

"On the Way" 365 Bible Reading Plan

Hebrews 4

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What is unbelief in its essence? *"It is a willful, stubborn, obstinacy in refusing to trust the truthfulness of God's word."* The writer of Hebrews is warning the Jewish recipients of this letter to not repeat the "sin of unbelief" that those of the exodus exhibited in failing to enter into the promise land, which represented the "place of rest" for the Israelites. Chapter 3:8-11 is a quote from Psalm 95 written by King David over 400 years after the Exodus account. He was writing to *his generation* and warned them *not to harden their hearts* as the wilderness wanderers did and missed entering into the wonderful land of promise that God offered them. That was an application hundreds of years past the events recorded in the Torah. The writer of Hebrews says the same thing to the *first century Jewish believers* and *to each of us!* God's word is true and that is talked about at length in Hebrews 4:11-13,

"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

The written word of God, that is the promises of God, are living words. They impart life (see I Peter 1:22-25) and can be used by God to regenerate the soul of man. *"The word of God is dynamic and sharper than any two-edged sword."* This is a book to the *Hebrews*, not the *Romans*. Why is this reality important in properly interpreting this passage? The Greek word used in v. 12 is **μάχαιρα**, ***machaira***, pronounced (*makh'-ahee-rah*) a short sword or dagger, and that is a valid usage and translation of the word, but a beater and basic translation is *máχaira* – properly, ***a slaughter-knife***. The writer was addressing the Hebrews/Jewish believers in a language of sacrifice and priesthood that they could understand better than anyone. All offerings except the "Whole Burnt Offering" were divided into portions (Please listen to the Podcast to get details, too much to write in this limited space). The animals had to be divided in a certain way by the priests as directed by God. The knife they used was sharp on both sides (two-edged) so that it might cut both ways back and forth, up and down. This is an illustration of the power and effectiveness of the word of God on the human heart. The Hebrews knew this illustration very well. Verse 14 is where the next Chapter should begin as it talks about the High Priest and his duties and Jesus our superior High Priest.

Prayer and Action Steps

Father in heaven, please forgive my unbelief and willfully choosing not to trust you and your word in any area of my life. Thank you for your forgiveness and for restoring me to fellowship with you.

Amen