

THE EPISTLES TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 10:19-13:19, THE SUPERIORITY OF FAITH IN CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

A. An outline of Hebrews

1. The superiority of the person of Christ (1:1-4:13)
2. The superiority of the work of Christ (4:14-10:18)
3. The superiority of faith in Christ (10:19-13:19)
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 - b. The reality of faith (11:1-40)
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 - 1) Maintain an attitude of faith (12:1-17)
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4. Conclusion (13:20-25)
 - a. Benediction (13:20-21)
 - b. Final greetings (13:22-25)

B. Review of Hebrews 12:1-17

1. Douglas Mangum, *If it was not already evident why the author included the many faith examples in the previous chapter, this portion of the letter begins with a clear statement of purpose. They were meant to serve as witnesses . . . Those examples bear witness to God's faithfulness and ought to serve as strong motivation to stride forward down the track of life ahead of us.*
2. Leon Morris, *Suffering comes to all; it is part of life, but it is not easy to bear. Yet it is not quite so bad when it can be seen as meaningful The writer points out the importance of discipline and proceeds to show that for Christians suffering is rightly understood only when seen as God's fatherly discipline, correcting and directing us. Suffering is evidence, not that God does not love us, but that he does.*
3. R. Kent Hughes, *The author's transcending desire is that his flock, and indeed the Church universal, will finish well. So he expounds the metaphor [running a race] further in verses 12–17 with specific advice on what to do (vv. 12–14) and what to guard against (vv. 15–17) in order to finish well.*

C. Introductory comments on Hebrews 12:18-29

1. Donald Hagner, *In one of the most remarkable passages in the whole book, the author presents a vivid contrast between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, between the essential character of the old and new covenants . . . Those who have been to Mount Zion can never contemplate a return to Mount Sinai.*
2. R. Kent Hughes, *The contrast is between Mounts Sinai and Zion—the Old and New Covenants—terror and joy—distance and closeness.*
3. Ray Stedman, *The author has, throughout the letter, been drawing a contrast between the old covenant of the law, which was given at Mount Sinai, and the new covenant of grace, which actually preceded the law . . . Now, in verses 18–24, he repeats the contrast using striking symbols, drawing from Exodus and Deuteronomy the fearful scene at Mount Sinai when the Ten Commandments were given, and from the prophets various elements of the heavenly Jerusalem which are associated with the new covenant.*

HEBREWS 12:1-29, THE VITALITY OF FAITH

HEBREWS 12:18-29, A WARNING TO MAINTAIN A LIFESTYLE OF FAITH

A. A comparison of the New Covenant to the Old (18-24)

1. Sinai was a place of terror (18-21)

- a. It pictured the absolute holiness of God (18-19), *For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.*

1) Introductory notes

a) Biblical references

- 1] Deuteronomy 4:11, *And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom.*
- 2] Deuteronomy 5:22, *These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.*

b) Comments

- 1] R. Kent Hughes, *Zion, to which they had come, is a spiritual mountain, whereas Sinai was a physical mountain that could be touched only at pain of death.*
- 2] Zane Hodges, *Vividly the writer pictured the situation at Mount Sinai where the Old Covenant was given and its awesomeness and fearful nature were described (cf. Ex. 19:9–23; Deut. 9:8–19).*
- 3] Donald Hagner, *The manifestations of God's presence on Sinai were tangible, that is, they could be experienced by the senses. The fire, darkness, gloom, and storm made a vivid impression on the Israelites.*
- 4] Robert Gundry, *In 12:17 "For" introduced a reason to pursue peace and sanctification, with the use of Esau as a warning example. Now in 12:18 "For" introduces another reason to pursue peace and sanctification, this time with a contrast between unapproachable Mount Sinai, a threat to apostates, and Mount Zion, a welcoming site for persevering Christian pilgrims.*

2) Concerning the holiness of God

- a) William Newell, *The infinite moral distance between the holy God and sinful man is the foundation. It is not a setting forth of man's inability to carry out the instructions of the Law that is here before us, but the presence of the Lawgiver. God is present, and at the foot of the mountain sinful man is present.*
- b) Raymond Brown, *Under the old covenant God's holiness and majesty were emphasized by those natural signs which accompanied his presence, sometimes a blazing fire, at other times deep darkness and gloom, and the piercing blast of the celestial trumpets.*
- c) Thomas Constable, *The emphasis in this comparison is on the holiness of God and the fearful consequences of incurring His displeasure (cf. Judg. 13:20; 1 Kings 8:12; 18:38; Nah. 1:3; Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16).*
- d) H. D. M. Spence, *This whole account, thus powerfully condensed from Exodus and Deuteronomy, presents a vivid picture of the terrors of the Mosaic revelation. God was, indeed, revealed to man, but still as unseen and unapproachable, terrible in his wrath against sin, and surrounded by sounds and sights of fear.*

3) Concerning God's communicating with the Israelites

- a) William L. Lane, *Just as they heard a trumpet blast, so too they heard the noise of a voice, but it evoked fear rather than understanding. The Israelites were incapable of enduring it. Sinai was not an occasion for revelation so much as for dread.*
- b) Donald Hagner, *It was not only the actual hearing of God's voice that frightened the Israelites, but also the stern commands he uttered.*
- c) R. Kent Hughes, *The people were visibly, physically assaulted with the holiness and majesty of God. This palpable divine display on Sinai communicated far more than any speech or written word ever could—and all Israel, young and old, could understand.*
- d) Raymond Brown, *They could not bear to hear God speaking and implored Moses to communicate the word to them.*

- b. The order to the Israelites demonstrated mankind's utter separation from God (20), ***For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."***
- 1) Donald Hagner, *The awesome and absolute holiness of God's presence was unapproachable. Even an animal was to be stoned if it touched the mountain (the quotation is from Exod. 19:13). The result of the Israelites' fear was that they wanted no further word to be spoken to them.*
 - 2) Raymond Brown, *The Hebrew people were instructed to keep away. Even if a straying animal, let alone a responsible Israelite, touched the mountain, it had to die (12:20).*
 - 3) William L. Lane, *Judgment for anyone who ignores the holiness of God is swift and terrible. The injunction served to reinforce the emotion of terror Israel experienced at the prospect of encountering God . . .*
 - 4) R. Kent Hughes, *The mountain was so charged with the holiness of God that for a man to touch it meant certain death.*
- c. Even Moses sensed mankind's desperate condition (21), ***Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."***
- 1) Thomas Constable, *God was far from the Israelites, and even Moses felt terror.*
 - 2) Ray Stedman, *All who seek earnestly to obey the law find themselves confronted with such personal failure that they soon despair of escaping God's fearful condemnation. Mount Sinai stands as the symbol of this despair and fear.*
 - 3) R. Kent Hughes, *To understand that God is holy and that one is a sinner is to stand at the threshold of grace . . . the great problem with the trip to Sinai was that while men and women could come to see God's holiness and their sinfulness, the Law provided no power to overcome sin.*
 - 4) William L. Lane, *In the absence of sufficient evidence, it is clear only that the writer reinforced the notion of fear by expanding it to include Moses as well as the people . . . The emphasis falls on the sense of immense distance that separates the worshiper from God under the Sinai covenant.*
 - 5) Douglas Mangum, . . . even Moses trembled in terror. This may suggest that Moses was fearful like the people at the initial theophany at Sinai, but it is likely an allusion to Deut 9:19, where Moses recalls his fear at the prospect of God's punishment after the golden-calf incident [Deuteronomy 9:19, *For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the LORD bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me that time also.*]
2. Zion is a place of joy (22-24)
- a. Introductory notes
- 1) R. Kent Hughes, *From Mount Sinai we now switch to Mount Zion and the sublimest description anywhere of what we come to under grace.*
 - 2) John Owen, *Zion was a mount in Jerusalem that had two peaks. The temple was built on the first, Mount Moriah, and so became the center of all the solemn worship of God. On the other mount, the palace and homes of the kings of the house of David were built. Both of these mounts typified Christ; one of his priestly office, the other of his kingly office . . . The apostle is not thinking about the physical nature of Mount Zion here, but only how it compares with Mount Sinai, where the law was given. "Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother" (Galatians 4:25-26).*
 - 3) Raymond Brown, *They have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. And having arrived, they realize that all the abiding blessings of God's earlier revelation are here.*
 - 4) Thomas Constable, *The giving of the New Covenant and the things associated with that covenant are more impressive because they are the heavenly realities . . . Everything about this vision encourages us to come boldly into God's presence (cf. 4:16).*
 - 5) William L. Lane, *Christians order their lives in accordance with a different revelation . . . every aspect of this vision provides encouragement for coming boldly into the presence of God (cf. 4:16). The atmosphere at Mount Zion is festive. The frightening visual imagery of blazing fire, darkness, and gloom fades before the reality of the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem . . . An overwhelming impression of the unapproachability of God is eclipsed in the experience of full access to the presence of God and of Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant . . .*

- b. Zion pictures the city of the living covenant-keeping God (22-24)
- 1) A description of Mount Zion (22a), ***But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,***
 - a) *city of the living God*
 - 1] Hebrews 11:16, *But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*
 - 2] Hebrews 13:14, *For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.*
 - 3] Donald Hagner, *a city already mentioned as Abraham's true goal* [Hebrews 11:10, *For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God*].
 - b) *the heavenly Jerusalem*
 - 1] Donald Hagner, *Mount Zion is synonymous with Jerusalem in the OT (e.g., 2 Sam. 5:6f.; 2 Kings 19:21; Ps. 2:6; 9:11).*
 - 2] Here it is described as the abode of God.
 - 3] It is the New Jerusalem.
 - a] Revelation 21:2, *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*
 - b] Hebrews 13:14, *For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.*
 - c] Ray Stedman, *Our author views it as already attained by those who have believed the new covenant and come to Jesus. In spirit they were residents of the city already, though in body they were yet pilgrims and strangers on earth.*
 - d] Warren Wiersbe, *The earthly Jerusalem was about to be destroyed by the Romans, but the heavenly Jerusalem would endure forever.*
 - 2) A description of current residents (22b-24)
 - a) Angels (22b), ***and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,***
 - 1] *innumerable angels*
 - a] Jude 14, *It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones,*
 - b] Revelation 5:11, *Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,*
 - c] Some commentators believe *innumerable* speaks of angels and the assembly of the firstborn.
 - d] R. Kent Hughes, *Whereas at Mount Sinai the angels blew celestial trumpets that terrified God's people, we are to see ourselves on Mount Zion as dressed in festal attire and worshipping in awe side by side with these shining beings!*
 - e] Ray Stedman, *Angels minister, with joy, to believers in many hidden ways, helping them run the race of life with patient endurance. An example of this is found in Acts 27:23–24.*
 - f] John Owen, *Because of our fall from God and the entry of sin into the world, these angels had nothing to do with us except to carry out God's judgment on us. God made use of these angels in the giving of the law, to fill people with dread. But now they are, in Christ, one mystical body with the church, and we serve God together.*
 - 2] *festal gathering*
 - a] The word is only used here in the New Testament and means *joyful assembly*.
 - b] H. D. M Spence, . . . *the assembly of a whole nation for a festival, is peculiarly appropriate to the angels, whether regarded (as in the Old Testament) as ministering round the throne or as congregated to rejoice over man's redemption.*
 - c] William L. Lane, *The fervent joy in the gathering distinguishes the atmosphere of Zion from the terror that dispersed the Israelites at the foot of Sinai . . . Heavenly Jerusalem is a place of blessing, where the redeemed can join with "angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven" in celebratory worship of God.*

- b) All the redeemed (23a), **and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven,**
- 1] *assembly*
 - a] It is the same word for *church*.
 - b] Here, it would have a universal meaning.
 - c] Note Ephesians 1:22, *And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,*
 - 2] *of the firstborn enrolled in heaven*
 - a] Luke 10:20, *Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*
 - b] Zane Hodges, *The term church of the firstborn may mean the assembly of those whose inheritance rights are already won (since under the OT Law the “firstborn” was the primary heir; cf. v. 16). They have already gone on to the heavenly regions where the angels are.*
 - c] Robert Gundry, *“The firstborns” are believers such as those celebrated in chapter 11 . . .*
 - d] R. Kent Hughes, *Jesus is the firstborn par excellence, and by virtue of our union with him we are firstborn. All the rights of inheritance go to the firstborn—to us who are “co-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17) . . . As firstborn, our names are written in Heaven along with the firstborn who are already there. In other words, there is an amazing solidarity between the Church Triumphant in Heaven and the Church Militant here on earth. We are all the Body of Christ! The family is never broken.*
 - e] William L. Lane, . . . *it has been suggested that the reference in v 23a is to men and women of faith whose names are inscribed in the heavenly archives but who are not themselves in heaven, in distinction from the company of the redeemed who have died who are mentioned in v 23b...*
- c) God the Father (23b), **and to God, the judge of all,**
- 1] God is at the center of everything as *Judge of all* which is a powerful motivation to heed the writer’s upcoming warning in verse 25-29.
 - 2] Raymond Brown, *Although the scene describes a joyous festival, it is a serious theme to contemplate, for to enter the city is to meet the judge who is God of all, the Lord of both the earlier saints and the present believers, of Gentiles as well as Jews. He is the universal sovereign and all must prostrate themselves before him.*
 - 3] R. Kent Hughes, . . . *we come before him in awe because he is the Judge. But we do not come in craven dread, because his Son has borne the judgment for us. This is our highest delight—to gather before God! It is a miracle of grace.*
 - 4] William Barclay, *The writer to the Hebrews never forgot that, at the end, Christians must stand the scrutiny of God. The glory is there; but the awe and the fear of God still remain. The New Testament is never in the slightest danger of sentimentalizing the idea of God.*
 - 5] Words of encouragement
 - a] John 3:18, *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*
 - b] John 5:24, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*
- d) Those who awaited Christ’s resurrection (23c), **and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,**
- 1] William L. Lane, *The relationship between the vast multitude designated in v 22b as “the assembly of the firstborn inscribed permanently in heaven” and this company can now be clarified. The earlier description alludes to the whole people of God, the eschatological assembly in its ultimate and complete state, gathered for the encounter with God, while those to whom reference is made in v 23b are the aggregate of faithful men and women who have already died and faced their judgment (9:27), having been “perfected” on the ground of Jesus’ high priestly offering (10:14).*
 - 2] R. Kent Hughes, *No one was “made perfect” under the Old Covenant, because Christ had not yet died. They were saved, but not until Jesus’ work on the cross was complete could salvation be perfect. Their salvation looked ahead to what Christ would do. Ours looks back to what he has done—and ours is perfect.*

- 3] It may be considered that verse 23a is a complete record of the redeemed and 23c refers to those who have passed from earth to heaven, or, possibly, those who died before the resurrection of Christ. Note Hebrews 11:39-40, *And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*
- e) Jesus (24), ***and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.***
- 1] Introductory notes
- a] William L. Lane, . . . *the writer finally presents the ground and the reason for this festal gathering on Mount Zion.*
- b] Jesus is the reason one can live in New Jerusalem.
- 2] *mediator of a new covenant*
- a] William L. Lane, *By pointing to Jesus in his office as mediator of a better, more effective covenant (8:6) the writer provides the balancing contrast to Moses, mediator of the old covenant, terrified and trembling in the presence of God (v 21) . . . As the mediator of the new covenant, Jesus is its guarantor.*
- b] Raymond Brown, . . . *through the ministry of Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, we draw near with confidence. Christ's human name is introduced deliberately here. We have come to Jesus, the man like us, and the man for us, whose sprinkled blood is still eloquent. It speaks of grace and pardon, whilst Abel's blood cries for vengeance and retribution.*
- c] Ray Stedman, *Moses was the mediator of the old covenant and under it, the Aaronic priests sprinkled blood upon the mercy seat to cover over the sins of Israel. This made the continued presence of God among them possible. As our author has ably shown, all this was but a shadow of the new covenant where Jesus would be an eternal mediator, sprinkling his own blood which does not merely cover over sins but take them entirely away.*
- 3] *better than the blood of Abel*
- a] Thomas Constable, *Jesus' blood is better than Abel's because it did not cry out for justice and retribution as Abel's did (cf. 11:4; Gen. 4:10). It satisfied God's demands and secured God's acceptance of New Covenant believers (cf. 9:12, 26; 10:10, 14, 19). It cried out to God for mercy and pardon for those for whom Jesus shed it.*
- b] William L. Lane, *The shedding of Abel's blood is associated with the imposing of a curse (Gen 4:11–12). The death of Jesus was also a violent affair (12:2–3) despite the innocence of the victim (4:15; 7:26). In this instance, however, it is associated with the securing of blessing. The ratification of the new covenant on the ground of Jesus' death secured for the Church the promised blessings attached to that covenant (8:6, 10–12; 10:15–18).*
- c] Donald Hagner, *Christ's atoning blood speaks of the end of the old covenant and the establishment of the new. It is this blood that has brought the readers to the benefits of the new covenant and to their present glorious status wherein they have begun to experience the fulfillment, the goal of God's saving purposes, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.*
- d] Ray Stedman, *The better word of which his blood speaks is forgiveness, whole and complete. This is in contrast to the blood of Abel, which, as we saw earlier, could only call for vindication but could not offer forgiveness.*
- 3) Comments
- a] Thomas Constable, *Everything about this vision encourages us to come boldly into God's presence. . .*
- b] Raymond Brown, *The blessings are eternal. No persecuting Jewish neighbour could rob these believers of such rich assurance. Like the heavenly multitude, their names were enrolled in heaven. They are citizens of an eternal kingdom.*
- c] William Barclay, *Once, human beings were under the terror of the law; the relationship between them and God was one of unbridgeable distance and shuddering fear. But after Jesus came and lived and died, the God who was distant and unapproachable was brought near, and the way opened to his presence.*

B. A final warning concerning apostasy (25-29)

1. Introductory notes

- a. Ray Stedman, . . . *for the fifth time in this epistle, the author warns against turning back from the truth they have learned as professing Christians to a more comfortable and less demanding life in Judaism or to an accommodation to the unbelieving lifestyles around them.*
- b. William L. Lane, *The concluding paragraph consists of a sober caution to listen to what God is saying, a concentration of his word in the form of prophecy, and a final admonition to respond appropriately with gratitude and worship.*
- c. Raymond Brown, *Where everything around them was being shaken, these believers were not to be afraid, but to rejoice in the secure, immovable kingdom to which they most certainly belonged.*
- d. R. Kent Hughes, *Both mountains—Sinai and Zion—reveal the true God. Neither can be separated from the other. God is not the God of one hill but of both. Both visions must be held in blessed tension within our souls—consuming fire and consuming love.*

2. Don't reject the warnings of God (25-27)

a. There is no escaping the wrath of God (25)

1) A call to obey God's commands (25a), ***See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.***

- a) William L. Lane, *There is a sharp change in tone as the writer resumes the expression of urgent concern that characterizes vv 14–17. . . They have a qualitatively greater responsibility than Israel did to listen attentively to the voice of God. Those who deliberately ignore the eschatological revelation of God through his Son and who show contempt for the blessings of the new covenant cannot possibly escape judgment.*
- b) Raymond Brown, *These Christians must not refuse to hear an obey him who is speaking. Membership of the permanent and abiding kingdom inspires not only diligent study of God's word, but an eager obedience and faithful witness to its truth.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *If God shook things at Sinai and those who refused to hear were judged, how much more responsible are we today who have experienced the blessings of the New Covenant!*
- d) John Owen, *It is not enough to give him a hearing, as we say, unless we also obey him. Hence the word is preached to many, but it does not benefit them, because it is not combined with faith.*
- e) God Who spoke on Mt. Sinai continues to speak from heaven. Take time to listen and obey.

2) The seriousness of disobedience (25b), ***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.***

- a) Hebrews 10:28-29, *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 trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?*
- b) Zane Hodges, *The contrast between the two covenants is now focused as a contrast between a warning given on earth and one that issues from heaven itself. Since those who refused the Old Covenant did not escape, how could those of the New Covenant who turn away expect to do so?*
- c) Thomas Constable, *Considering the inexorable penalty for disobeying God's earthly message, how much greater will the penalty be in the greater instance of disobeying his heavenly message of grace through his Son? (cf. 1:2).*

b. A reminder of the terror of Sinai with a promise of terror everywhere (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."***

- 1) Haggai 2:6, *For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.*
- 2) Warren Wiersbe, *The "shaking" quotation is from Haggai 2:6 and refers to that time when the Lord shall return and fill His house with glory. As events draw nearer to that time, we shall see more shaking in this world. But a Christian can be confident, for he shall receive an unshakable kingdom. In fact, he is a part of God's kingdom today.*
- 3) Raymond Brown, *In Moses' day the mountain shook, but in the coming great Day the entire earth, and also heaven, will be shaken and removed.*
- 4) William L. Lane, *It is actually necessary to distinguish in v 26 three distinct moments: the past event of Sinai, the present moment of the promise, and the announcement of a future shaking that will affect not only the earth but heaven as well.*

- 5) Thomas Constable, *God's voice shook the earth at Mt. Sinai (Exod. 19:18; Judg. 5:4–5; Ps. 68:8; 77:18; 114:4, 7). It will shake the earth and the heavens at the end of the Millennium. That shaking will lead to the creation of new heavens and a new earth that will remain (Ps. 95:9–11; Hag. 2:6; Rev. 21:1).*
- 6) Ray Stedman, *It is this greater shaking from which there is no escape. That shaking began with the preaching of Jesus (Hag 2:6) has been continuing through the Christian centuries, and will culminate in the great judgments described in Daniel and Revelation. The earth and heaven will flee away and be replaced by the new heavens and the new earth.*
- 7) R. Kent Hughes, *Imagine how terrifying it was to have the ground under one's feet tremble in response to God's audible word. There were no sleepers in the congregation at Sinai! . . . But there is an infinitely greater shaking coming, an eschatological cosmic shaking of the whole universe, and it too will be triggered by God's word.*
- 8) William Newell, *It was one thing for Jehovah to descend to Mount Sinai and speak to an earthly nation, Israel, about morality on earth—the Ten Commandments . . . But it was quite another thing when in His infinite love God sent His Son . . .*

c. Hope in an unshakable kingdom of God (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.***

- 1) *Yet once more* looks back to Sinai and the Old Covenant and forward to Zion and the New Covenant.
- 2) Douglas Mangum, *The quotation from Habakkuk in the previous verse anticipates a time of disruption more severe than God's theophany at Sinai. The shaking will be universal and extremely intense, but the result will be that only the unshakable things will remain.*
- 3) William Barclay, *In that day, everything that can be shaken will be destroyed; the only things to remain will be the things which can never be shaken; and chief among them is our relationship with God.*
- 4) Ray Stedman, . . . *there are some things which cannot be shaken and which will remain forever. That which is shaken and removed is so done in order that what cannot be shaken may stand revealed. Such an unshakable thing is the kingdom of God into which those who trust in Jesus have entered. It is present wherever the King is honored, loved and obeyed.*
- 5) Raymond Brown, *Christians are alert to what is happening in the world, but the news does not fill them with fear. Conscious as they are of political instability, social pressures, economic hazards, religious apostasy, physical hardship and moral decay, they do not despair. Their trust is in God and they are safe.*
- 6) William Newell, *God's uttered Word will abide forever; every one who has in heart received and believed that word will remain forever!*

3. The proper response to God is total surrender (28-29)

a. Have hearts of gratitude for His unshakable kingdom (28a), ***Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken,***

- 1) Daniel 2:44, *And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,*
- 2) William L. Lane, *The severity of vv 25–27 is momentarily softened when the writer announces that Christians are in the process of receiving an unshakable kingdom.*
- 3) Robert Gundry, *The unshaken things that will last are those that make up the “unshakeable kingdom” of God's Son, whose “throne ... is forever and ever” (1:8), who himself “will last throughout” (1:11), and whose “years won't run out” (1:12).*
- 4) Raymond Brown, *In the teaching of this passage, the Christian should live in the spirit of adoring gratitude, for he of all people has received a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Moreover, the believer is grateful that such an incomparably holy God has made himself known to sinful men.*
- 5) Ray Stedman, *We enter the kingdom at conversion, but we abide in it daily as we reckon upon the resources which come to us from our invisible but present King. Such unbroken supply should arouse a continuing sense of gratitude within us and lead to acceptable worship of God. What renders such worship acceptable is the sense of God as incredibly powerful and majestic in person, and yet loving and compassionate of heart.*
- 6) Donald Hagner, *Kingdom here refers to what may be described as the fruit of the new covenant. Thus, like the reality of the kingdom of God mentioned frequently in the NT, it is the experience of the reign of God made possible by the reconciling grace of God in Christ. It thus is the new quality of life, the new existence, made possible through the fulfillment of the promises of a new covenant. Since this is the result of God's work, it remains secure through any future shaking of the world.*

- b. Offer true worship to our awesome God who is the all-consuming judge (28b-29), *and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*
- 1) The worship of God is a responsibility.
 - a) R. Kent Hughes, *After obedience, the other great “to do” that comes from the two mountains is worship...*
 - b) William L. Lane, *This gift, secured on the ground of the new covenant, calls for gratitude expressed in thankful worship of the God whose awesome and holy character was disclosed in the fiery epiphany of Sinai . . . Recognizing that thankfulness is a strong support to obedience and fidelity, the writer calls for the response of gratitude that will prepare the heirs to the unshakable kingdom for the future “shaking” of earth and heaven.*
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *What shall we do as we live in a shaking world? Listen to God speak and obey Him.*
 - 2) The worship of God demands the right attitude.
 - a) Thomas Constable, *Our attitude toward Him should be reverence and awe in view of His ability to judge the unfaithful (cf. 1 Cor. 3:14–15).*
 - b) William L. Lane, *A channel for the expression of thanksgiving is provided in worship.*
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *Receive grace day by day to serve Him “with reverence and godly fear.”*
 - d) Ray Stedman, *The proper attitude of Christians must be one of awe that a Being of such majesty and glory could find a way to dwell eternally with such sin controlled and sin-injured creatures as us.*
 - e) Douglas Mangum, *Instead of faithless fear, the appropriate response to an awesome, consuming God is one of faithful reverence.*
 - 3) The worship of God is based on Who He is.
 - a) Deuteronomy 4:24, *For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*
 - b) Hebrews 12:23b, *and to God, the judge of all . . .*
 - c) J. Dwight Pentecost, *As a consuming fire, God purifies all that is unworthy and unacceptable in those who serve Him and all that is unfit to abide in His presence.*
 - d) Thomas Constable, *Many readers of Hebrews associate the figure of God consuming with His judging unbelievers in hell, but this figure also occurs in the Old Testament with reference to His judging His people (cf. Exod. 24:17; Lev. 10:2; Num. 16:35; Deut. 4:24; 1 Cor. 3:15).*
 - e) Raymond Brown, *The fire on Sinai is a thing of the past (12:18), but the blazing fire of God’s holy, jealous and righteous love will never be extinguished. The believer knows that in the presence of that bright light all his sins are exposed. He also rejoices that mercifully, in its refining flames, they can also be consumed.*
 - f) Ray Stedman, *“Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?” (Is 33:14). God’s love is just such a fire, it destroys what it cannot purify, but purifies what it cannot destroy. In Jesus we have a relationship that cannot be destroyed (Rom 8:38–39).*
 - g) H. D. M. Spence, *The LORD’S nature is not changed: he is still a consuming fire against evil, as he declared himself from Sinai; and if we scorn the present dispensation of grace, the day of judgment will still be to us a day of terror . . .*
 - h) William L. Lane, *. . . it is God’s essential character that provides the reason for the fear and awe that are appropriate to his worship.*

CONCLUSION

- William L. Lane, *Christians under the new covenant are to enter into an experience of maturity in which all of life becomes an expression of worship.*
- R. Kent Hughes, *The twin peaks of our spiritual life demand two things as we march to Zion: obedience and worship. Let us obey his Word implicitly, for it is effectual—it never fails, and it is final—it will shake the whole universe. Let us worship him with reverence and awe and thanksgiving!*
- Warren Wiersbe, *Remember that your Father loves you. And draw on God’s enabling grace. . . . While others are being frightened, you can be confident!*
- Douglas Mangum, *Themes of a hopeful, secure future continue as these verses draw this portion of the letter to a conclusion. Creation will be shaken, but God’s unshakable kingdom will remain.*