebrews is quick to attribute the word of the Psalmist to the Holy Spirit. He does not tell us, “The Holy Spirit said.” He tells us “The Holy Spirit **says**.”

What does this tell us about the author or Hebrew’s view of Scripture?

Why is this important for us?

2. The writer of Hebrews is quoting from the last half of Psalm 95. The first half of the Psalm is a magnificent call to worship:

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. ² Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. ³ For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. ⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. ⁵ The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. ⁶ Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; ⁷ for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care (PSALM 95:1-7).

The warning is a bit jarring, but it is a reminder that the heart of worship is not singing, or shouting, or extolling with music and song. It’s not even bowing down. The heart of worship is obedience that comes from a faithful heart.

What stands out about the call to worship in Psalm 95:1-7?

What stands out about the writer of Hebrews lengthy quote from the second half of the Psalm in verses 7-11?

OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN LIGHT OF THE WARNING (vv. 12-15)

¹² See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. ¹⁵ As has just been said: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.”

1. How does the writer of Hebrews describe an unbelieving heart?
2. How can we see to it, that none of us has an unbelieving heart?
3. Why is it important to respond to the Spirit’s prompting in the moment rather than assuming we can pick up where we left off in our walk with God sometime in the distant future?
4. According to the writer of Hebrews, how can we know that we have come to share in Christ?
5. In last week’s study we reminded you that Paul holds a similar view.

“By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain (1 Corinthians 15:2).”

“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel (Colossians 1:21-23)”

What is disturbing about these passages?

What is encouraging about these passages?

How should these passages shape the way we encourage each other, “as long as it is called today?”