

Hebrews 4A

- Complete the chart for the second warning
 - What do we have so far
 - Most of it is found in Verses- 3:7-19
 - Audience – Unbelievers
 - Why?
 - It's a warning against unbelief
 - What's another way to determine the audience
 - By the consequence
 - Message
 - Verse 12
 - Exhortation
 - Verse 13
 - Consequence
 - Tonight
- At the end of chapter 3, the writer had finished the first half of his example from the rebellion in the wilderness
 - At Kadesh Barnea
 - He challenged the reader not to be like those who rebelled in the wilderness
 - The writer selects this event because it serves two purposes
 - First the generation of Israel that left Egypt offered a useful example of a group of people who had been exposed to the truth
 - They new God's word and His promises
 - They had seen His works

- But they persisted in unbelief
 - They tested God, meaning they did not take Him at His word
 - They failed to accept His word on faith
- Secondly, this event gives a sobering lesson on the consequences of unbelief
- Remember, the writer is trying to do something that every pastor or teacher struggles to do with any congregation
 - And his task was arguably even more difficult, since Jewish thought had always assumed that those who left Egypt were included in the family of God by birthright
 - And by their experience as participants of the exodus
 - So, the writer's first challenge was exposing the truth about that generation
 - They were unbelievers
 - They were not trusting in God's word in the way that faith requires
 - Then he drew a parallel at the end of chapter 3
 - In verses 12-15 the writer issues his warning to the church that they not allow similar unbelief (evil) persist in the camp of God today
 - But now he's ready to move to the final discussion
 - Consequences
 - Every preacher would like to present a call to believe in the Gospel
 - That listeners would leave behind unbelief and hear His voice while it is still Today
 - We generally want to emphasize the benefits that may be found in faith
 - The joy of salvation and of God's pleasure in us

- The rewards for obedience
- But I think every good preacher must be prepared to approach the discussion from the negative
 - To a discussion of the consequences of continued unbelief
- And chapter 4 is the writer's best shot at the consequences of unbelief

[Heb. 3:18](#) And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?

[Heb. 3:19](#) So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

[Heb. 4:1](#) ¶ Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

[Heb. 4:2](#) For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

- God swore in chapter 14 of Numbers that those who had spurned Him would die in the wilderness and not enter the promised land
 - They were prohibited from entering because of unbelief
 - Therefore, we should fear if any one of us should seem to have come short entering His rest
 - While a promise of entering it still remains
 - The comparison now moves to consequences
 - His language here again is very interesting
 - He says let us fear
 - But if any one of us
 - He seems to be emphasizing a corporate responsibility to ensuring that everyone in our midst makes the trip with us
 - Leave no child of God behind
- Then he says seems to have come short of it (inclusio with verse 11)
 - Seems (dokeo) means "to be of the opinion of" or suppose
 - And to come up short (hustereo)

- To be lacking, to come up short

[Rom. 3:23](#) for all have sinned and **fall short** of the glory of God

- So the writer carefully selected words to convey a very specific sense
- The NET version does a good job...

[Heb. 4:1](#) ¶ Therefore we must be wary¹ that, while the promise of entering his rest remains open, none of you may seem to have come short of it.

[Heb. 4:2](#) For we had good news proclaimed to us just as they did. But the message they heard did them no good, since they did not join in² with those who heard it in faith.³

- This problem is one that effect the body of Christ but be below the surface to others
 - But we might suppose someone else is not with us in belief
- And again, we come up short
 - This is a great way to reflect the reality of how this works
 - People can put on an act and appear to be one of the group
 - But in a day of testing, they fall away
 - Condition 2 in the sower and seed
- The corporate Body has a responsibility to respond when we suppose that one of us has come up lacking
- Someone is at risk of not entering God's rest
 - Just as happened with the nation of Israel in the wilderness
- Look at verse 2
 - For indeed we have also had good news preached to us, just as they did
 - The word for good news is euaggelizo

[1Pet. 1:12](#) It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who **preached** the **gospel** to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

- They indeed had the gospel preached to them in that they heard the saving word of God
 - But why did they fall?
 - Because even though they heard it, it wasn't united with faith in those who heard
 - Perhaps the strongest confirmation in these chapters that we are talking about an matter of faith in the gospel
 - Trust in God's word
- But there's a piece missing here, isn't there?
 - We understand the offense – unbelief
 - We understand those who were guilty in Israel's day – the generation in the desert
 - We understand the penalty they experienced – failing to enter the promised land
 - But then the writer begins to talk about failing to enter God's rest
 - What does that mean for us?
 - In other words, what is the consequence of repeating the mistake of the Jews in the desert?
 - What does it mean to not enter into God's rest?
- Go back to Psalms 95 briefly

[Psa. 95:11](#) "Therefore I swore in My anger,
Truly they shall not enter into My **rest**."

- The writer begins using this term precisely because it's the term that Psalm 95 uses, which elaborated on the events of Numbers 13 & 14

- So the term was not included in Moses' account, but it was introduced by the inspired writing of David
- So the writer seizes on that term and begins to emphasize it to his readers

[Heb. 4:3](#) For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said,
 "AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH,
 THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,"

although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

[Heb. 4:4](#) For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*: "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS";

[Heb. 4:5](#) and again in this *passage*, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST."

- The writer establishes a series of relationships that grow more complex as we progress through the chapter
 - It's a fascinating puzzle
 - Let's begin with the word rest itself
 - What could it mean?
 - Literal meaning
 - A cessation of work
 - Sabbath
 - Symbolic meaning
 - A period of time
 - Or a state of being
 - Physical Location or Reward
 - Promised Land
 - Eternal state
 - Heaven with eternal rewards
 - There is one principle we can't ignore
 - The writer reestablishes the principle in the beginning of verse 3

- Whatever rest is, it's the same thing for the Israelites in the desert as it is for you and I today
 - In 3:19, they couldn't enter His rest because of unbelief
 - We who have believed, on the other hand, enter that rest
 - And just to make that clear, the writer repeats his quote from Psalm 95
 - To those who were disobedient to God's word, He swore they would not enter His rest
 - In other words, the writer connects the rest we enter when we believe the gospel to the rest the Israelites forfeited when they failed to believe
 - So, the principle that must guide our understanding is that the ultimate interpretation of rest must be the same for both groups – them and us
- What are some of the ways the readers might have misunderstood the meaning of Psalms 95?
 - What might they have assumed God meant by rest?
 - Well the writer is going to dispel each misinterpretation one at a time
 - At the end of verse 3, he says God's works were finished from the foundation of the world
 - What is he referencing?
 - The seventh day
 - God rested
 - Rest means cessation of activity
 - Why brings this up now?
 - He wants to clarify that when God said rest, he didn't mean an age or a period of time
- Look at verses 3&4

- God's works were finished from the foundation of the world
 - Because it was written somewhere (Exodus 20) that God rested from all his works
 - God spoke those words about Himself in the giving of the Sabbath at Mt Horeb in the wilderness
 - The same nation of people who heard those words while they were in the wilderness were the very same people who later heard they will not enter God's rest
- After the creation was completed on day six, God ceased from that work
 - In other words, the seventh day ushered in age that is still ongoing now
 - It's an age when God has rested from His work
 - The seventh day wasn't followed by an eighth day when God resumed work
 - It is a period marked by God at rest from the work of creation
 - Every person born has been born into the period of time with God at rest
 - Yet he later turned to the nation of Israel in the wilderness and said they weren't going to enter His rest
 - Well, that eliminates the possibility that by rest God meant His rest from the work of creation
 - Because all of us are sharing in that rest by virtue of our existence
 - As sure as we all breath the same air
 - There is actually a second principle at work here too
 - When God finishes something, it is finished forever
 - When God declares something finished, it is truly finished
 - There will never come a day when the work that God has completed will ever need to be undertaken again

[Heb. 4:6](#) Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,
[Heb. 4:7](#) He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before,

"TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,
 DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

- In these verses the writer draws this very conclusion
 - He says, therefore it remains for some to enter God's rest
 - Another way to say that is:
 - Not all have entered the rest, because God instructs David to call for us to enter it Today
 - Remember, we said that Today is a timeless call
 - It always means now to the one who reads those words
 - And therefore, evidently some have not yet entered this rest
 - And that continues until today
 - Even today, some have not entered it for as long as it is called today
 - When will today not be today?
 - When God brings an end to this age
 - When He himself brings the opportunity to a close
 - Until then, God's invitation stands
 - So rest isn't the age of God's rest
 - It's something that we have to choose to enter
- The writer's inclusion of the name of David is another masterful tactic
 - Remember the second symbolic way to interpret rest
 - A physical location, like the promised land

- This is probably the most common way to view God's words
 - In fact, this was probably the way most Jews interpreted it in the day of this letter
 - But the writer introduces David into the conversation to dispel that idea
- This is a matter of time, so we need a timeline
 - When did God speak his words of wrath against Israel?
 - 1,440 BC
 - When did the faithful generation finally enter the promised land?
 - 1,400 BC
 - When did David write the Psalms?
 - About 1,015 BC

[Heb. 4:8](#) For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that.

- If God had been referring to the land of Canaan when He said they will not enter my rest
 - Then David wouldn't have repeated God's warning to the nation of Israel in 1,015 BC, nearly 400 years after the nation entered Canaan
 - Yet God was still speaking through David about another day after that
 - A day when the people of God will enter into His rest when they hear His voice
 - So we've eliminated the physical place as a potential meaning
 - When God spoke to the nation of Israel in the desert, He wasn't talking merely about Canaan
 - He had something more important in mind

[Heb. 4:9](#) So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

[Heb. 4:10](#) For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

- So, there remains a Sabbath rest for God's people
 - In other words, the meaning of rest is something that still remains for God's people
 - It's not a reference to God's work of creation
 - It's not a reference to the physical land of Canaan
 - It's a spiritual issue
 - And it's something that still exists for God's people
 - Then the writer gives us the answer to the meaning of rest
 - The one who enters God's rest is the one who himself has rested from his works, just as God has done
 - Let me ask you...have you believed the gospel?
 - Then you have entered His rest
 - But you aren't at rest are you? Or are you?
 - How are we at rest?
 - What works have we rested from?
 - The works of salvation
 - The believer will enter God's rest in that we can cease from our work of trying to obtain righteousness on our own behalf
 - Instead, we can rest in God's work, the work of God Jesus on the cross
 - He did the work required to ransom us into Heaven
 - And when we believe His word, we join that rest and cease from our own work

- But to those who did not believe, they have not rested
 - Nor will they ever rest
 - They will never know the peace that comes from freedom from sin's penalty
- The consequences for failing to believe are the same as they were for the evil generation in the desert
 - They never experience the physical rest from their wandering
 - Nor did they know the spiritual rest of depending on God's work rather than their own
 - We have the same choice
 - By believing God's word, we can rest in His work
 - And live in peace knowing that we are already sharing in God's rest
 - A permanent rest
- Then the writer follows his exposition with his exhortation

[Heb. 4:11](#) Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience.

[Heb. 4:12](#) For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[Heb. 4:13](#) And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

- Again, let's not let anyone fall by following the example of disobedience in the wilderness
 - Rather, let's be diligent (lit: make every effort) to ensure they enter the rest (end of inclusio)
 - Believes God's word and enter His rest
 - Because remember, that the word of God is able to discern the real believer from the pretender
 - While we may be successful in fooling people, God knows us for who we really are

- Now remember how we entered into this discussion of unbelief in the wilderness?
 - Verse 3:6
 - The question of whether we are in God's house
 - Right before that, the writer had been talking about our high priest of our confession
 - The one who had been tempted, therefore Jesus is able to come to the aid of those who are likewise tempted
 - Well, he's ready to conclude that discussion now

[Heb. 4:14](#) ¶ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

[Heb. 4:15](#) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin.

[Heb. 4:16](#) Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- With such a great high priest, we have every reason to hold fast this confession
 - Did you notice a shift in the audience here?
 - Remember, he began talking to brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling
 - Then he broke from that conversation in chapter 3:6
 - And he began this extended discussion of the need to believe
 - A conversation we said was directed to the unbeliever
 - But now he's returned to talking to believers, picking up right where he left off
 - He says we owe our confession to Jesus because He is a superior High Priest
 - One Who once walked in our shoes and yet without sin
 - One Who allows us to draw near to the throne of grace with confidence, especially in our time of need