

The Book of Hebrews

מְאֹנְשׁ מִנְמָה דָא מִנְהָת אַקְלָא
צְמַאַלְלָא נְתַחְצְרָה דְרַחְסָנָה סָקָה
אַחֲרַ פְּקָלָא תְּסִנְ סְרְבָּאַלְלָה
רַרְתָּא סָקָה תְּאַקְסָנָה דְמַמָּצָה
תְּאַתְּפָלָשָׁה נְתַרְדְּנָה הַרְפָּרָה נְרַלְדָה
תְּאַגְּשָׁה רַלְדָה מְלַלְצָה סָסָה תְּלָשָׁה



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Outline of Hebrews

“Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)
- V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)
- VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)

Outline of Hebrews

V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)

- A. Exhortation to Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Encourage One Another (10:19-25)
- B. Warning: No Hope of Forgiveness for Those Who Turn from Christ (10:26-31)
- C. A Call to Persevere (10:32-12:17)
- D. You Have Come to Mount Zion Instead of Mount Sinai (12:18-24)
- E. Final Warning: Don't Reject God's Word! (12:25-29)

Final Warning: Don't Reject God's Word! (12:25-29)

²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷ This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken--that is, things that have been made--in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

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- The author here is building on the contrast drawn between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion in the preceding passage.
- You'll recall that *in* that preceding passage (especially Heb 12:19), the author talked about how the Israelites "*refused*" to hear God's voice when he spoke to them "*on earth*" through his servant Moses (see Exo 20:18-19, Deut 5:24-25).
- To refuse to listen to **God's word** is, of course, to reject **God himself**.
- God repeatedly "*warned*" Israel in that revelation given to Moses from a hill "*on earth*" (Mount Sinai) what would happen to them if they "*refused*" to obey him and keep his covenant stipulations (see especially, Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:15-68).

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- The curses that God warned would come to pass were **earthly** curses such as famine, defeat in wars, crops that fail to produce, and disease.
- The **ultimate** curse was that they would be **exiled**:
 - *And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.* (Lev 26:33)
- God's word is an effective word and when the Israelites "**refused**" to heed the Lord's warnings, the curses that God threatened did indeed come to pass.
- They "*did not escape*."

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- The author then makes an argument from the lesser to the greater.
- If those warned “**on earth**” did “**not escape**” God’s judgement, how “**much less**” likely is it that those who “**reject**” the one “**who warns from heaven**” will “**escape**” judgment.
- The readers are addressed with a warning “**from heaven**” because Jesus “**passed through the heavens**” into the presence of God (Heb 4:14; cf. 7:26; 9:24) and sat down at God’s right hand “**in heaven**” (Heb 8:1) is now ruling from the “**heavenly**” Mount Zion (Psalm 110:2, cf. Heb 12:22).

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- The argument that the author is making **here** is an argument that he has made (using slightly different words) **at least two other times** in this letter :
 - *Since the message declared by angels [i.e. the Mosaic Law given on Sinai] proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?* (Heb 2:2-3a)
 - *Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?* (Heb 10:28-29)

²⁶ *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”*

- Here the author draws ***another contrast*** to what happened at Mount Sinai:
 - ***At Mount Sinai***, God's voice “*shook the earth*.” In Ex 19:18 it tells us that “*the whole mountain quaked greatly*” at the arrival of its Creator (cf. Judg. 5:4-5; Ps 68:7-8).
 - That trauma to the earth ***foreshadowed*** a coming day when God has “*promised*” that he will “*shake not only the earth but also the heavens*.”
- The words of this “promise” come from Haggai:
 - *Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.* (Hag 2:6-7)

²⁶ *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”*

- This “promise” was originally given to the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian exile and needed encouragement to rebuild God’s temple, and so the Lord promised to shake “*the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.*”
- In its *original* context this promise meant that the Lord would compel the surrounding nations to contribute their wealth to the building of his sanctuary.

²⁶ *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”*

- But what was happening in Haggai's day was a picture of a ***much greater*** future event in which the Lord “*has promised*” to “*shake the heavens and the earth*” on a ***much grander*** scale.
- ***Haggai*** was using imagery given ***previously*** in the book of ***Isaiah*** to portray a coming day when the Lord's vengeance would bring destruction ***not only*** to the ***earth's*** inhabitants but ***also*** to ***heaven*** and its starry hosts:
 - *I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger* (Isa 13:13).

²⁶ *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”*

- Isaiah had also prophesied that when the present heavens and earth were “shaken,” they would be replaced by a ***new*** heavens and a ***new*** earth:
 - *For behold, I create **new heavens and a new earth**, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.* (Isa 65:17)
 - *For as the **new heavens and the new earth** that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.* (Isa 66:22)

²⁶ *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”*

- NT authors teach this as well. For example Peter says:
 - *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* (2 Pet 3:10-13)

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- This description is similar to what we see in the book of Revelation:
 - *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence **earth and sky fled away**, and no place was found for them. (Rev 20:11)*
 - *Then I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the **first heaven and the first earth had passed away...** (Rev 21:1)*

²⁶ *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”*

- Of course the author of Hebrews himself has *already* cited Psalm 102:25-27, all the way back in chapter 1, where he says:
 - *You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed...* (Heb 1:10-12 giving a citation from Psalm 102:25-27)

²⁷ This phrase, “**Yet once more**,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken--that is, **things that have been made**--in order that **the things that cannot be shaken may remain**.

- Here the author interprets the shaking that God will do “*yet once more*” as the final judgment on the earth at the end of the age, when the material universe (“*things that have been made*”) will pass away.
- After God does that “shaking,” the only things that will “*remain*” will be the “*the things that cannot be shaken*” which (as we will see in the next verse) are the things belonging to the **kingdom of God**.

²⁸ *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,* ²⁹ *for our God is a consuming fire.*

- Those things that “*cannot be shaken*” can be summed up in the single concept of “*a kingdom*,” – an ordered harmonious society governed by “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (Rev 19:16).
- It is that realm that was described in Heb 12:22 as the “*city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*,” where God eternally dwells with his people and righteousness reigns (cf. Rev 21:1ff).
- The ***full and final manifestation*** of this “*kingdom*” will be seen at the glorious appearance of Christ at the end of the age.
- And yet, in one sense, this “*kingdom*” is ***already here***: Jesus is ruling this “*kingdom*” as he sits enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 1:3; 12:2), and the people of God have already come to it (Heb 12:22).

²⁸ *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.*

- God's kingdom “*cannot be shaken*” and will survive when all else dissolves.
- In King Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dream, described in the book of Daniel, a great stone shattered a statue representing all the great human empires.
- That stone symbolized “*a kingdom*” that the God of heaven would erect, one that “***shall never be destroyed... It shall break in pieces all these [other] kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.***” (Dan 2:44b; cf. 7:13-14, 18).

²⁸ *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.*

- Even more surprisingly, God bestows this “*kingdom*” on “**us**” as a gift we are “*receiving*.”
- The proper response to so gracious a gift is for us to be “*grateful*” and to offer “*acceptable worship*” consisting of “*reverence and awe*”.
- Our grateful joy must be blended with “*reverence and awe*” because “*our God is a consuming fire*.”
- This description of God as “*a consuming fire*” was **first** given in Deut 4:24, when Moses was exhorting the people to be faithful to the old covenant given at Mount Sinai.

²⁸ *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.*

- God remains the same despite the new circumstances of the ***new covenant***.
- In light of all this, the readers are to be “*grateful*” for what is theirs in Christ and to put out of their mind all thoughts of lapsing from their Christianity to their former way of life.

Class Discussion Time



***Class Discussion Time**

- No doubt, all of us would like to have a positive impact on the world around us – one that lasts beyond our own lifetime.
- Our text today teaches that everything in this life that is not a part of Christ’s kingdom will be burned up on the last day.
- Given this principle, where should we direct our efforts if we want to have a lasting positive impact?

*Class Discussion Time

- In the passage we looked at *last* week, in the middle of a text that described the heavenly assembly of those “*enrolled in heaven*” and “*spirits of the righteous made perfect*”, the author reminded us that God is “*the judge of all*”.
- In the passage we looked at this week, after exhorting us to “*be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken*” and to “*offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe*”, the author reminds us that “*our God is a consuming fire.*”
- Do you think the author may be reminding us that however much we may be caught up in anticipating the glories of heaven, and however much we may be caught up in our gratitude and reverence and worship of God, we must never forget that God is a God of **wrath** as well as a God of **love**?
- Why might that be a good thing for us to remember?

*Class Discussion Time

- Today we looked at a number of passages in association with our text that describe what will happen at the end of the ages.
- I would summarize what we saw in those texts, as follows:
 - Jesus continues to build his “*kingdom*” on earth as he has been for many years – working through his church on earth while seated at the right hand of God
 - Until the “*day of the Lord*” when, at a time when we least expect him to come, he will return like a “*thief in the night*”
 - At which point, the Lord will cause the present heavens and earth to “*pass away*”, preserving only those things associated with his “*kingdom*”
 - Which then become a part of a “*new heavens and a new earth*” that the Lord creates to replace the old heavens and old earth
- Do you think this is a fair summary of what we saw in the texts that we looked at today?
- People in our day hold to a variety of “end times” views. What is *your* end times view? How well does it fit with the above sequence of events?