

UNSHAKEABLE

Hebrews 12:18-29

Especially in times of suffering, the church family is responsible to make sure that no one in the family “fails to obtain the grace of God” (Heb. 12:15; cf. 4:14-16). For the original recipients of Hebrews this was particularly acute on account of the persecution they were suffering. Failure to obtain God’s grace would spiral into bitterness; bitterness into spiritual contempt and spiritual contempt into defection back into Judaism (12:15-16).

Esau traded away the covenant and material blessings of his birthright for a bowl of soup. Consumed by hunger, he made a tragic decision. He remained Isaac’s son, but received far less than what he might have. Consumed by bitterness, hurting believers are at risk of making a similarly tragic decision.

The church family needs to do all that it can to help strugglers obtain the grace of God lest they spiral past the point of no return as did Esau.

Hebrews 12:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

We need to understand that believers can sin in such a manner as to cross a line of no return. The unbelief of the Exodus Generation at Kadesh Barnea was forgiven, but they still suffered divine punishment and died in the Wilderness never entering the Promised Land (3:16-19; cf. Numbers 14:20-24). In chapter 6 the Preacher warned the Hebrew Christians that if they reject Christ and return to Judaism they will not go on to spiritual maturity nor will they be able to change their minds about Christ again; though still saved, they will suffer divine punishment (6:1-8). In chapter 10 he warned that if they defect to Judaism they will die with that generation of Israel who had rejected Christ. By returning to Judaism, they will die in the Roman conquest of Israel in 66-70 A.D. (Heb. 10:26-31, cf. Luke 21:20-24). Just as Esau crossed a line and could not reverse the consequences neither will those Hebrew Christians who defect to Judaism. That is why the church family must be diligent in caring for one another.

A second reason is given in verses 18-24: if these Jewish believers go back to the old system, they are leaving a place of privilege and grace and returning to a place that was inaugurated in terror. To make this point, the Preacher contrasts the *birthplace* of Judaism over against the *birthright* of believers. How foolish to move from the greater to the lesser. In the verses to follow Mount Sinai is to Mount Zion what Esau’s soup was to Esau’s birthright.

Hebrews 12:18–24 (ESV)

¹⁸ For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” ²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.”

²² 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, ²³ and to the assembly of the

firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 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.

At Mount Sinai the Law was given. It was not a party. The people were terrified. Moses was terrified. God manifested His holiness at Mount Sinai and it filled the people with dread. Through the finished work of Christ we have been delivered from Mount Sinai. For the Hebrew Christians to go back to the Law was to go back to a place of terror and death. In 2 Corinthians 3:2-18, the Apostle Paul likewise teaches that going back to the Law is returning to a ministry of death and condemnation.

Mount Zion is the home and inheritance of believers in Christ. Mount Zion is not a place of terror and dread, but is full of grace, forgiveness and joy. Our home is the heavenly Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem, which Jesus is preparing for us (John 14:1-3; Rev. 21:9-22:5). It is a marvelous, loving, joyful community. The righteous angels are there. The Old Testament saints will be there (spirits of the righteous made perfect). The Church will be there (assembly of the firstborn). And at the center of the city will be the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit giving light to all!

Jesus' blood sprinkled on the mercy seat in the heavenly tabernacle makes all this possible (9:11-14). What is the better word which Jesus' blood speaks? If the "blood of Abel" refers to his murder by Cain, his blood cried out for vengeance (Gen. 4:8-12). The blood of Jesus speaks forgiveness. If the "blood of Abel" refers to the blood sacrifice he brought in faith (Gen. 4:4; Heb. 11:4), that blood speaks of the temporary covering of sin, but the blood of Jesus speaks of complete forgiveness and reconciliation to God (Col. 2:13-15).

These Hebrew Christians, as believers, are identified with the Heavenly Jerusalem. If they go back into Judaism, they will not lose their citizenship in the New Jerusalem but they will lose out on the blessings of this life. They will suffer the terror with which the Law was given while they are on earth. More specifically, they will suffer the terror of the judgment of the Roman invasion soon coming upon that generation.

The Preacher continues his warning in verses 25-29. At Mount Sinai any person or animal who did not heed God's Word that came through Moses and crossed the barrier to touch the mountain was put to death. If punishment was certain for disregarding the Word of God that came through Moses how much more certain is punishment for disregarding the Word of God that has now come through the Son (1:1-2, 2:1-4)?

Hebrews 12:25 (ESV)

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.

The voice of God shook the earth at Mount Sinai and terrified the people. The voice of God will one day not only shake the earth, but the heavens (Haggai 2:6; Rev. 6:12-17, 16:17-21). This shaking will take place during the Tribulation. That shaking will bring to an end the reign of Satan over the world and the kingdoms of men. That shaking will make way for the unshakeable kingdom of Messiah (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:11-28; Rev. 20:4-6).

Hebrews 12:26–29 (ESV)

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.

For the Hebrew Christians to return to Judaism is to align themselves with a system that will be shaken and removed (is the Preacher alluding to 70A.D.?) when, in fact, their inheritance is in the unshakeable Millennial Kingdom.

Rather than defecting, the appropriate response is to hold on to God’s grace and serve Him with reverence and awe. A better translation of verse 28 is this:

Hebrews 12:28 (HCSB)

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us hold on to grace. By it, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe,

Some thoughts for us...

Have you received God’s grace? Have you received God’s gracious gift of Jesus whom He gave to die in our place and pay the penalty of our sin?

John 3:16 (ESV)

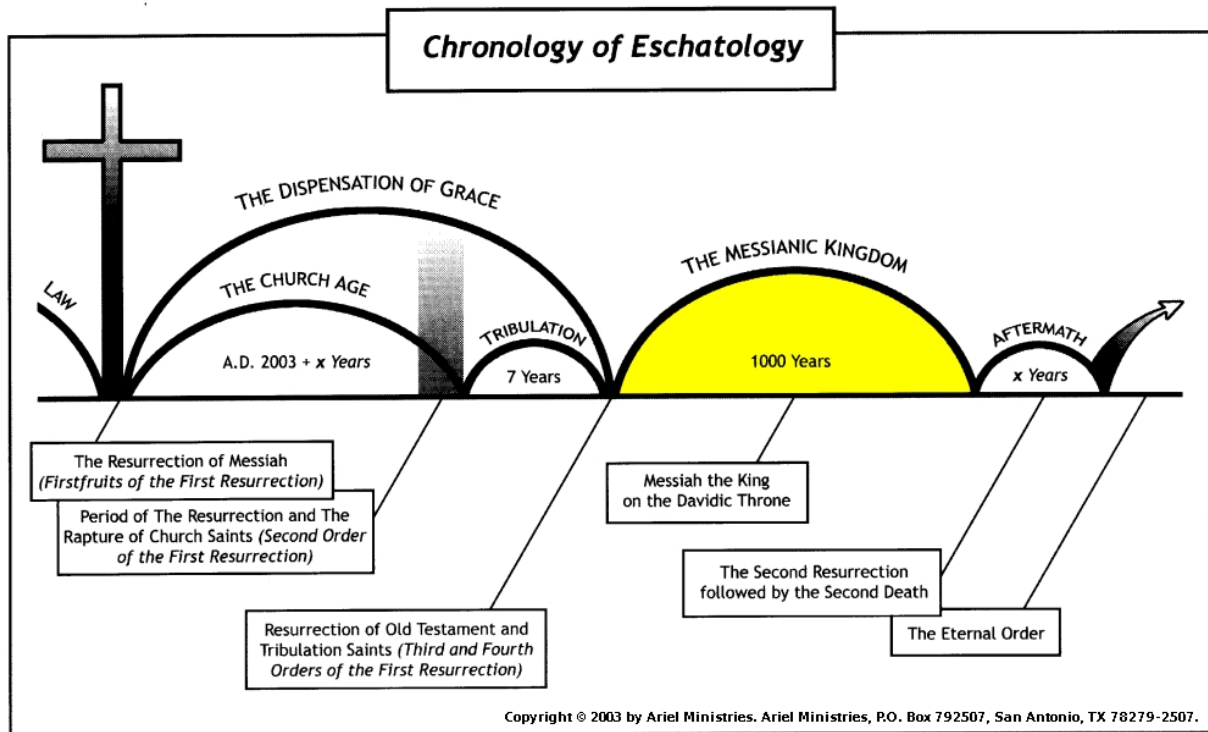
¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Get free from your bitterness. We all struggle with bitterness from time to time. We must guard our hearts against bitterness because it is so destructive. It not only eats out the soul; it leaches out and defiles others. *How To Be Free From Bitterness* is an excellent resource; please take a copy. Seek the help of a trusted brother or sister to get free. Christian counselors are also available through our website and app.

Keep your inheritance in the forefront of your thinking. This world is not our home we’re just ‘a passin’ through. The New Jerusalem is your eternal home. You are receiving an unshakeable kingdom. This should be vivid and vibrant in our hearts and minds. Our inheritance is meant to inspire and strengthen us in our race of faith. I hope you will commit to memory *The Chronology of Eschatology*. The title is academic, but the timeline is your future! You should know it and think about it often.



Are you serving the Lord with awe and reverence? God has given us His grace and is giving us an unshakeable kingdom. What are you giving to God?