

Unshakeable Kingdom, Consuming Fire

Hebrews 12:25-29

Reading: Revelations 21:1-8

Bethany Baptist Church

August 4, 2019

...pray...

Some people act as if God's *grace* is at their *beck & call*... **But consider**, ...

Is it possible to *lose your opportunity* to be saved?

Could there ever come a point when it's *too late* to repent?

Questions like these suggest the sober theme of Hebrews **five warning passages**.

- **2:1** – *drifting away from (drifting past) what we have heard*
- **3:12** – *take care brethren that there **not** be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God*
- **6:4-8** – *for in the case of those who have once been enlightened...it is impossible to renew them again to repentance*
- **10:26, 27** – *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment...*
- **12:25** (this morning) – *See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking*

If you *reject the gospel today*, could it be too late to *change your mind tomorrow*?

Turn w/ me in your NT to Hebrews 12:18-29 (hear Hebrews final warning as we focus on vv.25-29)

This is a warning to *church attenders* who are **not** *Christ followers*. Every church *has* them! If that's you, you will either *follow Christ* or *desert Him*. ..*obey Him* or *reject Him*... For you, Hebrews offers this *terrifying* but *necessary* last word!

Hebrews' final warning to spiritual fence-sitters.

1. **A call to obey (v.25).**
2. **A call to watch (vv.26-27).**
3. **A call to worship (vv.28-29).**

To be clear, the warning is this: **stop** putting off God!

The final warning in Hebrews is a plain call to obey God (v.25)...

1. *See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking.* That's the final warning: God is *speaking*, **don't ignore** Him.
 - a. Don't forget that this warning stands on the reminder (18-21) of **OT Mt. Sinai**.
 - b. Ex 19, 20 – The *people* gathered, *God* descended in fire, the *mountain* responded like a smoking furnace, *the* ground shook right off the *Richter Scale*, the *trumpets* of heaven blasted, the *people* begged for relief. Because in the midst of it all they *heard a voice*: God spoke the Law from Mt. Sinai. *Thou shalt...thou shalt not*.
 - c. So now there is this *call* (25) that moves from the *lesser* spiritual crime to the *greatest* spiritual felony of all. From *ignoring* Mt. Sinai's Law to *ignoring* Mt. Zion's gospel.

2. *God warned them on earth.*
 - a. Beginning from the *summit* of Mt. Sinai, and down through the *centuries* that followed, it was always *clear* what God required.
 - b. Yet beginning from the *foot* of Mt. Sinai, and down through the *centuries* that followed, Israel *refused* to listen to God's voice.
 - c. But there is a *penalty* for ignoring God and Israel *paid* it – over and over.
 - i. They *rejected* God and *embraced* idols. Over and over.
 - ii. God sent *invading armies*. Over and over.
 - iii. Finally God delivered Israel into *exile*.
 - iv. And He declared the *Old Covenant* (introduced on Mt. Sinai) to be *broken* – broken by His *spiritual adulterous people*.
 - d. But God graciously promised a *New Covenant* to be established by a greater *Mediator* than **Moses** and a greater *Priest* that **Aaron: Jesus!**

3. But there is a **second** and *greater* warning to heed. *God now warns us from heaven.*
- a. The **first**, *lesser* warning came from earthly **Mt. Sinai**, the **second** and *final voice* comes from heavenly **Mt. Zion** (considered last week; **read vv.22-24**).
 - b. ...it's the *voice* of Jesus; it's the *offer* the Gospel.
 - c. "*Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden.*"
 - d. "*For I delivered unto you as of first importance that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to many*"
 - e. "*He who believes in Him will never be disappointed.*"
 - f. But you who *ignore* Jesus' voice will soon *run out of time* – there will be **no escape**.
 - g. If **OT Israel** could not escape God for ignoring His Law, *how much more* are we accountable if we continue to ignore His grace!
4. So the *final warning* is to **obey the call of the Gospel**.
- a. To *turn* to Jesus in *repentance* and *faith*.
 - b. **OT Israel**, beginning at **Mt. Sinai**, is a picture of every *spiritual procrastinator's* pathetic *spiritual track record*, and *inescapable judgment*.
 - c. But **Mt Zion** (*Heavenly Jerusalem, celebrating angels, the worshiping saints, the enthroned Lord Jesus, the sprinkled blood*) is a reminder of God's graciously relentless *call* (offer) in the *gospel*.

See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking from Zion

But as surely as hearts *harden*, offers *expire*. Time is running out. So this warning is a call to *watch the times*.

1. I got *pulled over* in the city just **two** weeks ago! My *tag* was expired! ***I knew that!*** In fact, I'd had a necessary *repair* made and the *paperwork* in my brief-case. But I'd been *putting it off*. ... I got away w/warning this time – but if there's a **next time** I bet I *pay the full penalty!*
2. Hebrews goes on to *warn* you why this *final warning* (25) is so critical. It's because the *warning* is *time sensitive*. **VV.26&27** tell you *what's coming* – and *when* – if you continue to *ignore* Christ's voice (**read 26-27; v.26 - OT Haggai**).
 - a. Quite simply, the *end* of the *present age* is coming. You don't want to be *outside* of Christ's kingdom when it comes.
 - b. The natural response to a time-sensitive warning is: *how much time do I have?* The explanation appeals to **three** times: *past, present, ... soon*.
3. **Past. V.26a** - *And His voice shook the earth then*. Again, we are pointed *back* to the *fiery, mountain moving spectacle* on Mt. Sinai that *terrified* Israel. As *terrifying* as that was, it's **less** than what's *coming!*
4. Which demands we consider the *future...the imminent, the soon*.
 - a. At Mt. Sinai the *earth* staggered & shook. But *soon*, God will *shake not only the earth, but also the heaven*. The *fire & smoke & sound & shaking* on Mt. Sinai is **nothing** compared to what's coming in all the *universe*.
 - b. The expression "*yet once more*" (25, 26) warns you that there is *one more shaking* coming, and it will be the *last one!*
 - i. The *environmentalists* kind of have it right! The earth is headed for *ruin!* But **not** because of *carbon emissions* and *greenhouse gases!*
 - ii. We live on a **disposable planet** because its Creator *planned & built* it that way. The **universe** has an "*expire-by*" date God *stamped-on* in *eternity past!*

iii. **2 Pt 3:8-15a (turn)**. Peter's prophecy not only *confirms* the universe's **expiration**, it *underlines* God's **patience**. The *warning*, just like in Hebrews 12, is that you **not** continue to test His *mercy*!

1. But both texts *also* make that clear that out of the coming eschatological destruction **unshakeable** wonders will *emerge*! ...*new heavens & new earth*

2. And so again, **v.27** of our text: '**Yet once more**' denotes *the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain*.

3. **Rev 21:1** – *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away...*

5. The Bible's previews of "*last things*" reinforce the greatness of God.

a. He *designed* and *created* the immense, complex, beautiful universe we currently occupy, ... Creation declares the *glory* of the Lord!

b. yet He always planned to *shake* it *and* replace it with something even *more magnificent* and **never** to be shaken again.

6. But I said there are **three** senses of *time* in this warning: the *past*, the *soon*, ... and the **now**. **V.26** – *But now He has promised*.

a. Mt. Zion's *celebration*. The *sprinkled blood*. Christ's *unshakeable kingdom*. God's patient but certain *warning*. Their invitation *sounds* in your ears, *even now*.

b. **You have time**! But only **now** is certain. Eternity's clock is *ticking*.

c. *See to it that you do not refuse Him!*

God warns: "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven."

And if you are a *citizen of Christ's unshakeable kingdom*, this warning has become your *call to worship* (read vv.28-29).

1. Mt. Zion's *celebration*. The *sprinkled blood*. The *new & better covenant*. Christ's *gracious call* – "Come!"
 - a. Are **you** following Jesus through *faith & repentance* in His *death & resurrection*..?
 - b. Then *check your passport!* ☺ You are a *citizen of Christ's eternal, unshakeable, heavenly kingdom*.
 - c. "When He comes, our *glorious King*. All His *ransomed home to bring*, then anew this song we'll sing: "Hallelujah, **what a Savior...!**"

2. So we *celebrate!* Heaven is populated by *worshipping angels* and *worshipping saints* (22-23). But if you are a Christian this day, you are **already** *in the Kingdom*, and the time to start *anticipating & celebrating* is **now!**

3. How do you *worship* the God of *Sinai & Zion*? The Spirit tells us (28) that God *accepts our service (worship)* when it is *fueled* by a blend of *gratitude* and *holy fear*.
 - a. We are **grateful**, of course, because God has *sent Son* to pay for our sins, and then *given us* the faith to trust in Him (Rm 5:8; Eph 2:8,9).
 - b. We are **grateful** because, in Christ, we escape *judgment* and have received the *unshakeable kingdom*.
 - c. And there is so much more to be *grateful* for, of course, but that's the focus in our text.

4. ? But *reverence & awe - fear*... is it proper for a Christian to *fear God*?
- a. Clearly, it is absolutely necessary for the *church attender* who ignores God's voice to learn to *fear Him*! **10:26** – *For if we go on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins!* (That *procrastinating-church-attender-but-maybe-not-Christian* is *exactly* the primary audience of Hebrews' warnings!)
 - i. But did you *hear that...!?! There no long remains a sacrifice for sins*. God's *gospel offer* many have an *expiration date* if you keep *ignoring it*.
 - ii. And so, **10:31** – *It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*
 - b. But **NT** also teaches that genuine *Christians fear God*, too.
 - i. He is, after *all*, **not at all** like us! Theologians very helpfully say that God is **other** than us. *Infinitely, immeasurable greater & fundamentally other* than you & me in every way!
 1. *Almighty power.*
 2. *Uncompromising justice.*
 3. *White-hot holiness.*
 - ii. We also fear God as disobedient children fear their fathers. Christian, God **is** your *Father*, but you are **not perfect**, and good & loving fathers *discipline* their children.
 1. *Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines* (12:6)..
 2. ...and God's discipline *hurts!* **12:11** - *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful.*

iii. So *love* and *holy fear* are **not** polar opposites when you come to God!

1. In C.S. Lewis' beloved *The Lion, the Witch, & the Wardrobe*, young Susan learns that the King of Narnia is a great lion – *Aslan*. She's taken *aback*...
2. "*I think I should be rather nervous about meeting a lion. Is he safe...?*"
3. "**Safe?** *Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe! But he's good. He's the king.*"

5. So Hebrews' final warning ends like this, ringing in the ears of every *church attender*, whether a *true worshiper* or a *procrastinating pretender*:

"...our God is a consuming fire."

Don't refuse Him! Obey Jesus' call to *repentance* and *faith*!

The offer **won't last forever!** The *Great Day of the Lord* is coming. The *current creation* will be *removed*. Only God's Kingdom will *endure*. And His *children* will *endure* with it!

In the meantime Christian, *watch & worship*.

Grateful for your great salvation.

Secure in His unshakeable kingdom.

In awe of your white-hot, holy God.

...pray...