

# Hebrews 3:16-17 Commentary

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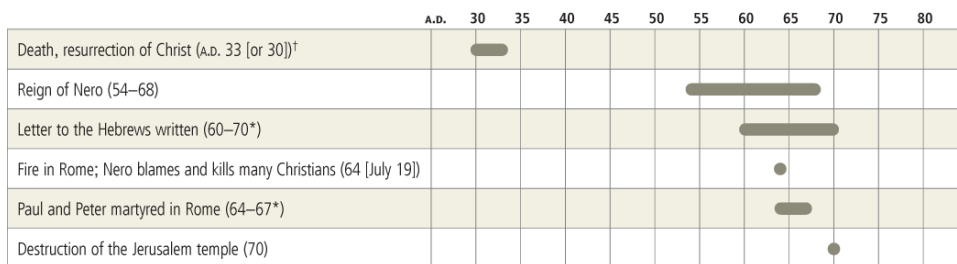
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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST  
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The Epistle to the Hebrews				
INSTRUCTION Hebrews 1-10:18				EXHORTATION Hebrews 10:19-13:25
Superior Person of Christ Hebrews 1:1-4:13	Superior Priest in Christ Hebrews 4:14-10:18			Superior Life In Christ Hebrews 10:19-13:25
BETTER THAN PERSON Hebrews 1:1-4:13	BETTER PRIESTHOOD Heb 4:14-7:28	BETTER COVENANT Heb 8:1-13	BETTER SACRIFICE Heb 9:1-10:18	BETTER LIFE
MAJESTY OF CHRIST	MINISTRY OF CHRIST			MINISTERS FOR CHRIST
DOCTRINE				DUTY
DATE WRITTEN: ca. 64-68 AD				

See [ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"](#)  
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Timeline of Hebrews - ESV Study Bible

**Hebrews 3:16** For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Greek:** tines gar akousantes (AAPMPN) parepikranan (3PAAL) all ou pantes oi exelthontes (AAPMPN) ex Aiguptou dia Mouseos

**BGT** τ νες γ ρ κο σαντες παρεπ κραναν; λλ ο π ντες ο ξελθ ντες ξ Α γ ππου δι Μωϋσ ως;

**Amplified:** For who were they who heard and yet were rebellious and provoked [Him]? Was it not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

**NET:** For which ones heard and rebelled? Was it not all who came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership? ([NET Bible](#))

**NLT:** And who was it who rebelled against God, even though they heard his voice? Wasn't it the people Moses led out of Egypt? ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** For who was it who heard the Word of God and yet provoked his indignation? Was is not all who were rescued from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses? ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** For who, having heard, rebelled? But was it not all who came out of Egypt through the aid of Moses? But with whom was He, angry forty years?

**Young's Literal:** For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?

**NKJ** For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?

**NET** For which ones heard and rebelled? Was it not all who came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership?

**CSB** For who heard and rebelled? Wasn't it really all who came out of Egypt under Moses?

**ESV** For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?

**NIV** Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt?

**MIT** For who are the hearers who rebelled? Were they not all those who made the exodus out of Egypt through Moses' leadership?

**NJB** who was it who listened and then rebelled? Surely all those whom Moses led out of Egypt.

**NRS** Now who were they who heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses?

**RSV** Who were they that heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses?

**NAB** Who were those who rebelled when they heard? Was it not all those who came out of Egypt under Moses?

**GWN** Who heard God and rebelled? All those whom Moses led out of Egypt rebelled.

**BBE** Who made him angry when his voice came to them? was it not all those who came out of Egypt with Moses?

**ASV** For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses?

- **Provoked** Heb 3:9,10; Nu 14:2,4; 26:65; Ps 78:17 Jer 32:29; Jer 44:3, Jer 44:8
- **not** : Nu 14:2,11, 24,30,38 De 1:35, 36,38 Jos 14:7-11 Ro 11:4,5
- Hebrews 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL ALL HEARD BUT MOST REBELLED

**William MacDonald** points out that "The chapter closes with a historical interpretation of Israel's apostasy. In a series of three questions and answers, (Heb 3:16, 17, 18) the writer traces Israel's rebellion, provocation, and retribution. Then he states the conclusion (Heb 3:19).

**For** ([gar](#)) is a term of explanation. The writer now explains who was not able to enter the promised land. **Lenski** "With the two lines of warning quoted from the psalm (v. 15, see v. 8) ringing in their ears, let the readers note who these people were that are referred to in the psalm." **Morris** adds "The author presses home his point by three questions that emphasize that it was the people who were in a position of spiritual privilege and yet sinned grievously who were in mind in Psalm 95."

**For who provoked** ([parapikraino](#) - rebelled against) *Him* **when they had heard** ([akouo](#))? **Indeed, did not all those who came out** ([exerchomai](#)) **of Egypt led by Moses - NET** = For which ones heard and rebelled? **CSB** = For who heard and rebelled? **Amplified:** For who were they who heard and yet were rebellious and provoked [Him]? The question is rhetorical. It is interesting that the KJV begins "For some," which is not accurate because it was actually "for most!" Israel seemed to make a good beginning, for it took some degree of trust to leave Egypt and cross the Red Sea. But even though they clearly heard His promises, but they rebelled and provoked Him by their rebellion. They exasperated God Who had graciously promised them the land of milk and honey, reflecting the failure of their faith. And without faith it is impossible to please Him (Heb 11:6) for it was only by faith men of old gained approval (Heb 11:2).

**Kenneth Wuest** explains that "The writer is saying, "For who, having heard, did provoke?" using a question to recall to the minds of his readers the identity of those who refused to enter Canaan. The interrogation is continued. "But, was it not all who came out of Egypt through the instrumentality of Moses?" The writer reminds his readers that it was the entire generation that committed the sin of apostasy. ([Hebrews](#))

**J Vernon McGee** on **provoked** - In the word provoke is the thought of God's being highly displeased with them because they had heard but did not believe. They had had faith enough to come out of Egypt, but that was as far as it went.

**C H Spurgeon** comments on the effect of hearing and still rebelling - There are many such, and there are no sinners who provoke God so much as those who hear the Gospel. A man who never hears the Gospel at all may provoke God, but the man that sins after he has heard it again and again and again, and has the sound of it ringing in his ears, provokes God with a sevenfold degree of provocation.

**Phillip Hughes** asks - Who were they that heard and yet were rebellious? The startling character of the answer to this, the first of the three leading questions proposed in these verses, rests in the fact that the persons involved were none other than those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses—all of them, that is to say, the entire generation that had been set free from bitter bondage and victoriously led forth with Moses at their head from the land of the tyrant. This does not imply that all without exception were guilty of unfaithfulness and apostasy, for the mention of Moses, who was certainly no rebel, is sufficient to remind us that there was a loyal remnant of those whose trust in God remained constant. The point is that this generation, which had firsthand experience of the goodness of God in bringing them from slavery to freedom, comprised the very last group of persons one would have expected to rebel against their Savior God. Still more unthinkable is the prospect of hard-hearted rebellion by Christians against the Lord who at the price of his own life-blood has ransomed them from the dark power of Satan and led them into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Yet this was precisely the danger threatening the community to whom this letter was addressed. ([A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews](#))

**Brian Bell** - BELIEVE JESUS (Heb 3:16-19) Deliverance from Egypt doesn't equal an inheritance in Canaan. 6 questions in 3 pairs (Heb 3:16-18) [Question. Answer. The Point] 1. (Heb 3:16) The Point: Everyone who died in the wilderness began in the glorious exodus. 2. (Heb 3:17) The Point: God was angry w/those who did not believe God would provide for them. Though they left Egypt with hope...it goes to show high hopes will not suffice...there must be belief. 3. (Heb 3:18) The Point: Unbelief leads to action(not entering in)...as it always does. (18) Where does God swear an oath against any class of people? - Only against unbelievers. D. They did not obey – Obedience is necessary. 1. It is just as if a doctor said, I can cure you if you obey my instructions implicitly. 2. It is just as if a teacher were to say, I can make you a scholar if you follow my curriculum w/absolute fidelity. 3. It is just as if a trainer said to an athlete, I can make you a champion if you do not deviate from the discipline that I lay down. E. The Key?...Hear & Obey

(19) 1. Believe in Him, but also walk with Him. a) Then the reward will be entering into His rest (ch.4). 2. Hearing or Hardening...your choice. F. Slide#33 "The first duty of every soul is to find not its freedom but its Master". Which are you after? - Slide#34 Consider your Master...Consider Jesus.

**Indeed, did not all** (except Caleb and Joshua) **those who came out** ([exerchomai](#)) **of Egypt led by Moses?** - The writer answers his first question with another question, which expects a "yes" answer. The problem with the majority of Israel that came out of Egyptian bondage was their unbelief in God's promises which provoked the anger of Jehovah and resulted in them not entering into the promised land but wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. Clearly this is a warning to the Hebrews who had heard the Gospel and were intrigued but who ultimately rejected it in unbelief. The result is not that they lost a land (the promised land) but that they lost a life (eternal life). Be careful in this section. The writer is NOT saying that genuine believers who express times of unbelief in their life (we all do from time to time and to varying degrees) will not enter heaven. Will we experience the discipline of the Lord? Yes, if that is what it takes to get our attention (Heb 12:5-11+). But we will still go to heaven. **On the other hand** individuals who **profess** to believe in the Gospel of Christ but experience no change whatsoever in their life are indicating by their lack of such change that they are not really genuine believers but that they are still dead in their trespasses and sins because they are in unbelief.

**Leon Morris** has an interesting note - NIV says that Moses "led" the people out of Egypt; but, more literally, the author said that they "came out through [dia] Moses"—implying that they acted of their own volition (ED: [exerchomai](#) is active voice = choice of one's will) and made a good start.

**Spurgeon** qualifies the writers use of "all" - Not all, for there were two faithful ones; **Joshua** and **Caleb** were faithful among the faithless found. See how the Spirit of God gathers up the fragments that remain. If there are but two faithful ones out of two millions, He knows it, and He records it. There were only a few—a mere handful—in Sodom, but the Lord would not consume them with the wicked. They were brought out of it. And so here, if there be only two, the Holy Spirit takes care to be very accurate in the counting of God's elect ones. If you are one of a family, and two of a city, He will take you and bring you into Zion. You may be in so great a minority that in all your acquaintance there may not be one godly person, yet the Holy Ghost will not take the matter in the lump, but He will choose you out, and mark you out, and distinguish you. Do you not notice how careful He was when he spoke about Judas—the good Judas? He says, "Not Iscariot" (John 14:22). No, no; he will not have him mistaken for that traitor. He guards the names of His people, each one of them, if there be but one—and two, if there be but two.

**Newell** - As to Israel, "Even so then at this present time also there is **aremnant** according to the election of grace" (Ro 11:5-note). But they are received by grace alone, as sinners only! As to this word, "**TODAY**," let Israel be our warning! Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea, and being permitted (let Dt 1:22 interpret Nu 13:1) to send spies into the good land God's word had vouchsafed them, they hearkened to the evil report of the ten unbelieving spies: "*It is a good land ... but the giants are there, and cities walled up to heaven.*" No attention was given to the testimony of Joshua and Caleb: "*The land is an exceeding good land ... Rebel not against Jehovah, neither fear ye the people of the land ... Jehovah is with us: fear them not.*" Nay! "*All the congregation bade stone them with stones*" " '*Let us make us a captain,' said they, 'and let us return into Egypt'*" (Nu 14:4-10). This was "the provocation" of our text. Then the glory of Jehovah appeared; and but for the intercession of Moses they would have been smitten with pestilence and disinherited, and Moses alone would have taken their place. (Read again, we beg you, Nu 13:1-33, Nu 14:1-45, and Dt 1:1-46.)

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**Provoked** ([3893](#))(**parapikraino** from **pará** to the point of, unto, implying movement toward a certain point + **pikraíno** = embitter) (only used in Heb 3:16) means to embitter alongside, to exasperate, to provoke to bitterness or anger, to make bitter towards one, to exasperate, rouse to indignation, to be disobedient, to rebel. It carries the idea of causing someone to become resentful or angry, often used in contexts describing rebellion or provoking someone (especially God) through disobedience or stubbornness.

**Gilbrant** - **Parapikrainō** is not found in Greek literature before the Septuagint. However, the word appears some 45 times in the Septuagint and seems to have two primary meanings. **The first is "to be rebellious or stubbornly defiant"**; this line usually translates the Hebrew verb **mārâh** (which has this same meaning) or its noun form **m'ri** ("rebellion"). **Mārâh** might refer to defiance either in word or in deed; it most often refers to Israel's national rebellion against God. It is frequently used of her rebellion in the wilderness after the Exodus. **The second use of parapikrainō in the Septuagint** emphasizes the idea "to stir up to bitterness," hence, "to provoke to anger." This line normally translates the causative (hiphil) forms of the Hebrew verbs **mārâh** or **kā'aš**. These verbs are most used of a grieved God, provoked to anger by a sinful Israel. The sole New Testament usage of **parapikrainō** in Hebrews 3:16 also is set in the context of Israel's rebellion in the wilderness. Though it may be taken to mean that Israel "was rebellious and contentious" at Rephidim, the context supports the other line of meaning; i.e., that Israel "provoked" God to 40 years of anger by her complaints and unbelief. Christians are thus warned against similar acts and attitudes. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**PARAPIKRAINO IN THE SEPTUAGINT** - Deut. 31:27; 1 Ki. 13:21; 1 Ki. 13:26; Ps. 5:10; Ps. 66:7; Ps. 68:6; Ps. 78:8; Ps. 78:17; Ps. 78:40; Ps. 78:56; Ps. 105:28; Ps. 106:7; Ps. 106:33; Ps. 106:43; Ps. 107:11; Jer. 32:29; Jer. 44:3; Jer. 44:8; Lam. 1:18; Lam. 1:20; Ezek. 2:3; Ezek. 2:5; Ezek. 2:6; Ezek. 2:7; Ezek. 2:8; Ezek. 3:9; Ezek. 3:26; Ezek. 3:27; Ezek. 12:2; Ezek. 12:3; Ezek. 12:9; Ezek. 12:25; Ezek. 12:27; Ezek. 17:12; Ezek. 20:21; Ezek. 24:3; Ezek. 24:14; Ezek. 44:6; Hos. 10:5;

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**Jon Courson** - How were the children of Israel delivered from Egypt? By blood and water—the blood that they applied to the doorposts before Passover and the water of the Red Sea which drowned the chariots pursuing them.

So, too, we are delivered from "Egypt"—from damnation and destruction—by the blood and water that flowed from Jesus' side on the Cross of Calvary. Yet, like the children of Israel, although they are delivered from Egypt, too many Christians spend their whole lives wandering between Egypt and the land of abundance. Year after year, they trudge through life, thinking, *Well, this is as good as it can get until I die and go to the Promised Land of heaven.*

That's not what God intended for us, gang. He intended to take us out of Egypt, through the wilderness quickly, and into the Promised Land of the Spirit-filled, abundant life. You see, the Promised Land in Bible typology is not a picture of heaven. It's a picture of life in the Spirit. How do I know? Because while there are neither giants nor battles in heaven, the Spirit-filled life is filled with many a giant to wrestle and many a battle to wage.

Only Joshua and Caleb realized that giants, battles, wars notwithstanding, God would, indeed, give them the Promised Land. And thus, they did not provoke God. (See [Jon Courson's Application Commentary](#))

**Hebrews 3:17** And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** tisin de prosochthisen (3SAAI) tesserakonta ete ouchi tois hamartetasin (AAPMPD) on ta kola epesen (3SAAI) en te eremo

**BGT** τισιν ὁ προσχθισεν τεσσαρεκοντα τη; οὐχ τοις μαρτασσιν, ντ κλα πεσεν ντ ρμ;

**Amplified:** And with whom was He irritated and provoked and grieved for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose dismembered bodies were strewn and left in the desert? ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

**NET:** And against whom was God provoked for forty years? Was it not those who sinned, whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness? ([NET Bible](#))

**NLT:** And who made God angry for forty years? Wasn't it the people who sinned, whose corpses lay in the wilderness? ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** And who was it with whom God was displeased for forty long years? Was it not those who, after all their hearing of God's Word, fell into sin, and left their bones in the desert? ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** But with whom was He, angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness?

**Young's Literal:** with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

**NKJ** Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?

**NET** And against whom was God provoked for forty years? Was it not those who sinned, whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness?

**CSB** And who was He provoked with for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

**ESV** And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

**NIV** And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert?

**MIT** With whom was God indignant for 40 years? Were they not those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the desert?

**NJB** And with whom was he angry for forty years? Surely with those who sinned and whose dead bodies fell in the desert.

**NRS** But with whom was he angry forty years? Was it not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

**RSV** And with whom was he provoked forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

**NAB** With whom was he "provoked for forty years"? Was it not those who had sinned, whose corpses fell in the desert?

**GWN** With whom was God angry for 40 years? He was angry with those who sinned and died in the desert.

**BBE** And with whom was he angry for forty years? was it not with those who did evil, who came to their deaths in the waste land?

**ASV** And with whom was he displeased forty years? was it not with them that sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

- **was it** : Nu 26:64,65 1Co 10:1-13
- **whose**: Nu 14:22,29,32,33 De 2:15,16 Jer 9:22 Jude 1:5
- Hebrews 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Corinthians 10:5+ "Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; **for** (term of explanation - What's Paul explaining?) **they were laid low in the wilderness.**"

Numbers 14:22-23+ - "Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs, which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it.

Numbers 14:29-33+ - your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. 30 'Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. 31 'Your children, however, whom you said would become a prey—I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected. 32 'But as for you, your corpses will fall in this wilderness. 33 'Your sons shall be shepherds for forty years in the wilderness, and they will suffer for your unfaithfulness, until your corpses lie in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 1:35+ 'Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers,

Jude 1:5+ Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.

Psalms 106:26 Therefore He swore to them That He would cast them down in the wilderness,

### **WAGES OF ISRAEL'S SIN A WILDERNESS GRAVEYARD!**

Note that four different terms are employed to describe Israel's sin which emphasizes the depth of their rebellion against the Almighty! "**provoked**" (Heb 3:16), "**sinned**" (Heb 3:17), "**disobedient**" (Heb 3:18), "**unbelief**" (Heb 3:19).

**And with whom was He angry ([prosochthizo](#)) for forty years?** - What does the "**40 years**" refer to? God paid them for 40 days in the land, so that the punishment fit the

Nu 13:25ff+. The spies into Canaan had begun to look at their circumstances and taken their focus off what God has promised.



When they took their eyes off of God, fear began to enter in. They so provoked God that they were denied the very thing that they had wanted. So Israel's "rest" was a land but they were refused entry to Canaan bc they failed to believe God. Failure to Believe is not ignorance but stubbornness as they refused to obey God and thus they were refused rest.

**THOUGHT** - God was patient, but provocation overrode His patience. I rebelled against Him for almost 40 years until He rescued me from the wilderness of this world. Totally undeserved, amazing grace and longsuffering! See my personal testimony.

**Was it not with those who sinned** ([hamartano](#) - active voice = willful choice!), **whose bodies** ([kolon](#) - corpses, dead bodies) **fell** ([pipto](#)) **in the wilderness** ([eremos](#))? - Speaking of those Israelites who had come out of Egypt with Moses, the writer is saying that they missed the mark when they swerved from the truth that God had promised them entree into the promised land. They refused to believe and unbelief is disobedience and disobedience is sin and when sin is fully accomplished it brings death. And death it brought! The bodies in the wilderness **fell** at the rate of about 90 corpses per day! It is interesting to note that when the verb for fell, [pipto](#), is used to describe an edifice that has fallen into ruin! There is no text even stating that the bodies were buried! Unbelief led to wasted years and wasted lives!

**Spurgeon** - He does not say that their bodies were buried, but that their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Unbelief degrades us into beasts whose carcasses fall beneath the poleax of judgment. Remember that in the Old Testament the unredeemed man is comparable to the donkey: "If you will not redeem it, then you will break its neck" (Exod 13:13). But the redeemed man is comparable to the sheep. Valuable property is in him, and God esteems him.

**Phillip Hughes** - The same Israelites who had been rescued from Egypt were the ones with whom God was **provoked forty years**, and the reason for this provocation was that they sinned by abandoning their trust in God, with the consequence that their bodies fell in the wilderness. God judged and punished these rebels, who had set out with such protestations of loyalty and obedience, by not permitting them to arrive at the land of promise which was their destination. Only Joshua and Caleb, whose confidence in God had not wavered, and those who at the start of the exodus were immature in years were allowed to enter Canaan (see Nu 14:26ff.). And so a journey which might have taken a few months lasted for forty years—forty years of wandering and not arriving. This period involving the number forty represents, as on other occasions in Scripture (cf. Ge 7:4, 17; Dt. 2:7; 8:2; Josh. 14:10; Neh. 9:21; Amos 2:10; Jonah 3:4; Mt. 4:2; Acts 1:3; 7:30, 36), a period of divine longsuffering, on the one hand, and, on the other, of testing which culminates in judgment for the unrepentant. (See [A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews - Page 154](#))

**CH Spurgeon** - God speaks very lovingly of the bodies of His saints, but see how the apostle speaks of the bodies of apostates. He does not say that their bodies were buried, but that their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Unbelief degrades us into beasts whose carcasses fall beneath the poleax of judgment. Remember that in the Old Testament the unredeemed man is comparable to the donkey: "If you will not redeem it, then you will break its neck" (Ex 13:13). But the redeemed man is comparable to the sheep. Valuable property is in him, and God esteems him.

**Henry Morris** makes an interesting comment on the bodies that fell in the wilderness - One of the difficulties posed by skeptics is that, if a million or more Israelites perished in the wilderness during their forty years in the desert, why have none of their graves been found by archaeologists? This verse suggests that the bodies may not have been buried at all but simply left to decay and return to dust under the desert sun. These all died "because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19), without seeing the promised land.

The writer of Hebrews is implying that some of his readers will die in their sins (cp Jesus' solemn warning - Jn 8:21, 24+) if they fail to place their faith in Messiah and bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance (Mt 3:8+). If any of his audience professed belief but do not "possess" (genuine, soul saving) belief, they would die in the wilderness of this world just as the unbelieving, disobedient Israelites died in the desert.

*The cause of this recalcitrance lies deeper than a wrong attitude or wrong behavior; it lies in a disobedient will.*

**Ray Stedman** writes "The rhetorical questions of Heb 3:16–18 show how an **outward facade of belief** can be maintained while the **heart is still unrepentant**, and **therefore unredeemed**. It is possible to participate in and benefit from the great miracles of God, as the Israelites did who came out of Egypt with Moses (Heb 3:16). Yet, despite such evidence, **the heart can remain unchanged for a lifetime**. God sees that inner hardness and warns continually against it until he is forced to judge it (He 3:17). Note the growing stages of unbelief: general rebellion (He 3:16); sin, punished by physical death (He 3:17); and disobedience (Gk "being unpersuadable"—He 3:18). The cause of this recalcitrance lies deeper than a wrong attitude or wrong behavior; it lies in a disobedient will. Therefore, the loss of promised blessing is traceable only and solely to long-continued unbelief (He 3:19). This word (apistian, "disbelief") is the platform upon which the writer's more positive explanation of rest is founded. He gives us the other side of disbelief in Hebrews 4. ([Don't Miss Your Opportunity](#)) (Bolding added)

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**Angry** (4360)(**prosochthizo** from **pros** = toward or with + **ochtheô** = be sorely vexed; feel indignant at; loathe; spew out; be disgusted with; extreme anger and disgust) is expressive of a strong displeasure, amounting to offence. **Grieved** as translated in the KJV does not adequately express the righteous anger of God intimated in the passage and fails to accurately reflect the extreme anger and disgust of God. To put it mildly, God was offended at the actions of Israel which were a manifestation of their unbelief!

**PROSOCHTHIZO - 2V** - Heb. 3:10; Heb. 3:17

**PROSOCHTHIZO IN THE SEPTUAGINT** - Gen. 27:46; Lev. 18:25; Lev. 18:28; Lev. 20:22; Lev. 26:15; Lev. 26:30; Lev. 26:43; Lev. 26:44; Num. 21:5; Num. 22:3; Deut. 7:26; 2 Sam. 1:21; Ps. 22:24; Ps. 36:4; Ps. 95:10; Ezek. 36:31

**Sinned** (264)(**hamartano**) literally means to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize). Hamartano means to act contrary to the will and law of God. To commit a wrong. To be in error. Hamartano means to **err** (err is from Latin errare = to wander or to stray!) which means to wander from the right way, to deviate from the true course or purpose and so to violate an accepted standard of conduct. To err is to miss the right way. To err means to deviate from the path or line of duty. To stray by design or mistake. To err is to stray from God and/or His commandments. **Hamartano** means to swerve from the truth, to turn aside from the straight course charted by the Word of Truth. To swerve means to wander from any line prescribed, or from a rule of duty; to depart from what is established by law, duty or custom. In short hamartano means to miss the mark of God's perfect standard.

**HAMARTANO - 37V** - Matt. 18:15; Matt. 18:21; Matt. 27:4; Lk. 15:18; Lk. 15:21; Lk. 17:3; Lk. 17:4; Jn. 5:14; Jn. 8:11; Jn. 9:2; Jn. 9:3; Acts 25:8; Rom. 2:12; Rom. 3:23; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 5:14; Rom. 5:16; Rom. 6:15; 1 Co. 6:18; 1 Co. 7:28; 1 Co. 7:36; 1 Co. 8:12; 1 Co. 15:34; Eph. 4:26; 1 Tim. 5:20; Tit. 3:11; Heb. 3:17; Heb. 10:26; 1 Pet. 2:20; 2 Pet. 2:4; 1 Jn. 1:10; 1 Jn. 2:1; 1 Jn. 3:6; 1 Jn. 3:8; 1 Jn. 3:9; 1 Jn. 5:16; 1 Jn. 5:18

**Bodies** (2966)(**kolon**) means a limb, a member of the human body or of an animal. A dead body, a corpse (inasmuch as the members of a corpse are loose and fall apart) and in the plural as here the carcasses or corpses (as in Nu 14:29).

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek this word was commonly used in the singular to mean "limb" or "member" (of a body). It could also refer to the "limb" of a tree or plant or the "side" of a building (cf. Liddell-Scott). In the Septuagint and New Testament *kōlon* is found only in the plural, hence it is used in the sense of "dead bodies, carcasses." The Septuagint used *kōlon* in Numbers 14:29 where God commanded Moses to tell Israel: "Your carcasses shall fall in the wilderness." The Septuagint also used this word similarly in Leviticus 26:30; Numbers 14:32; 1 Samuel 17:46 (LXX 1 Kings 17:46); and Isaiah 66:24. It is used in the New Testament in reference to Israel in the wilderness: "But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?" (Hebrews 3:17). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**KOLON** - There are 6 uses in the Septuagint - Lev. 26:30 Nu 14:29 Nu 14:32 Nu 14:33 1Sa 17:46 Isa. 66:24

**Wilderness** (2048) **eremos** means lonesome, solitary, wilderness = uninhabited, lonely, uncultivated region translated "wilderness" 32x in the KJV. Only used twice in Hebrews - Heb. 3:8; Heb. 3:17

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**Steven Cole on Hebrews 3:16-19** - The author comes back to the story of Israel in the wilderness, quoting again from Psalm 95: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me." Then he brings this story home to his readers by asking three sets of two rhetorical questions each (the KJV mistranslates Heb 3:16). The first question in each set is answered by the second question. He wants his readers to see that their situation parallels exactly that of Israel in the wilderness. In Heb 3:19 he sums up his point, tying it back to the idea of unbelief in Heb 3:12.

*The best of saints have need to be cautioned  
against the worst of evils*

The first question and answer show that this story applies to all **professing** believers. **Who provoked God when they heard His voice?** (Heb 3:16) The same group that Moses had led out of Egypt. While there was a truly saved remnant in that company (**Ed**: For example, Moses was in this company and he certainly was genuinely saved as he appeared with Jesus in the Transfiguration!), **most** of them grumbled, disbelieved God, and died in the wilderness. The author is saying to all **professing** Christians, "This applies to you!" Even if we are true believers, John Owen's comment is apropos: "The best of saints have need to be cautioned against the worst of evils" (Hebrews: The Epistle of Warning [Kregel], p. 53).

The second question and answer show that **professing** believers who persist in sin should expect God's anger, not His rest. If we are not true believers, our sin in the face of knowledge will incur God's final judgment. If we are true believers, our sin will bring on His strong discipline. Either way, you don't want to go there!

The third question and answer show that those who incurred God's judgment in the wilderness were not only **unbelieving**; they



were **disobedient**. As we've seen, you cannot separate the two. **Unbelief that is unchecked quickly moves into disobedience. Often unbelief is a smokescreen used to hide disobedience. Unbelief is more socially acceptable than sin, so we posture ourselves as struggling with intellectual issues. But beneath the surface, we know that if God's Word is true, then we need to turn from our sins, and we don't want to do that.** The disobedient who failed to enter God's rest were one and the same with the unbelieving.

His final summary (Heb 3:19) also shows that unbelief renders us not only **unwilling**, but also **unable** to appropriate God's blessings. Either faith opens the blessings of God's eternal rest to you, or unbelief bars you from them. To persevere in faith, we need to personalize the story of Israel in the wilderness. We need to avoid their awful sin of unbelief that rendered them unable to enter God's promised rest.

**Conclusion** - I had a neighbor in California who could be described as an all-out macho man. His face and tattooed arms were tanned from working on a road crew and from riding his motorcycle in the California sun. He had a quick temper. I once heard him from over 100 yards away cussing out the snowplow driver for plowing a berm in front of his driveway. He had copies of Penthouse magazine lying around his house. He never went to church.

One day I got an opportunity to share Christ with him. But he quickly held up his hand to silence me and then said, "Steve, I've got that all fixed up with the Man Upstairs." I'm always worried when someone refers to Almighty God as "the Man Upstairs." I said, "What do you mean?" He proceeded to tell me that when he was a teenager, he attended a large Baptist church in the Los Angeles area. The youth pastor had told him that if he would accept Christ, he would be assured of going to heaven. He said, "I did that, and so you don't need to worry about me." Even though there was not a shred of evidence that he was persevering in the faith, and in spite of much evidence that he was not, he thought that because he had once believed, he had eternal life!

The author of Hebrews had a different view of things. He says that to enter God's rest, we must persevere in obedient faith. To persevere, we must avoid the great sin of unbelief; we must practice the great service of mutual encouragement; we must hold fast our great salvation in Christ; and, we must personalize the great story of Israel in the wilderness. Take care, brethren! ([\*\*Lesson 11- Persevering in Faith Hebrews 3:12-19\*\*](#)) (Bolding added)

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### **Graves in the Wilderness - Heb 3:17**

The wilderness became a vast graveyard for a generation that would not believe. They had seen God split the sea, rain bread from heaven, bring water from rock. Yet when He called them to trust Him again—to enter the land He promised—they shrank back in fear. Their sin was not ignorance, but willful unbelief. The consequence? Not merely delay, but death. Their bodies fell—not by accident, but by judgment. Hebrews 3 is not written to atheists, but to professing believers. It is a warning to those who have heard God's voice but risk hardening their hearts through drifting, doubting, and disobedience. This is not about losing salvation by stumbling. It is about revealing hearts that never truly trusted God in the first place. It is possible to walk with God's people, see God's works, and still fall short of entering His rest. God's anger is not impulsive but holy and just—a settled opposition to sin and unbelief. Let the wilderness of Hebrews 3 lead you to the cross—not just to escape wrath, but to experience rest and lasting joy.

### **Fell in the Wilderness**

They saw the sea divide in two,  
A path where only faith could view.  
They ate the bread that angels dropped,  
Yet still their hearts in trust were stopped.

They murmured long, complained aloud,  
Though fire and cloud led through the crowd.  
Their sandals did not wear with time,  
Yet still they doubted the Divine.

The voice of God they would not hear,  
His promises fell on hearts of fear.  
They turned from rest, and turned to roam—  
And perished far from Canaan's home.

Their bones were bleached by desert wind,  
Their dreams all lost because of sin.  
Their journey ended not with cheer,  
But judgment carved in dust and fear.

O heart of mine, beware the same—  
A lifeless walk that wears His name.  
Let faith arise and daily trust,  
Lest I too fall into the dust.