



# Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13

In our last session, we saw that Jesus tasted death for everyone, so that he is not ashamed to call those who believe in him brothers and sisters. That is why Jesus had to be made like them, fully human in every way, so that he can be our faithful high priest in service to God. The author then exhorts his readers to fix our thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.

In this session, the author continues to exhort his readers. However, this time he uses a particular psalm to call his readers to hold firm to their original conviction. We shall see how he applies this particular psalm to his readers in two different ways. Understanding how the author does that will teach us how to read and apply the Old Testament for ourselves.

## Launch

What are some ways that people harden their own hearts today? How does one soften it?

## Jesus' Rest is Better Than Joshua's Rest

### Hebrews 3:7-19

Read Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13

- 1) Which Psalm does the author focus on applying in this passage?
  - a. Take the time to read that whole Psalm. Who wrote this Psalm? (cf. Heb 4:7)
  - b. When in Israel's history do you think this Psalm was written? What are some hints that you can see from this Psalm?
  - c. Which group of Israelites is the Psalmist referring to with "that generation"? (Ps 95:10)
  - d. Read Joshua 21:43-44. What event in Israel's history is connected with the idea of "rest"?
- 2) What is the author of Hebrews commanding his readers to do? (v12-13)
  - a. How does the author of Hebrews apply Psalm 95:7-11 in this passage to his readers?
  - b. What word does he take from Psalm 95 to make his application?
- 3) Based on your answer in Question 1c, what did "that generation" do according to the author of Hebrews? (v16-18)
  - a. What lesson should we learn from them? (v14, 19)
- 4) Summarise the author's exhortation from Psalm 95 in one sentence.



## Hebrews 4:1-13

Read Hebrews 4:1-13

- 5) What is the author's exhortation in v1? What reasons did the author provide for that? (v1-2)
- 6) Who is the "they" refer to in verse 2? What good news/message was proclaimed to them? (v2)
  - a. What is this "faith" that they did not share with those who obeyed? (v2b, 6)
- 7) Who are the ones who "enter that rest"? (v3) Whose "rest" are these people entering? (v3b)
  - a. Where in the Bible have you read about this "rest"? (v3-5)
- 8) Even though the Israelites were already in the Promised Land and received God's rest (question 1d), what else did God ask them to do through Psalm 95, specifically verses 7b-8, 11? (Heb 4:6-7)
  - a. What then do you think this implies about the "rest" that the Israelites entered into when they took possession of the Promised Land? (v8-9)
  - b. What did Jesus say about "rest" during his ministry? (cf. Matt 11:28-30)
- 9) Put these biblical passages/events into their historical sequence as given to us in the Bible: (1) Psalm 95, (2) question 7a, (3) Joshua 21:43-44, (4) Hebrews 3 – 4, (5) Matt 11:28-30.
  - a. Based on this, how does the author of Hebrews apply Psalm 95:7-11 to his readers?
  - b. How is this different from how the author does it from Hebrews 3:7-19 (question 2a)?
- 10) What does the author exhort his readers to do in light of his explanation about God's rest? (v11)
- 11) What does the author say about the "word of God" in v12-13?
  - a. What is the "word of God" referring to in this context? (Heb 3:7-11)
  - b. In what way is the "word of God" living and active? (Heb 3:7, cf. Psalm 95:7-11) Notice the verb in Heb 3:7, as Psalm 95 is quoted.

## Application

- 12) Based on the two ways that the author applies the Old Testament, how should we read the Old Testament and apply it to ourselves today?
- 13) How and where can we hear God's voice today? How can we make sure that we do not harden our hearts like the generation in the wilderness?



14) How can we help each other to “make every effort to enter [God’s] rest”, so that we do not perish?

The author of Hebrews exhorts his readers to persevere on in their faith by quoting and applying Psalm 95 to them. He first applies it in a moralistic way, i.e. do not follow their disobedient example. However, in Hebrews 4:1-11, he views Psalm 95 in a salvation historical way. Even though the Israelites had already received God’s rest by being in the Promised Land, God still warns his people through David not to harden their hearts, so that they can enter God’s rest. The author notices this and reasoned then that it still remains for people to enter God’s rest *today* (Heb 4:6, 9).

This helps us to see how God’s word is living and active today. We can read the Old Testament and learn from their mistakes. We can also read the Old Testament and see where we fit into the history of salvation. God still speaks to us today, and so we should not harden our hearts when we hear his voice. In Hebrews 3:7, we see that God’s voice today is heard through his word. Let us not neglect God’s word, and through reading God’s word, we can persevere on in our faith and enter into God’s rest.