

Hebrews 12:25-29
“God behind the shadows”

I. Introduction

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I. Introduction

We come to the fifth and last great warning in this book! They are:

- **2:1-4** *First warning of rejecting the salvation through the Son*
- **3:7 – 4:13** *Second warning of rejecting a mightier mediator*
- **5:11 – 6:20** *Third warning of rejecting spiritual maturity*
- **10:26-39** *Fourth warning of forgetting faith*
- **12:25-29** *Fifth warning against escaping endurance*

This final warning was written to remind his readers that difficult times have a special purpose. Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 “*But know this, that **in the last day’s perilous times will come**: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*” The very fact that such “**perilous times**” are **times**, reminds us that they are **temporary in nature** and **not permanent**; it also reminds us that **they have a threefold designed purpose!** As we have already noted the first two purposes the last two weeks:

1. Vs. 12-17 ***They cause inward maturity in the believer!***
2. Vs. 18-24 ***They provide an outward observable witness to the non-believer of the hope that lies within!***
3. Vs. 25-29 And this week we shall note that: ***They also are God’s way of showing humanity what is passing and what is permanent!***

II. Vs. 25-27 See to it

Vs. 25 “See” in the Greek literally means “**see to it**” the word is in the present imperative which means that it is continuous action, meaning that is something that the reader needs to “**ever be seeing to it.**” The word “*refuse*” in the Greek is a word that means **to prevent the consequences of an act by protesting against it and disavowing it.** The “*They*” refers to the Jews of Exodus and the words, “*if we turn away*” is speaking of an action going on presently. After giving the contrasts between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, the writer says, in effect, “**Here is what you must do;**” “**See that you do not refuse Him who speaks.**” In the very first statement of this letter the writer said in 1:1-2 “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.*” The point he now makes is that “*Since your ancestors were held accountable for hearing and obeying God when He warned them from Mount Sinai how much more will you be held accountable to hear and obey since*

God has been speaking to you from Mount Zion?" Unbelieving disobedient Israel never entered the Promise Land and neither will unbelievers today see the true promised land of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The blessings of the second covenant are immeasurably greater than those of the first covenant but so are the consequences for refusing to obey!

Vs. 26 The writer in verse 26 quotes the prophet Haggai in chapter 2:6 where we read the LORD of hosts say: "*Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land.*" He does so by reminding the reader that the earth shook because of the events from Mount Sinai but he tells them that that is nothing compared to Mount Zion as all heavens and earth will shake. Revelation 6:12-14 describes just such a scene when we are told that after Jesus opens "*the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.*" Haggai wrote the 2nd shortest book in the First Testament (1,131 words in 38 verses in 2 chapters) and his prophecy was the first chronologically of the post-exile prophets (Zechariah and Malachi being the other two). But **Haggai was a prophet of action** as God called him to prophecy to the people who had begun to repatriate the land of promise after the Babylonian captivity during the reign of Darius the Great king of Persia who has issued a decree to return during Nehemiah and Ezra's time. Based upon Haggai's prophecy we learn that his ministry only lasted for four months from September 1st to December 24th and was only comprised of three sermons ***each a call to action*** (five times in two chapters he says that they need to "***consider***"). ***That's what the writer of Hebrews wants his readers to do "CONSIDER" as God was about to shake the heaven and the earth to see what would fall out!*** Have you noticed that God periodically shakes the inhabitants of the earth up a bit? He does so to cause those who dwell on this whirling ball in space to lose security in the temporal so they can refocus their attention on the eternal and permanent. People are trusting in things and those things can never produce true security. In August of 1935 President Roosevelt signed into law the "Social Security Act" a general welfare and insurance program to pay retired workers age 65 and older a continued income after they retire. Now 83 years later I'm not certain anyone would call the "***New Deal***" Social or Secure! Humanity thinks that it can form an organization that will govern themselves and do what is best for their fellow man but because the organization refuses to understand their own sin nature the organization inevitably becomes self serving to specific people in the organization to the detriment of the rest of humanity. The organization just gets bigger and bigger and more and more intrusive to dominate more and more of life. And when it all falls apart, which it inevitably does, people will again realize that we trust in the the wrong thing instead of the Right Person! When our economy falls people realize that praying to "***Our Father which art in Washington...***" is not where we need to be placing our trust. These superficial things are shaken up by God so humanity can see what will remain and is permanent and eternal. The truth is we humans are not smart enough to run our lives. That's what this passage makes clear. God is shaking the things that can be shaken in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

Vs. 27 The words "*Yet once more*" indicate that the words of the prophet Haggai where he predicted the "***shaking***" was to be final as it proceeds the new heaven and earth of Rev. 21:1. The word "***removal***" in the Greek is a word that means to "***transfer to a new basis or to change***" It refers to ***the act of God transferring to a new basis this present universe which is currently under Adam's fall, to a universe that is perfect with out the effects of sin.*** The "***whole creation***" of Romans 8:22 that "*groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*" speaks not just of the earth but of everything in the celestial realm as well. That tells us that the effects of Adam's sin, was far greater than just this planet and encompassed everything part of God's creation the sun moon and stars included. So if there were aliens out there in space craft they wouldn't be very happy with humans! Everything physical (of those things which can be shaken) will be destroyed and only those things which are eternal will remain.

III. Vs. 28-29 The work of Fire

Vs. 28 The word to the Christian is in verse 28, “*since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*” God is light and God is love, and when you put those two together you get fire. Fire is both light and warmth. ***Fire will destroy what it cannot purify, but it purifies what it cannot destroy.*** That describes what is presently happening during trials and tribulation: ***We are passing through the fire which is designed to destroy that which can be destroyed, or to purify that which can never be destroyed.*** God is leading us through these trials and through the difficulties of our day, in order that we may learn to cry what Job, did in his book in Job 23:10 “***He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.***” Jesus replied to Pilate in John 18:36 saying, “***My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.***” Thus our response to this world being shaken ought not be surprise or fear but “*let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*”

Vs. 29 The closing statement of this chapter is a sever warning: “***For our God is a consuming fire.***” Some of these professing Hebrews had come to the very edge of trusting alone in Jesus finished work on the cross. But going back now no matter how close they had come to believing **IN** Jesus instead of just believing **OF** Jesus would be a worse judgment. They were being told ***NOT to go back religion*** as a worse judgment than Sinai was at hand described not as a mountain consumed with fire from God but God Himself! These folks were described in this very letter in Hebrews 6:4 “***those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit***”. There in that passage we discovered that the:

1. ***Once enlightened: This phrase makes no reference at all to salvation.*** There is no mention of new birth or regeneration and to make the “*once enlightened*” as “*born again*”, without any connecting phrases any where in the Bible is a stretch NOT implied in the text or else where. None of the normal New Testament terminology is used to indicate salvation. ***What we have here is two words of a phrase that will indicate who the writer had in mind when he wrote it:***
 - a. First the word “*once*” in the Greek it means “*once for all*”. This means that the “*enlightening*” ***never needed repetition.*** From the writer’s perspective to the original readers, ***these Hebrews who had listened to the message of the New Testament had experienced the the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment in their minds and hearts to clearly understand what they had heard.*** The writer is declaring that this happened to the readers and it never needed to be repeated for the purpose of the lack of understanding or to make it clearer.
 - b. Second the word “*enlightened*” in the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures always has to do “*intellectual perception of biblical truth*”. The word means to be “*mentally aware of something, to be instructed or informed*”. ***The word carries NO CONNOTATION of response, neither acceptance or rejection. These Hebrews who the writer is addressing had natural knowledge of factual information.*** The only conclusion you can make of ***these Hebrews is that they were “enlightened” but not saved!***
2. ***Tasted the heavenly gift:*** At issue in this advantage is the understanding of what the writer meant by using the word “*tasted*” and what he meant by the phrase “*heavenly gift*”. The word used to describe the advantage given to them by the Holy Spirit was a “*taste*” and it is worthy to note that if the writer intended to describe those he was writing to as believers then why did he say that they merely “***TASTED***” of the “*heavenly gift*” instead of saying that they “***RECEIVED*** the heavenly gift”? ***The writer is clear on this, the “heavenly gift” was not feasted on He was only sampled which had left an impression of the distinct flavor of his goodness.*** The interpretation of the words “*heavenly gift*” can be one of two persons, the Holy Spirit as He is spoken of as such or it can be a reference to

persons, the Holy Spirit as He is spoken of as such or it can be a reference to Jesus who is the greatest “*heavenly gift*”. I believe that these Hebrews had tasted of the blessings of salvation in Christ but had yet to feast upon Him fully as they hadn’t received Him.

3. ***Become partakers of the Holy Spirit***: Here the main issue is what does the word “*partakers*” mean in reference to the Holy Spirit? The word in the Greek in reference to the meaning of “*partakers*” is not to a “**permanent**” state but a mere fact of a work of the Holy Spirit. “*Partakers*” of the Holy Spirit doesn’t mean “*possessors*” of the Holy Spirit. They weren’t indwelt by Him, He had NOT taken up His permanent residence in their hearts, they were not sealed by Him, born again by Him, or baptized by Him into the body of Christ by Him! Instead they were mere participators in His work co-operating in His pre-salvation work that was ***leading*** them to the act of repentance from their sins and trusting alone in the finished work of Jesus for their atonement. These Hebrews didn’t “*possess*” the Holy Spirit, they were only “*partakers*” of His work.
4. ***Tasted the good word of God***: At issue in the fourth advantage is two phrases “*tasted*” and “*word of God*”. The word “***tasted***” is the same as above and refers to ***having “sampled” the word of God but didn’t eat of it***. What I find interesting is what the “sampling” is; the writer doesn’t use the normal reference to the “word of God” “*logos*” in the Greek but instead uses the word “*rhema*” which emphasizes the parts of the word rather than the whole! These Hebrews had sampled parts of the word of God and may have done so with enthusiasm. There is nothing wrong with “*tasting*” as it is the first step to eating but if all you ever do is taste and never eat you will eventually die of starvation.
5. ***(Tasted) the powers of the age to come***: Same word “*tasted*” is implied here as well but we will need to understand what the writer meant by the phrase “*the powers of the age to come*”. The word “*powers*” in the Greek is repeatedly used to refer to miracles, wonderful works or mighty works. The word “*age*” in the Greek refers to a period of time characterized by miracles. It differs from this present age in which we live where “*mighty works*” are not the common every day norm. What the writer is saying is that these Hebrews had witnessed “*mighty works*” from the apostle’s healings and other “*wonderful works*” that will be common in the millennial kingdom of Christ. Yet though they had tasted of such things they had not come to faith in Christ.