

# Bible Workshop


## Developing Bible study skills

### 12. There remains a rest (Heb. 4:9)

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**T**HIS STUDY is designed to highlight a number of different aspects of Bible study, as follows:

- that Bible study is not difficult or the preserve of the intellectual
- the need to give careful attention to the text
- the importance of context
- the value of comparing Scripture with Scripture
- the value of following up quotations
- the value of recording and preserving information found.

 You will need:  
Bible with marginal references

The letter to the Hebrews draws heavily on the language of the Old Testament. Hebrews 3 and 4, by repeated quotation from Numbers 13 and 14 and Psalm 95, reproves the readers of the letter by likening them to the unbelieving Jews who fell in the wilderness. This study will:


- establish an easy way to identify the quotations
- show the value of looking at individual words
- develop an exhortation for ourselves.

#### Identifying the quotations

We are doubtless familiar with the way that quotations from the Old Testament are often introduced by the phrase “it is written” or similar language, but there are no quotations from the Old Testament which are introduced like this in Hebrews. However, all is not lost. Any Bible with marginal references will suffice

to provide most of the quotations from the Old Testament.

Now is a good time to read carefully Hebrews 3 and 4, taking careful note of the marginal references.

 Read Hebrews 3 and 4 and make a note of all references to the Old Testament, especially to Numbers 12–14 and Psalm 95

It will be beneficial to make a record of the quotations, but maybe it would be better to use a piece of paper and then transfer the details you wish to remember into your Bible when you have checked your findings. An approach that you could take would be to draw three columns. In the first column enter the references in Hebrews; in the middle column enter the words in Hebrews that are quoted from the Old Testament; and in the third column list the origin of the quotations. An example of how such a list might look is given in the table below.

Hebrews reference	Words quoted	Old Testament source of the quotation
3:2	appointed him	1 Samuel 12:6
3:2	Moses was faithful in all His house	Numbers 12:7
3:3	he... hath builded the house	Zechariah 6:12
3:4	He That built all things is God	Psalm 104:24
3:5	Moses... was faithful in all His house	Numbers 12:7
3:5	servant	Numbers 12:7
3:6	son	Psalm 2:7
3:7	as the Holy [Spirit] saith	2 Samuel 23:2
3:7-11	To day... They shall not enter... My rest	Psalm 95:7-11

Once you have noted some quotations from a particular area of Scripture by using the marginal references, you will see other words and phrases from that same area of Scripture that are quoted, even though the marginal references do not give them. The table, as well as indicating a way in which the quotation list can be developed, provides a start. When the list is complete you will

have about forty quotations. This will provide the basis for your study of the two chapters in Hebrews. The quotations will explain what the writer, through the Holy Spirit, is saying in this area of the letter. By reading Numbers 13 and 14 and Psalm 95, and producing our own list of quotations, we come to appreciate the extensive use that Hebrews 3–4 makes of both these areas of the Old Testament.

### The significance of Numbers 13 and 14

Summarising Numbers 13 and 14, we learn that Israel sent spies out to view the land, but, although all the spies brought back the same report, ten of them said, “We be not able” to take the land (13:31), resulting in the whole nation being turned back into the wilderness to wander for forty years. Psalm 95 is David’s (see Hebrews 4:7) inspired comment on that period.

The repeated use of language from these two areas of the Old Testament demonstrates that the writer to the Hebrews is developing the spiritual lessons of the events recorded in Numbers, and commented on in the psalm, for the benefit of the brethren and sisters in the first century, and, by implication, for us also.

### The lesson for us


So, we might ask, What is the lesson that the writer to the Hebrews wishes us to understand? “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (3:19) seems to be the conclusion of his detailed exposition of the rebellion that Numbers 13 and 14 speaks about. But what did they not believe? Clearly the answer is that the people did not believe that God could give them the land, for they said, “We be not able” (Num. 13:31). In fact, as we read Hebrews 3 and 4 we will notice that the word “unbelief” occurs four times (3:12,19; 4:6,11), and the exhortation is presented most powerfully by the use of couplets:

What was the cause of the abject failure of Israel? The answer is supplied in the phrase, “An evil heart of unbelief”. This is the natural possession of all men. All history testifies to the fact. Even the incidents of the Exodus, from the plagues in Egypt to the wonders and terrors at Sinai, did not prevent the manifestation of that unbelief in Israel then, neither did the wondrous works of the Messiah prevent the same manifestation in his days. Well may the writer add, “Take heed!” and “Exhort one another daily”. The events of the past are recorded for the instruction of the present. This instruction was never more needed than it is today, when the whole tendency of the age is against belief in God and His Word. The whole passage (Heb. iii, 7-19) is a strong exhortation to continued belief and confidence in God, and a warning against the “deceitfulness of sin” and the evils of unbelief.

W. H. Boulton, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 76-7.

make sure you are not an unbeliever (3:12), *because the people in Moses’ day were unbelievers* (v. 19); there is still the prospect of entering that ‘rest’ (4:6), *so do not be like those who were unbelievers* (v. 11).

So we see that the writer to the Hebrews uses Israel’s failure to enter the land under Moses at the beginning of the wilderness journey to warn us that we should not despair as to whether the Kingdom will be given to us. This, not surprisingly, echoes the words of Jesus: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk. 12:32).

 Record your findings

### Recording findings

Having done our research, how are we going to make notes so that we do not forget the details we have found?

The quotations that we have seen in Hebrews can be underlined and the origin of the quotation noted in the margin; it may well be that you simply underline the marginal reference and associate that with the underlined passage. Do not forget to go to the origin of the quotation and similarly underline it and make reference to its use in Hebrews. You may also wish to make marginal notes which help you to remember that Psalm 95 quotes Numbers 13 and 14. The occurrences of the word “unbelief” in Hebrews 3 and 4 can be underlined and linked to each other.

For those wishing to pursue the matter of quotations from the Old Testament found in the letter to the Hebrews, a list of such quotations can be found on the Web at <http://www.christadelphian.org.uk/studypapers/>. Click on ‘Old Testament Quotations in the Book of Hebrews’.