

Hebrews 3:16-19

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The Israelites turned from God, and because of their unbelief, they did not receive their inheritance.

God had told the Israelites to enter the Promised Land but they did not believe that God would protect them and give them the land, so they refused to enter. Because of this, God swore that *those who were disobedient* would not *enter His rest*. “*Enter His rest*” refers to receiving the full reward of the work to be done; God did not rest until the seventh day, and he only rested then because all was accomplished.

The generation who did not believe God and hardened their hearts suffered the consequence of wandering in the desert for *forty years*. They died in the desert, and were never able to enter the Promised Land. *They were not able to enter [the rest] because of unbelief*; that is to say they did not complete the work so they did not gain the benefits that come with finishing the job God gave them to do. If we question, doubt, and rebel against God, we are in danger of losing our reward that only comes through faithful obedience. Lack of belief in God is the reason that these Israelites did not enter the land. Our lack of belief in God could cause us not to *enter His rest*.

Rest does not refer to “getting in to heaven,” but rather is part of our reward for faithful obedience to God. If the Israelites had been obedient to God, they would have gained their inheritance, the Promised Land. If we are faithful to God, we will gain our reward. The fact that Paul is making such a fuss about possessing our inheritance tells us what an enormous consequence it is. We tend to think that just getting in to heaven will be reward enough. It is clear from these passages that the reward of the inheritance is something that is quite enormous – something that we should be willing to risk all in this life to gain. It is like the great treasure of the old stories that heroic characters risked their lives to possess. Those stories all point in a very weak way to the greatest hero of all: Jesus. Jesus gave up everything to do the will of His Father, and in doing so gained the inheritance of the world. Jesus has granted to share that inheritance with all who believe, if we are willing to possess it. The word “share” here is the Greek “metochoi,” from “metochos.” “Metochos” is an important word in Hebrews, used throughout ([Hebrews 3:1](#), [3:14](#), [6:4](#)). It

means to be a participator, a sharer, or a business partner. We share in Christ's reward if we live our life in faithful obedience.

¹⁶ For who provoked *Him* when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt *led* by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.