

Receiving an Unshakeable Kingdom



Week Twelve

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
Hebrews 12:18–29

KINGDOM COME

Hebrews 12:18–29, the passage for this week, is the climax of the letter, and it sums up its main concern by repeating the idea with which it started: God has spoken to us in the person of His Son, and we need to pay careful attention to Him (Heb. 1:1, 2; 12:25). The description of Jesus in Hebrews 12:22–24 epitomizes the letter's assertions about Him: Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant, and His blood provides salvation for believers. His priestly and royal ministry in our behalf is a cause for celebration for the heavenly hosts. And finally, Hebrews 12:25–29 contains the last and climactic exhortation: God's judgment is coming. It will bring destruction to His enemies, but vindication and a kingdom to His people (Heb. 12:28, 29).

The ending reaffirms the importance of Jesus' achievements at the cross and directs believers to the consummation of Jesus' victory. Paul uses imagery from Daniel 7 to remind the readers that Jesus has received a kingdom from God, the Judge (Dan. 7:9–14), and is going to share His kingdom with believers, "the saints of the Most High," who will possess it forever and ever (Dan. 7:18).



inScribe

Write out Hebrews 12:18–29 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Hebrews 12:27–29. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.

inGest



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you



Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?



Memorize your favorite verse in Hebrews 12:18–29. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

In what practical ways can we celebrate the reality of Jesus, His priestly ministry, and the New Covenant in our lives and in our worship?



Read more at www.inverseible.org/heb12-3

YOU HAVE COME

Hebrews 12:22–24 affirms that we have come to Mount Zion and participate in a great celebration. “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering” (Heb 12:22, ESV). We have come through faith in the person of our representative, Jesus. In this celebration we find an innumerable host of angels, God Himself, and Jesus, who is the center of the celebration. We come as part of the “assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (Heb. 12:23, ESV). Our names are enrolled in the books of heaven, where God’s professed people are listed (Exod. 32:32; Ps. 56:8; Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:16; Luke 10:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

We are the “firstborn” because we share the inheritance of the Firstborn par excellence, Jesus (Heb. 1:6). Thus, we have come not as guests but as citizens (compare with Phil. 3:20). We are also described as “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (Heb. 12:23, ESV). This expression is a figure of speech in which a dimension of our human nature stands for the whole. It is analogous to the expression “the Father of spirits” in Hebrews 12:9, which refers to God as the Father of us all, human beings who are spiritual in nature.

The festal gathering celebrates the inauguration of Jesus’ kingly rule, His priestly ministry, and the inauguration of the new covenant. In Hebrews, Mount Zion is the place where all these events take place. Three of the psalms in Hebrews 1:5–14 describe the enthronement of the Son and have Mount Zion as the place where it occurred (Ps. 2:6, 7; 110:1, 2; 102:21–27).

Mount Zion is also the place where the Son was appointed “priest forever” (Heb. 5:6), a quotation of Psalm 110:4. According to Psalm 110, the appointment of the Son as High Priest occurs at Mount Zion as well (Ps. 110:2). Finally, Hebrews argues that the inauguration of Jesus’ priesthood also marks the inauguration of the new covenant (Heb. 7:11–22). Thus, Mount Zion is also the place where the new covenant was ratified. Hebrews 12:22–24 describes, then, the festal gathering that occurred in heaven when Jesus ascended.

This scene evokes the great pre-Advent judgment described in Daniel 7, which portrays a judgment scene where God, the “Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:9), sits on a throne made of fire and is surrounded with “ten thousand times ten thousand” (Dan. 7:10) angels. Books are opened (Dan. 7:10), and the judgment is decided in favor of “the ‘saints of the most High,’ who then ‘possess the kingdom’ (Dan. 7:22).

Similarly, Hebrews 12:22–29 describes a judgment scene at Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, where God, “the Judge of all,” is surrounded with “thousands upon thousands” of angels (NIV). The scene is also a fiery one (Heb. 12:29). It includes books because the saints are “enrolled” in them (Heb. 12:23, ESV), which implies a favorable judgment for the saints.

Jesus is at the center of the scene (Heb. 12:24). He was described as the Son of Man in Hebrews 2, who was “crowned with glory and honor” after having tasted death in our behalf (Heb. 2:9, ESV). According to Hebrews 2:10, the “son of man” (see Heb. 2:6, ESV) suffered in order that He could bring “many sons to glory” (ESV); that is, in order that believers would be able to be “crowned with glory and honor” as well. The “Son” has now brought believers into Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, through the benefits of the new covenant (Heb. 12:22–24), where they are promised to receive a kingdom (Heb. 12:28).

This judgment is, then, really good news for believers because it is a judgment that rules in their favor. It vindicates them. It is a judgment that defeats their adversary, the dragon, who is behind the terrible beasts that have persecuted believers in the past (Daniel 7) and will do so in the future (Revelation 13).

UNSHAKEABLE

After describing the festal gathering occurring in heaven, Paul warns the readers that they need to pay attention to God's voice because God will shake "yet once more . . . not only the earth but also the heavens" (Heb. 12:26, ESV). Paul is saying that although Jesus has been enthroned in heaven, our salvation has not been consummated. We need to pay attention because an important event is still to happen.

In the Old Testament, the shaking of the earth was a common figure for the presence of God, who shows up to deliver His people. When Deborah and Barak fought against Sisera, God fought from heaven on their behalf (Judg. 5:20). This is described as a powerful earthquake, a shaking of the earth and mountains because of the presence of God (Judg. 5:4, 5). We find this same image appearing throughout the Old Testament when God arises to deliver the oppressed (Ps. 68:7, 8; 60:2; 77:17, 18). Thus, a shaking signaled God's judgment as He asserts His authority over the peoples of the earth. The prophets predicted this would happen in the Day of the Lord (Isa. 13:13; 24:18–23).

For Hebrews, the "shaking" of heaven and earth refers to the judgment of the enemies of God. This is what God promised at the enthronement of Jesus. God said to Him: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (Heb. 1:13, ESV). Thus, Jesus has defeated the enemy (Heb. 2:14–16) and been enthroned (Heb. 1:5–14), but the enemies have not yet been destroyed (Heb. 10:11–14; 1 Cor. 15:23–25).

But God will destroy these enemies in the future, when He will shake the heavens and the earth. The shaking of the heavens and the earth means, then, the destruction of the earthly powers that persecute God's people and, more importantly, the destruction of the evil powers (Satan and his angels) who stand behind the earthly powers and control them.

God has also announced that He will "shake" the heavens and the earth, which means that He will destroy enemy nations. Many modern translations of Hebrews 12:27 suggest that the shaking of the heavens and the earth means that they will be removed and forever gone. The Bible is clear, however, that God will create new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1–4), and we will be resurrected and have a new body (1 Thess. 4:13–17; Phil. 3:20) on this earth. Thus, the "shaking" implies the cleansing and renovation of creation, not its complete removal. What is here will be re-created, and it will be where the redeemed live.

There are some things, however, that will not and cannot be shaken. They include the righteous. They will not be shaken because they trust in God. The Creator sustains them and guarantees their survival.

Note that in Hebrews, permanence and stability are associated with Jesus. Hebrews 1:10–12 says about Jesus: "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. But you are the same, and your years will have no end" (ESV). Hebrews also says that Jesus' priesthood remains forever (Heb. 7:3, 24), as does also the inheritance of the redeemed (Heb. 10:34). In the final judgment, those who hold fast "in Jesus" will not be shaken (Ps. 46:5).

Hebrews 12:28 also says that we will receive "a kingdom that cannot be shaken" (ESV). This is a reference to Daniel 7:18, which says that the saints will "possess the kingdom forever." This is the kingdom that "shall never be destroyed" mentioned in Daniel 2:44. This kingdom belongs to the Son, but He will share it with us. Revelation 20:4 says that we will judge with Him the evil powers that persecuted us (1 Cor. 6:3).



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

How are you looking forward to an unshakeable kingdom now?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/heb12-4



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Exodus 32:32

Daniel 7:9, 10, 13-22

Haggai 2:6-9, 20-22

Psalms 15:5b; 16:8

Deuteronomy 32:36

1 Chronicles 16:33-35

Psalms 2:6, 7; 110:1, 2; 102:21-27



What other narratives come to mind in connection with Hebrews 12:18-29?

Review your memorized verse from Hebrews 12:18-29.

LET US BE GRATEFUL

Hebrews concludes this section by pointing out that the appropriate response to God for all the wonderful things He has done for us is to show gratitude by offering Him an appropriate type of worship.

In the old covenant system, the sacrifice of animals was the way people showed repentance and gratitude, but these sacrifices were to be but a token of the gratitude and repentance in the heart of the worshiper. Thus, God made clear in the Psalms and through the prophets that what really pleased Him was not the blood of animals but the gratitude, good deeds, and righteousness of the worshipers (Ps. 50:7–23; Isa. 1:11–17).

Thus, Paul invites us to worship God in the heavenly sanctuary by offering sacrifices of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and good works, which make up the true worship that delights Him. We offer these sacrifices on earth, but they are accepted as pleasing to God in heaven. This exhortation embraces all the calls that the author has made throughout the letter for the confession of Jesus' name (Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 10:23) and his exhortations that we continue to do good works (Heb. 6:10–12; 13:1, 2, 16).

The invitation of Paul to the audience to “offer to God acceptable worship” (Heb. 12:28, ESV) implies that believers are truly now a priestly nation that can be perfected and sanctified through the sacrifice of Jesus (Heb. 10:10–14, 19–23). This fulfills God's original purpose for Israel, that they would be a priestly nation through which He would be able to announce the good news of salvation to the world (Exod. 19:4–6; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10; Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

Hebrews 13:1–6 describes in practical terms what it means to do good and share what we have. It means to show brotherly love, just as Jesus showed brotherly love to us (Heb. 2:11, 12). It means to be hospitable, to visit those who are in prison or have been mistreated (Heb. 13:3), and to reject adultery and covetousness.



inVite

Meditate on Hebrews 12:18–29
again and look for where Jesus is.



How does this week's lesson
impact your worship of the
Lord Jesus?

How do you see Jesus
differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to
seeing Jesus in this way?



Read more at
www.inversebible.org/heb12-6



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

—————→
After this week’s study of the
passage, what are applications
of the unshakable kingdom in
your personal life?

What are practical applications
of the unshakable kingdom in
your social life?



Read more inSight from the
Spirit of Prophecy at
www.inverseible.org/heb12-7

THE MILLENNIUM

“For a thousand years, Satan will wander to and fro in the desolate earth to behold the results of his rebellion against the law of God. During this time his sufferings are intense. Since his fall his life of unceasing activity has banished reflection; but he is now deprived of his power and left to contemplate the part which he has acted since first he rebelled against the government of heaven, and to look forward with trembling and terror to the dreadful future when he must suffer for all the evil that he has done and be punished for the sins that he has caused to be committed.

“To God’s people the captivity of Satan will bring gladness and rejoicing. Says the prophet: ‘It shall come to pass in the day that Jehovah shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy trouble, and from the hard service wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take up this parable against the king of Babylon [here representing Satan], and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! . . . Jehovah hath broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers; that smote the peoples in wrath with a continual stroke, that ruled the nations in anger, with a persecution that none restrained.’ Verses 3–6, R.V.

“During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as an event that follows the second advent. ‘Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.’ 1 Corinthians 4:5. Daniel declares that when the Ancient of Days came, ‘judgment was given to the saints of the Most High.’ Daniel 7:22. At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. John in the Revelation says: ‘I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.’ ‘They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.’ Revelation 20:4, 6. It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul, ‘the saints shall judge the world.’ 1 Corinthians 6:2. In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death.

“Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and His people. Says Paul: ‘Know ye not that we shall judge angels?’ Verse 3. And Jude declares that ‘the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.’ Jude 6.

“At the close of the thousand years the second resurrection will take place. Then the wicked will be raised from the dead and appear before God for the execution of ‘the judgment written.’ Thus the revelator, after describing the resurrection of the righteous, says:

“The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.’ Revelation 20:5. And Isaiah declares, concerning the wicked: ‘They shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.’ Isaiah 24:22.” (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 660, 661.)



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



How well do you do now, in terms of being shaken? If not so well, what choices can you make in order to get help in this important area?

How does what we studied this week help us understand that God's judgment in the three angels' messages is "good news" for this time?

What does Daniel 7 teach us about the end of all earthly and fallen things?

Why do you think it is important that Hebrews ends the argument of the epistle with a link to the promises of Daniel 7?

Why is Jesus' ministry in heaven important for us today?

If God knows everything, what is the purpose of books or records in heaven?