

Finishing Well

Lesson #19

Look Up — Look Ahead: The Unshakable Kingdom May 26, 2021

Immediately following the case of Esau, a contrast is given between the Old and New Covenants [Heb. 12:18-24; OT in verses 18-21 and the NT in verses 22-24].

One of the blessings of the New Covenant is the fact that we have come to the "church of the firstborn."

Remember: The "firstborn birthright" does not have to do with our eternal salvation, which cannot be lost because it is not based upon our works [Eph. 2:8-9].

- The Firstborn birthright has to do with our rewards.

Although God has given us certain privileges belonging to a firstborn, it is clear from the warning passage these privileges can be forfeited by our actions, as was the case with Esau.

1. Look Up: The Glory Of The Heavenly City & The Believer's Privileges and Position

Mt. Sinai = Giving of the law with its responsibilities

Mt. Zion = Blessings of privilege and grace; the Heavenly city

Contrast Mt. Sinai with Mt. Zion: Heb. 12:18-24

2 different mountains 2 different covenants 2 historic people 2 important principles

Sinai	Zion
Heaven	Earth
Old Covenant	New Covenant
Terror	Joy
Shake	Unshaken
Not Come	Come
Distance	Closeness
Law At Sinai	Grace & Glory at Zion

For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, ¹⁹ And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: ²⁰ (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

²¹ And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:

²² But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling [forgiveness], that speaks better things than that of Abel. [vengeance]

What was God's purpose in giving the Jews a terrifying experience they would never forget?

- Instill the proper fear of God - the absolute unapproachableness of God

Ps. 111:10a The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...

What was the problem of Sinai? It provided no power to overcome sin.

- Even Moses, the mediator of the Old Covenant, trembled with fear.

Through Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant, we draw near with confidence.

- Abel's blood cried from the ground vengeance...judgment.
- Christ's blood shouts forgiveness...peace w/God.

We have Twin Peaks. Both mountains reveal the true God.

- One points to His consuming fire...the other to His consuming Love.

Quote: Start at Sinai understanding God's holiness...

Then run w/ endurance your marathon race that is set before you to Zion.

Mount Sinai is something like Jacob's stew, while Mount Zion is like Esau's birthright.

- The birthright and its blessings were vastly better, but these were future and "unseen."
- The revelation of God to Israel at Mount Sinai was seen, heard, smelled [smoke], and felt [earthquakes]. They could experience it.
- The law set forth God's conditions for Israel's enjoyment of an earthly kingdom. Judaism clung to Sinai, Moses, and the Old Covenant because it seemed to offer a more immediate (albeit inferior) and more visible kingdom.
- Mount Zion represents a spiritual city, the heavenly Jerusalem, and thus a spiritual kingdom. Mount Zion represents all that Christians hope for in the next life. They are willing to make great sacrifices in this life for the promises in the next life.
- Just as Esau had to make a choice between a bowl of stew and God's promised blessings, so the readers must choose between a present, earthly, Jewish kingdom [Mount Sinai] with its earthly temple, or God's promised eternal kingdom [Mount Zion].

Warning #5 Jesus Christ shall come, judge and bring in the new age with its new covenant.

Heb. 12:25 So see to it that you do not reject Him or refuse to listen to and heed Him

Who is speaking [to you now]. [Heb. 1:1-2a God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things,]

For if they [the Israelites] did not escape when they refused to listen and heed Him Who warned and divinely instructed them [here] on earth [revealing with heavenly warnings His will] how much less shall we escape if we reject and turn our backs on Him Who cautions and admonishes [us] from heaven?

- The appeal in Heb. 12:25 to not refuse the Lord is juxtaposed with verse 19 where the Israelites were not willing to listen to the awesome voice of God in the wilderness.

Ex. 20:19 And they said to Moses, You speak to us and we will listen, but let not God speak to us, lest we die. [Warning: Do Not Refuse To Listen To Him]

- This arrangement was not God's will for them.

Ex. 19:5-6 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

⁶ And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

God's Will For NT Believers: Conformed to the image of Jesus Christ [Rom. 8:29]

Hebrew Christians were in danger, like their forbearers under Moses, of stopping their ears to the voice of God Himself and His will. If they reject the present voice of the Lord, they are guilty of a far greater sin than their fathers.

Heb. 12:26-27 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. Now this expression, Yet once more, indicates the final removal *and* transformation of all [that can be] shaken—that is, of that which has been created—in order that what cannot be shaken may remain and continue.

Consider: This Hebrew Christian church stood in the midst of one of the direst convulsions this earth has ever seen. They stood in the midst of the shaking of their theological and their spiritual world.

- The interpretation of the rabbis of the Holy Word of God was being shaken by the new light shed on the Scriptures in the preaching of the apostles of the Son of God.
- They were declaring that Jesus was greater than Moses.
- The covenant of grace was greater than the covenant of the law.
- The sacrifices of the temple were types of the more precious sacrifice in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- The supremacy of the temple was being shaken by the erection of the temple of the body of Christ, the true temple of the Lord.
- The observance of the Sabbath day was being shaken by the observance of the first day of the week, the worship of Jesus our Lord.
- The Hand of God was outstretched to shake all things spiritual, ecclesiastical, all things religious.

"For," said these apostles of Christ, "these visible temples and these visible sacrifices and these visible ordinances God is sweeping away in order that He might bring in the eternities of the truth of Jesus Christ." The whole New Testament is a testimony to the tremendous spiritual convulsions of that awesome day and that awesome hour.

This was written during an awful and trying time.

- The Roman legions were hammering at the gates of Jerusalem.
- The temple and its services along with the nation and its unity were being destroyed by a heathen and a foreign power.

- In the wreck of the nations and empires, there is a foundation that endures forever.
- There is an everlasting kingdom that shall abide and endure when the heavens are rolled up like a scroll and when the earth is burned up with unquenchable fire.
- We have in Jesus Christ an eternal and changeless kingdom, and in Him an eternal and changeless King.

Ps. 2:6 Yet have I anointed (installed and placed) My King [firmly] on My holy hill of Zion.

In addition to the upheaval in their spiritual world, there was converging on the beloved city of God the legions of a foreign and heathen power: the conquest of Rome had begun. These people of God with fearful hearts were standing before the greatest destruction this earth has ever seen: the destruction of the hopes, and lives, and faith, and prayers of a whole nation and a whole people of God.

Josephus describes that awful hour in his "Wars" and in his "Antiquities."

An awesome thing happened: for days before the destruction of Jerusalem an angel from heaven was seen and heard flying through the streets of the city, crying, "Woe, woe to the doomed city!" Those Roman legions gathering slew the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem; they burned the temple down with fire; and those who escaped the edge of the sword were sold into slavery or scattered to the four winds of the earth.

The hearts of men cried, "Has God abdicated?" The hearts of men cried, "Has God never existed?" In the midst of the flames, lurid and burning, in the midst of the fires that consumed and destroyed, in the midst of the marching conquest of the heathen army of the Roman legionnaires, this author lifted up his voice to say, "God is touching nothing of eternal worth or of eternal value. The great God of the heavens is but shaking those things that may be moved, that the things that are eternal may remain forever."

Heb. 12:26-27

"Whose voice then shook the earth," speaking of the coming down of the Almighty God on top of the mount that burned with fire, but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth, but also heaven." [Quote from Haggai 2:6-7, 9]

Haggai was writing to the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity. Jerusalem lay in ruins, its walls were cast down flat, the temple, the glorious temple of Solomon was burned with fire, and in despair the people looked upon that scene of endless desolation. The old men wept as they recalled to mind the former glories of Solomon and of the worship of the temple. It was in that day and that tragic hour that the Lord God sent his prophet Haggai to say,

Haggai 2:6-7, 9 For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, in just a little while, I will shake the heaven[s], and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of All Nations shall come: and I shall fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord: and in this place will I give peace.

It pictures judgment which precedes the coming of a new age. The shaking of the earth will be the purifying judgment and the removal of all things not in conformity to the holiness of the Lord and not subject to the King.

"This is the shaking of the Lord. In the midst of this convulsion the Desire of All Nations shall come," referring to the great appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- And this house that is desolate and cast down and destroyed, I will raise up; and its glory shall be greater than its former glory."

What an incomparable hope, when the man of God stands in the midst of the wreckage of empires and of kingdoms, and the desolation of hopes and dreams and civilizations, and he says, "These things, these convulsions of time and of history are none other things than the shakings of God, that the things that can be shaken may be removed, and that the things that endure may belong to the eternities of heaven." [Criswell]

Heb. 12:26-27 "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven: And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, [things human, mundane and temporal, things of the here and now] that those things which cannot be shaken [the eternities of God] may remain.

1. The Word of God: God has had a word for mankind through the generations and ages.
 - God had a word for Israel, groaning in bondage in the slavery of Egypt.
 - God had a word through His prophet Haggai to the Babylonian captives.
 - God had a word to His people in this awful hour, when Jerusalem was being destroyed, and the temple worship was being taken away.
 - God has a word for us in our day and in our time.
 - God has a word for His children in The Tribulation Period and holocaust that shall destroy the old earth and the old heaven.

His Word with its great, exceeding and precious promises abides and remains.

Matt. 24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Isa. 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades: but the Word of our God shall stand for ever.

- It is the enduring, indestructible Word of the living God.
- In the third century, Diocletian sought to exterminate it.
- Then *Celsus* arose to undermine it. Then
- *Porphyry* cast against it his vindictive, violent, vitriolic shafts of burning arrows.
- Hume softly ridiculed it and scorned it.
- Voltaire repeatedly assaulted it.
- Thomas Paine sought to drown it in infidel ink.
- Bob Ingersoll and Bradlaugh heaped scorn and laughter upon it.

Criswell: Today, censorious critics with their pen knives seize to cut it up and to deface and to destroy this only franchise of our Christian hopes. But through the passing of the years and of the centuries, all of them together have not taken away one twig from its vast forest;

they have not dampened one spark of its perpetual fires; they have not slackened one pace of its step toward an ultimate, final and triumphant victory; nor have they been able to take away one string from its harp, nor have they been able to tear one hole in the vesture of its garment. This Book today, after the passing of the centuries of attack, walks more bypaths, travels more highways, speaks to more in their native tongue than any other book or all books together ever written in the history of mankind.

2. God's love and care Things That Cannot Be Shaken

Our lives are being shaken. Sometimes to the depths of our souls

Heb. 13:5b-6 "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

A man wins a great victory when he can stand in the midst of death, or in the midst of desolation, or in the midst of ruined dreams, or in the midst of a ruined destiny and say, "But I have my hand on something that endures."

Rom. 8:38-39 For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Christian's response in time of trials, tribulations and desolation:

"My life is in God's hands. He has permitted these providences that overwhelm me that the dross, the wood, hay and stubble of my life may be burned up, so the gold and the precious stones of what God has in me might endure forever." [Criswell]

3. Jesus Christ Things That Cannot Be Shaken & Abide Forever

- Towering above the wrecks of time,
- towering above the passing of the centuries,
- towering above the dissolutions of kingdoms and empires

There is the holy majestic living form of the Son of God, whom John saw when exiled on the isle of Patmos to die of privation and starvation. He heard a great voice, "Turning to see Him that spake, saw seven golden candlesticks, and the in the midst one like unto the Son of God," the enduring, abiding Son of God [Rev. 1:12-13].

Many great men, Moses, the prophets and the apostles have faded away. But Jesus Christ looms larger and greater and mightier with the passing generations and with the passing centuries. Christ may exhaust this world, but this world will never, ever exhaust Christ, the enduring, living Son of God, our Lord, our Savior, our King, and our God.

"Yet once more, signifying the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things temporal and made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

Death, the grave, all of the disappointments of the dreams and hopes of this life; but there, beyond it all, stands the towering, holy, lordly, living figure of Jesus, the Son of God.

4. A kingdom which cannot be moved Things That Cannot Be Shaken & Abide Forever
Heb. 12:28 Wherefore we [believers] receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

- All other empires, dynasties, governments and nations will be shaken.
- This earth itself is going to be burned up with fire.

II Pet. 3:5-7 For this they [scoffers; mockers] willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out in the water, and in the water whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

- The things of this earth are fleeting, temporary.
- They can be shaken, burned up and destroyed.

God has better things for us: unshakeable, immovable, eternal. They cannot be shaken. This is in keeping with Daniel's great prophecy.

Dan. 2:44-45 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

⁴⁵ Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Dan. 7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

¹⁴ And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

This world shall be destroyed in time, in death, in the grave, in senility and age, at the end of life; and ultimately, in the providence of God, this whole world in which we live shall be burned up with fire, taken away, swept away, that God may create a new heaven and a new earth. But there is a kingdom that shall endure, beyond life, beyond tide, beyond time, beyond the great judgment, beyond the fires of dissolution. There is a kingdom that abides forever! These things God shakes, and these things of temporalities God burns up, and these things of this world... God takes away in order that He might bring in His new and everlasting kingdom that shall endure forever.

Phil. 3:20-21a Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body...

We belong to an upper and a greater and a mightier kingdom that can never be destroyed. At the present time, the Mediator is still in heaven. The establishment of this kingdom on earth with the New Jerusalem over the earth is definite and sure, yet it is still unseen. Heb. 12:28-29 Wherefore we [believers] receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.

We must abide faithful and obtain grace [don't fall short of the grace of God] so we can patiently endure for our reward until He comes or until He calls home.

Heb. 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

God desires every believer to hear the words "well done." Therefore, He moved the author of Hebrews to structure his argument around 5 warnings. The 5 warnings serve as a wake-up call to God's children. He seeks to conform His justified children to the image of His victorious Son. Judgment awaits every born-again individual at the Judgment Seat of Christ. "Great Salvation" awaits those who persevere and finish their course. Great loss awaits those who fail to persevere - loss of reward and honor in Christ's coming Millennial Kingdom. When we understand and value the glory [inheritance in Christ] that awaits us, we are better able to endure whatever comes our way in this life. We can give God praise even during trials because we have His guarantee that we will receive all He has promised:

II Cor. 4:17 "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

May we heed the warnings and strive for the crown our Father so desperately wants to award us on that glorious Day of Judgment.

Rev. 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

Rev. 22:12 Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work.