

Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.² He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.³ Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.⁴ For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.⁵ Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future.⁶ But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

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 desert,⁹ where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did.

¹⁰ That is why I was angry with that generation, and 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.'"^a

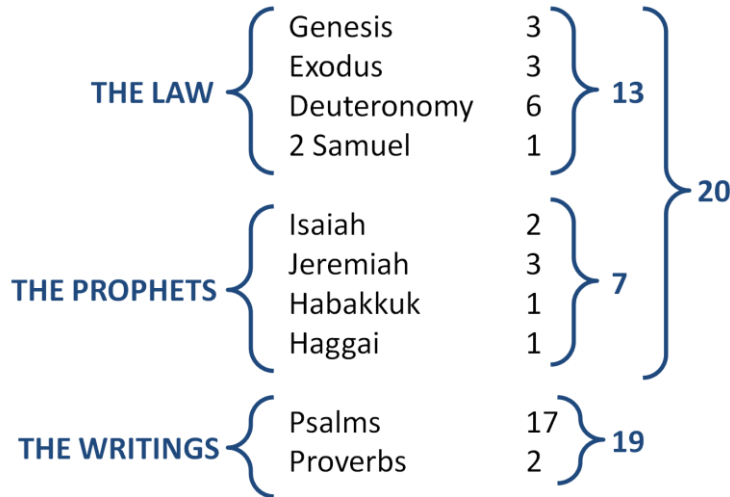
¹² See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.¹⁵ As has just been said:

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."^b

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

*fell in the desert?*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.*

Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews



Do you remember what I said about a few weeks ago the relationship between the author of Hebrews and the Old Testament. I said that his head was so full of the Old Testament that if you bumped into him, verses, chapters and entire books would spill out of his brain. We aren't certain who wrote the book of Hebrews but of this we are certain—this guy knew his Bible. His Bible was the Old Testament and he knew it like the back of his hand.

I developed a chart to show you how much he depended on the O.T. Out of

the Law or the first five books of the OT, the author of Hebrews used thirteen quotations. He used half as many quotations from the prophets—seven to be exact. But hands down his favorite book to quote from was the book of Psalms. Together with Proverbs, the author quoted almost as many times from these books as he did from the entire remainder of the Old Testament. We are certain that he knew his Bible and we are certain that the book of Psalms, if not his favorite book, at least was the book he saw as most useful for writing his sermon of exhortation.¹ Most of chapter one was a long string of seven OT quotations and as we will soon see, the third chapter of Hebrews which we just read is entirely based on the 95th Psalm.

This is a rich passage in Hebrews filled with layers and layers of Biblical history and truth. One third of the chapter is a quote from Psalm 95 and the rest of the chapter is a teaching on Psalm 95. But if you read the 95th Psalm, you will see that it is based on at least two passages from the books of Exodus and Numbers. Therefore, when the author wrote the 95th Psalm, it was like he

Exodus 17
Numbers 14



Hebrews 3



was looking through a telescope of history to the Israelites 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Then when the author of Hebrews wrote this chapter, he was looking back through the lens of history to Psalm 95 (see diagram). Everything he says in this chapter (Hebrews 3) is all about Psalm 95 and in turn, Psalm 95 looks back four hundred years earlier to the years in the

wilderness.

Therefore, in order to understand Hebrews chapter three we first need to understand Psalm 95. As a quick way to get a feel for the 95th Psalm, I want us to sing it together. There just happens

to be a well know worship chorus that is lifted directly from this Psalm. Hopefully most of you know it, so let's sing it together.

Come let us worship and bow down
Let us kneel before the Lord our God our maker
Come let us worship and bow down
Let us kneel before the Lord our God our maker
For He is our God
And we are the people of his pasture
And the sheep of his hand
Just the sheep of his hand²

That is a thirty one year old worship chorus that I think has stood the test of time because it is a direct quote from Scripture and doesn't have some strange words. We were talking about this at the worship meeting on Thursday night. You have to be careful with the topic of music because it can be so subjective but there is one song that I really don't care for. The end of the chorus says "dancers who dance upon injustice." I realize that dancing is a metaphor for dealing with injustice. The Bible speaks a lot about injustice and especially the command for kings, rulers and even church leaders to make decisions that are fair and just. I understand what this line of the song means but whenever I sing the phrase "dancers who dance upon injustice," I cannot escape a visual message of someone doing an Irish jig upon injustice.

That's my little rant for the day but my point is that not all songs are created equal and we do try our best to choose songs with good words and good Biblical meaning; which again is why I think this song has stood the test of time. However, if I could ask a question of Dave Doherty, the man who wrote the song, I would say, "So Dave, tell me—why did you not use the other half of Psalm 95 in your song? Why did you skip that part?" I think I know the answer he would give. I think that he skipped the other part because the words in the other half of the Psalm are not your typical lyrics for a worship song. Since Dave Doherty did not include these words, I thought we should try singing them using the same tune. Are you ready?

Today, if you hear his voice,
Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah
Where your fathers tested and tried me,
Though they had seen what I did to deliver them.³
"They are a people whose hearts go astray,
and they have not known my ways."
¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger,
"They shall never enter my rest."

Now can you see why Mr. Doherty did not include these words? These are difficult words to sing! One commentator has said that "the two parts should not be disassociated from each other."⁴ I don't think this second verse that we just sang will ever catch on in any church, but we do need to hear this message. Let's start again at the beginning of Psalm 95.

¹ *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.

It is evident why this section is so celebratory and worshipful. The Psalmist is extolling the creative and salvific virtues of the Lord. He is a rock of salvation. He is creator over all. He is the great king above all gods. These are just a sampling of God's character and his saving work. But despite this unfathomable love and mercy on God's behalf toward his people, the Psalmist knew a great truth—despite this great mercy and love, people are prone toward hardening their hearts.

Exodus 17



PSALM 95:7-9
Today, if you hear his voice,⁸ do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert,⁹ where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did.



HEBREWS 3:7-9
“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 desert,⁹ where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did.

In the last half, the Psalmist is looking back toward two events in Biblical history. Verses 7-9 of Psalm 95 is reflecting back on what happened in Exodus 17. It just so happens that this section verse by verse corresponds with Hebrews 3:7-9.

Today, if you hear his voice,⁸ do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert,⁹ where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen

what I did.

Let's read about the incident to which the Psalmist is referring.

The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

² *So they quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.”*

Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?”

³ *But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?”*



⁴ *Then Moses cried out to the LORD, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.”*

⁵ *The LORD answered Moses, “Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the place Massah^a and Meribah^b because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, “**Is the LORD among us or not?**” (Exodus 17:1-7)*

It is important to note that this event happened only six weeks after God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. A mere six weeks earlier God had poured out the ten plagues on the Egyptians

until Pharaoh would let the Israelites go free. Only six weeks had passed since God led them on dry ground through the Red Sea. Only six weeks had gone by since the Lord had drowned Pharaoh and his entire army in the same sea. Moreover, for every single day during those six weeks, the Lord miraculously led them with a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. God has been feeding them daily with a provision of manna. In the midst of that miraculous, constant provision, the people quarreled and tested the Lord, he asked, “Is the Lord really among us.”

The last two verses of Psalm 95 are reflecting back on what happened in Numbers 14. It just so happens that this section verse by verse corresponds with Hebrews 3:10-11.

	PSALM 95:10-11	HEBREWS 3:10-11	¹⁰ <i>For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.”</i>
Numbers 14			¹⁰ <i>For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.”</i>
	¹¹ <i>So I declared on oath in my anger, “They shall never enter my rest.”</i>	¹¹ <i>So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’</i>	¹¹ <i>So I declared on oath in my anger, “They shall never enter my rest.”</i>
			Now let’s read about this incident to which the Psalmist is referring.

(This text is part of the story of the twelve men after they returned from spying out the land of Canaan.)

The LORD replied, “I have forgiven them, as you asked. ²¹ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, ²² not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— ²³ not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers.

The author of Hebrews reflected back on this event in verse sixteen. 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 fell in the desert? One by one their bodies fell in the desert. Over forty years they left about two million shallow graves in the desert sand.*

I think the key to understanding these texts is verse nine of both Psalm 95 and Hebrews 3. *Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, ⁹ where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did.*

This is what makes their testing and quarreling so egregious—they had seen what the Lord had done for them. He was the “Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” This designation for the Lord was used 26 times by the Lord and 45 times by others. This was the most often used designation or description of the Lord in all of the Old Testament. The Lord was defined for the next 1000 years by his deliverance of his people out of Egypt.

What the Israelites rebelled against and ultimately rejected was the gospel itself. The deliverance from Egypt was a foreshadowing of the gospel. God did for them what they could do not for themselves. Pharaoh was systematically killing the Hebrew babies. Had they attempted a revolt on their own it would have resulted in their slaughter. The Israelites were slaves to the Egyptians. Their chains were unbreakable and their bonds permanent.

But God did for them what they could not do for themselves. Do you see how this was a foreshadowing of the gospel? Just as Israel was a slave to the Egyptians, so we are slaves to sin. Jesus did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He delivered us from bondage. If the Israelites did not enter the rest of the Promised Land because they rejected Moses' leadership, how much worse will it be for anyone who rejects Christ? The "rest" that they will miss is the eternal rest of Heaven.

But when we grumble, quarrel and complain, we are saying that the Lord's deliverance is not enough. These grumbings tell the Lord that his cross is not sufficient. There is no getting around that every complaint is a slap in the face of Jesus. Complaining says to the Lord, "Why did you give this to me? You made a mistake. This is not right, it's not fair!"

There are three basic type of complaints. There are atheistic complaints which are what most people do every day who could care less about God. Second there are complaints that flow out of practical atheism. This is where most of our complaints fall. This happens when we act like God is not in the hardship we are facing. We ask, "Is God among us or not? We complain because we do not believe—complaints that flow from disbelief. Finally, there is a good kind of complaining which is really a lament—a crying out for God. God longs to hear these kinds of "complaints." The only way this will happen is when we see our complaint in the shadow of the cross just as the Israelites lived in the shadow of the cloud of glory.

Rich Maurer
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^a Psalm 95:7-11

^b Psalm 95:7,8

^c Or *disbelieved*

¹ As I have repeated now several times, the book of Hebrews is a sermon of exhortation that has as its theme the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

² Dave Doherty, © 1980 by Maranatha! Music.

³ Even though the phrase "to deliver them" is not in the Psalm, I added it for better understanding and flow of the words.

⁴ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, ©1963, p. 63.

^a *Massah* means *testing*.

^b *Meribah* means *quarreling*.