

# EXPLANATION OF 58<sup>TH</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## HEBREWS 12 (A.D. 64)

### OUTLINE

	<b>The fruits of faith:</b>	
12:1-3.	Christian faith involves keeping the eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith	1
12:4-11.	Christian faith involves God's discipline of believers	3
12:12-17.	Christian faith involves taking action to stay spiritually fit and fruitful in righteousness and holiness	5
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12:25-29.	Christian faith involves paying heed to the voice of God	8

### 12:1-3. Christian faith involves keeping the eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

**12:1.** Therefore also we, *since we continually* have so large a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, *after* throwing off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, let us *once for all* with perseverance *continue* to run the race lying before us<sup>1</sup>

#### a. The cloud of witnesses witness to us about faith.

'The cloud of witnesses' are not the spectators watching their successors (Christians today) as they in their own turn are running their spiritual race. The departed dead cannot see or have any contact with the still living today<sup>2</sup>! *Rather, their example of faith during the Old Testament period bears witness (proclaim) to us about the possibilities of the life of faith! It is not they who look to us at all, but we who look to them for encouragement! They bear witness to the faithfulness of God to his Word in every situation, especially to his promise concerning the coming Messiah, who would inaugurate the new order. These witnesses lived during the Old Testament period in the good of that promise which has only been realised in Jesus Christ at his first coming. They were therefore witnesses of Jesus Christ before he was born as a human being on earth (his incarnation).*

#### b. Christians witness to the point of martyrdom.

Because Christians 'witness'<sup>3</sup> about Jesus Christ, they are persecuted and become 'martyrs'<sup>4</sup>! Origen wrote in his 'Exhortation to martyrdom' (A.D. 235) that " 'a martyr' (a witness) is a person who of his own free will chooses to die for the sake of religion rather than save his life by renouncing it". Nehemiah testified, "The people of Israel were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets, who had admonished them"<sup>5</sup>. For example, the Bible speaks of "the blood of Stephen, your witness (martyr)"<sup>6</sup> and "Antipas, my witness (martyr), who was killed among you"<sup>7</sup>.

#### c. Christians still have to run the race of faith.

This cloud of witnesses and their testimonies encourage us to run our race, which 'is set before us' or which 'we entered'. The present tense is used: let us *keep on (persevere, persist in) running the race. The Old Testament believers looked forward to the age of fulfilment. The New Testament believers live in the beginning of the age of fulfilment.* They look at Christ who put away sin by sacrificing himself during his first coming at "the end of the ages" (9:26). And they look at Christ who is no longer present on earth in visible form (9:24), waiting for his second coming at "the end of the age of fulfilment" (9:28). Like Moses, also the New Testament believers must see God who is invisible (11:27) by faith! *The race of believers is also a race of 'not seeing, but of believing'<sup>8</sup>!*

- Luke 13:24. 'You must continually make every effort' or 'you must persevere running'<sup>9</sup> to enter through the narrow door.
- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Runners run in the stadium. Run to obtain the prize. Runners exercise self-control or train strictly. They do not run aimlessly. They treat their bodies severely in order not to get disqualified.
- Galatians 2:2. Check the truth of the gospel with the apostles' teaching in order not to run the race in vain.
- Ephesians 6:12. The race or struggle (contest) is against the worldly authorities and evil spiritual forces.

<sup>1</sup> **12:1.** Therefore (τοιγαρουν)(ch=conjunction hyper/superordinating) (emphasis to draw a conclusion) also (και)(ab=adverb) we (ημεις)(nprn-xp =noun pronoun nominative 1<sup>st</sup> person plural), *since we continually* have (εχοντες>εχω)(vppanmxp) so large (great, much, far strong)(τοσουτος-αυτη-ουτον)(a-dan-s=adjective *demonstrative* accusative neuter singular) a cloud (το νεφος)(n-an-s) of witnesses (ο μαρτυς) (n-gm-p) surrounding (περικειμενον>περικειμαι)(vppnan-s) us (ημιν)(npd-xp), *after* throwing off (αποθεμενοι<αποτιθημι) (vrammxxp) everything (πας, παντα)(a--am-s) that hinders (a weight or impediment) (ο ογκος)(n-am-s) and (και) the sin (η αμαρτια)(n-af-s) that so easily entangles (easily ensnares) (επλεριστατος-ον)(a--af-s), let us *once for all* with perseverance (η υπομονη)(n-gf-s) *continue* to run (τρεχωμεν>τρεχω)(vspra--xp (cohortative) the race (ο αγων)(n-am-s) lying before us (προκειμενος >προκειμαι)(vppnam-s), ...

<sup>2</sup> Job 14:21; Ecclesiastes 9:5-6; Isaiah 63:16

<sup>3</sup> μαρτυρω

<sup>4</sup> μαρτυροι

<sup>5</sup> Nehemiah 9:26

<sup>6</sup> Acts 22:20

<sup>7</sup> Revelation 2:13

<sup>8</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:18

<sup>9</sup> αγωνιζεσθε)(imperative present middle/passive dep

- Philippians 1:30. The Christian struggle (contest) may include imprisonment.
- Philippians 2:16. Paul did not run (contest) or labour for nothing.
- Colossians 1:29. Paul struggles (contests) with all his energy.
- Colossians 2:1. Paul struggles (contests) for Christians.
- Colossians 4:12. Epaphras always wrestles (contests) in prayer for Christians.
- 1 Thessalonians 2:2. Apostles told the gospel in much struggle (contest).
- 1 Timothy 6:12. Struggle (contest) the good struggle (fight the good fight) of faith.
- 2 Timothy 2:3-6. Compete as an athlete according to the rules (lawfully).
- 2 Timothy 4:7. Paul struggled (contested) the good struggle and finished the race<sup>10</sup>.

d. Christians face hindrances in the race of faith which may trip them up.

Every Christian has different kinds of hindrances (impediments): personality, character, circumstances, etc. Every Christian must get rid of 'sins' (things outside God's goal or purpose for his life) that so easily ensnare or entangle him. An alternative reading: 'easily distract'<sup>11</sup> instead of 'easily ensnare'<sup>12</sup>. Everything that distracts the competing athlete would put him out of the race.

**12:2.** ... (Let us)<sup>13</sup> keep our eyes *continually fixed* on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy *continually* set before him, (patiently) endured the cross, despised its shame and sat down (*and is now sitting*) at the right of the throne of God<sup>14</sup>.

e. Christians keep their eyes continually fixed on the author of faith.

Jesus Christ is *the pioneer or trailblazer* of faith. He was the pioneer of faith even for the Old Testament believers, because it was the Spirit of Jesus Christ who spoke through all his prophets to his Old Testament people so that they could believe in what he said<sup>15</sup> and because it was Jesus Christ as 'the Angel of the LORD' during the Old Testament period that saved them from the house of slavery in Egypt<sup>16</sup> and that accompanied them in the wilderness<sup>17</sup>.

The Angel of the Lord during the Old Testament period.

- He is the Revelation of God<sup>18</sup>.
- He is the Presence of God<sup>19</sup>.
- He is God as Protector and Deliverer<sup>20</sup>.
- He is God as Judge<sup>21</sup>.
- He is the Mediator between God and man<sup>22</sup>.
- He is the Intercessor for believers with God<sup>23</sup>.
- He is the Representative of believers with God<sup>24</sup>.
- He is the Mediator of the covenant<sup>25</sup>.

Since his first coming his example of faith makes his pioneering leadership available to his people in a way that was impossible before.

f. Christians keep their eyes continually fixed on the perfecter of faith.

Jesus Christ is also *the one who ran the race of faith to its triumphant finish*. In Jesus Christ faith reached its perfection! He brings faith to its goal!

- Matthew 27:43. Even on the cross he kept on trusting God.

<sup>10</sup> cf. Acts 20:24

<sup>11</sup> ευπερισπαστος = easily distracting

<sup>12</sup> ευπεριστατος = easily ensnaring

<sup>13</sup> subjunctive in verse 1

<sup>14</sup> **12:2.** ... (Let us)(subjunctive in verse 1) keep our eyes *continually fixed* (to look away from one thing in order to concentrate on another) (αφορωντες>αφοραω)(vrpanmnp) on (εις)(pa=preposition accusative) Jesus, the author (ο αρχηγος)(n-am-s) and perfecter (ο τελειωτης) (n-am-s) of our faith (η πιστις)(n-gf-s), who (ος)(apnm-s=adjective pronominal *relative* nominative masculine singular) for the sake of (αυτι) (pg)

the joy (η χαρα)(n-gf-s) *continually* set before (προκειμενης>προκειμαι)(vrpngf-s) him (αυτος-η-ον)(nrpdmzs), (patiently) endured (υπεμεινεν>υπομενω) (viaa--zs) the cross (ο σταυρος)(n-am-s), despised (scorned, think down on) (καταφρονησας>καταφρονεω) (vrpaanm-s)

its shame (ignominy) (η αισχυνη)(n-gf-s) and sat down (*and is now sitting*)(κεκαθικεν>καθιζω)(vira-zs *perfect tense*) at the right (δεξιως-α-ον)(ap-df-s) of the throne (ο θρονος)(n-gm-s) of God (ο θεος)(n-gm-s).

<sup>15</sup> 1 Peter 1:10-12

<sup>16</sup> Jude 5

<sup>17</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:1-5

<sup>18</sup> Exodus 3:2-15; John 1:18; John 17:6

<sup>19</sup> Exodus 23:20-23; Matthew 1:23; Mark 2:5-7

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 34:7; Psalm 35:4-7; John 10:9-10

<sup>21</sup> 1 Chronicles 21:15-19,27; Revelation 19:11-16

<sup>22</sup> Zechariah 1:8-11; 1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>23</sup> Zechariah 1:12-13; Hebrews 7:25

<sup>24</sup> Zechariah 3:1-7; 1 John 2:1-2

<sup>25</sup> Malachi 3:1-5; Hebrews 8:6

- Luke 22:42. Not his will, but God's will be done. His faith, unsupported by any visible or tangible evidence, carried him through the taunting of the people, the scourging of the whip, the crucifying by the soldiers, and the even more bitter agony of rejection, desertion and dereliction of his followers. In this he left a practical example for us to follow.
- He endured the cross and scorned shame. The cross was the most degrading death sentence reserved for non-Romans, for slaves and criminals of low degree. His suffering perfected him as the perfect pioneer of salvation (2:10; 5:8f). He is not only the perfecter of faith but also the perfecter of endurance!
- Christ becomes his people's *supreme inspirer of faith!*

**12:3.** Therefore you *must* consider him who endured *victoriously* such opposition against himself under (from) sinful men, so that you will not *grow* weary in your souls *when* you lose heart.<sup>26</sup>

The present tense. 'The cloud of witnesses' are *continually* witnessing to us. Christians should *keep on* throwing off whatever impedes their running. They should *persevere* in running the race. They keep their eyes *continually* fixed on Christ. They *persist* in not losing heart.

The perfect tense. Christ took his seat on the right hand of God and *now forever sits* on the heavenly throne ruling the universe. Christ endured all opposition against himself and *now is the conqueror forever*<sup>27</sup>.

Christ shares his joy with Christians.<sup>28</sup> Christians (those that overcome)<sup>29</sup> will sit with Christ on his throne<sup>30</sup>.

## **12:4-11 Christian faith involves God's discipline<sup>31</sup> of believers.**

a. The Christian race of faith includes the struggle or contest against sin.

**12:4.** You have not yet resisted unto the point of (shedding your) blood in your *continuing* struggle against sin.<sup>32</sup>

The Christians had already experienced persecution and the confiscation of their property (10:32-34), but have not yet experienced martyrdom, that is, to the point of being killed. They experienced trials and temptations of sin (2:18; 4:15), but in their struggle against sin and injustice of others against them they have not yet been called to die.

b. Christian upbringing includes instruction, training, correction and punishment.

**12:5.** And you have forgotten encouragement that *continually* addresses you as sons: "My son, you *must* not *continue* to think little of the discipline of the Lord and you *must* not *again and again* lose heart when he *again and again* rebukes you"<sup>33</sup>,

**12:6.** for the one whom he loves the Lord *again and again* disciplines! And he punishes *again and again* every son he accepts<sup>34</sup>.

**12:7.** You *must continue* to endure (hardship and affliction) as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son (is there) that a father does not *again and again* discipline<sup>35</sup>?

The present tense. Christians should *continually* struggle against sin. God as Father *keeps on* disciplining Christians as his children, because he *persistently* loves them and seeks their best. Therefore Christians should *persevere (persist)* in enduring hardship.

<sup>26</sup> **12:3.** Therefore (γαρ)(cs=conjunction subordinating) you *must* consider ('meditate on') (αναλογισθασθε>αναλογιζομαι)(vmaδ—yp-verb *iMperative* aorist mid dep) him who endured *victoriously* (τον υπομεμενηκοτα>υπομενω)(vpraam-s *perfect tense*) such (as this)(τουουτος-αυτη-ουτον/ουτο)(a-daf-s *demonstrative* ) opposition (η αντιλογια)(n-af-s) against (εις)(pa) himself (εουτος-η-ον) (npamz) under (from) (υπο)(pg) sinful men (ο αμαρτωλος)(ap-gm-p), so that (ινα)(cs=conjunction subordinating) you will not *begin to grow* (*ingressive* aorist) weary (καμητε<καμνω)(vsaa--yp) in your souls (η ψυχη)(n-df-p) *when* you lose heart (εκλυομενοι>εκλυομαι)(vpppnmyp).

<sup>27</sup> cf. John 16:33

<sup>28</sup> John 15:11; John 16:20-21,24; John 17:13

<sup>29</sup> 1 John 5:4-5

<sup>30</sup> Luke 22:29-30; Revelation 3:21

<sup>31</sup> 'discipline' (η παιδεια) is training by instruction, correction, punishment and hardship

<sup>32</sup> **12:4.** You have not yet (ουπω)(ab) resisted (αντικατεστητε<αντικαθιστημι)(viaa--yp) unto the point of (μεχρις)(pg) (shedding your) blood (το αιμα)(n-gn-s) in your *continuing* struggle (ανταγωνιζομενοι>ανταγωνιζομαι)(vpppnmyp) against (προς)(pa) sin (η αμαρτια)(n-af-s).

<sup>33</sup> **12:5.** And (και) you have forgotten (*and now forgetfulness is a present condition*) (εκλελησθε<εκλ.ανθαινω) (vim—yp *perfect tense* n=mid/pas dep) (that word of) encouragement (η παρακλησις)(n-gf-s) that (ητις)(aprf-s *relative*) *continually* addresses (διαλεγεται>διαλεγω)(vipn--zs) you (υμιν)(npd-yp) as (ως)(cs) sons (ο υιος)(n-dm-p): "My (μου)(npg-xs) son (ο υιος)(n-vm-s), you *must* not *continue* to think little of (make light of)(ολιγωρει>ολιγωρεω) (vmpa—ys=verb *iMperative* present active 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular) the discipline (η παιδεια)(n-gf-s) of the Lord (ο κυριος)(n-gm-s) and you *must* not (μη)(ab) *again and again* lose heart (εκλυου>εκλυω)(vmpp—ys *iMperative*) when he *again and again* rebukes (ελεγχομενος>ελεγχω)(vpppnmys) you,

<sup>34</sup> **12:6.** for (γαρ)(cs) the one whom (ον)(apram-s / apdam-s *relative/demonstrative*) he loves (αγαπα>αγαπαω)(vipa--zs)(the object is put first for emphasis! Cf. John 1:1 "God is the Word") the Lord (ο κυριος)(n-nm-s)(the subject) *again and again* disciplines (παιδευει>παιδεω)(vipa--zs)! And he punishes (flogs with a whip) (μαστιγοι<μαστιγωω)(vipa--zs) *again and again* every (πας)(a--am-s) son (ο υιος)(n-am-s) he accepts (παραδεχεται>παραδεχομαι)(vipn--zs).

<sup>35</sup> **12:7.** You *must continue* to endure (υπομενετε>υπομενω)(vipa—yp=*indicative* / vmpa-yp=*iMperative*) (hardship and affliction) as (εις)(pa) discipline (η παιδεια) (n-af-s); God (ο θεος)(n-nm-s) is treating (προσφερεται>προσφερομαι)(vipr--zs) you (υμιν)(npd-yp) as (ως)(cs) sons (ο υιος)(n-dm-p). For (γαρ) what (τις)(a-tnm-s *inTerrogative*) son (ο υιος)(n-nm-s)(is there) that (ον)(apram-s) a father (ο πατηρ)(n-nm-s) does not (ου)(ab) *again and again* discipline (παιδευει<παιδεω)(vipa-zs)?

Hardship is God the Father's method of training and disciplining his people. The writer quotes Proverbs 3:11-12 from the Greek text. Discipline is 'the upbringing of a child by means of instruction, by means of training or practising and by means of correction'<sup>36</sup>. Punishment is 'the upbringing of a child by means of appropriate punishment.

The instrument of punishment was originally a whip, but can be any instrument except the father's hand or foot, which a child should never fear. See discipline in Proverbs 13:24; Proverbs 19:18; Proverbs 22:15; Proverbs 23:13-14; Proverbs 29:15,17. Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, "When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong."

c. The goal of Christian discipline is obedience that leads to conformity to Christ.

**12:8.** For if you are without discipline, of which all have become participants, then you are illegitimate and not (true) sons<sup>37</sup>

Christ learned obedience by what he suffered (5:8). *Christians must also learn obedience by 'suffering hardship, correction and punishment'*. To avoid discipline and punishment causes a person to be an illegitimate child, that is, not really kin to Christ, a relation or family of Christ.

d. The instruction through discipline (including punishment) of God is always for the best interest of Christians.

12:9 Moreover, we had our earthly fathers as disciplinarians (correctors/teachers) and we respected/revered (them) for a little while (period of youth); but how much more should we submit/subject ourselves to the Father of (our) spirits and live.<sup>38</sup>

As the father of our body is our physical or earthly father, so the Father of our spirit is our spiritual or heavenly Father<sup>39</sup>.

**12:10.** For they *used* to instruct (train through discipline and punishment) for a few days according to what *always* seemed (best) to them; but he (God) (disciplines us) for our 'good' (profit), so that we may share in his holiness.<sup>40</sup>

**12:11.** All discipline for the present does not seem to be pleasant, but painful. However afterwards it *time and again* 'produces' a peaceful fruit of righteousness for those who have been trained (*and have reached a trained condition*) by it.<sup>41</sup>

The perfect tense. Christians that have been trained and completed the training of discipline will produce a harvest of righteousness and peace. Such results do not come easily, but takes time and training.

The way to eternal life and to living in a way that is pleasing to God is submission to God and his will. Disobedience destroys, but submission to the God of the Bible and what he teaches in the Bible is to our greatest profit. Discipline is unpleasant and painful, but it always leads to holiness of character and a harvest of righteousness with its accompanying peace. Peace is *the absence of* irritation, fear, anger, fighting, war and *the presence of* wholeness of relationships that were formerly broken.

- Psalm 119:71, It was good for me to be afflicted, so that I might learn your decrees.
- Acts 14:22. We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.
- Matthew 5:10-12. Rejoice when you are persecuted, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to you.
- C.S. Lewis. <sup>42</sup>"God *whispers* to us in our pleasures, *speaks* in our conscience, but *shouts* in our pains: it (pain, suffering) is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world!"

## 12:12-17. Christian faith involves taking action to stay spiritually fit and fruitful in righteousness and holiness.

<sup>36</sup> cf. Jeremiah 46:28

<sup>37</sup> **12:8.** For (δε)(cc=conjunction coordinating) if (ει)(cs-conjunction subordinating) you are (εστε>ειμι)(vipa--yp) without (χωρις)(pg) discipline (η παιδεια)(n-gf-s), of which (ης)(aprgfs *relative*) all (πας)(ap-nm-p) have become (γεγονασιν>γινομαι)(vira-zp *perfect tense*) participants (ο μετοχος)(ap-nm-p), then (αρα)(ch=conjunction hyper/superordinating) you are (εστε>ειμι)(vipa--yp) illegitimate (out of wedlock) (νοθος-η-ον)(ap-nm-p) and (και) not (ουχ)(ab) (true) sons (ο υιος)(n-nm-p).

<sup>38</sup> **12:9** Moreover (then, besides this) (ειτα)(ab=adverb), we had (ειχομεν>εχω)(viia--xp) our (ημων)(npg-xp) earthly (of the flesh)(η σαρξ)(n-gf-s) fathers (ο πατρος)(n-am-p) as disciplinarians/correctors/teachers (ο παιδευτης)(n-am-p) and we respected/revered (ενετρεπομεθα>εντρεπω)(viip--xp) (them) for a little while (ου)(ab) (πολυς-πολλη-πολυ)(ap-an-s/ab); but (δε)(ch) how much more (μαλλον)(abm) should we submit/subject ourselves (υποταγησομεθα>υποτασομαι)(vifp--xp) to the Father (ο πατρος)(n-dm-s) of (our) spirits (το πνευμα)(n-gn-p) and (και)(cc=conjunction coordinating) live (ζησομεν>ζω)(vifa--xp).

<sup>39</sup> Numbers 16:22; Numbers 27:15; Isaiah 64:8

<sup>40</sup> **12:10.** For (γαρ) they (οι μεν) (our human fathers) *used* to instruct (train through discipline and punishment) (επαιδευον>παιδευω)(viaa-zp) for (προς)(pa) a few (ολιγος-α-ον)(a--af-p) days (η ημερα)(n-af-p) according to (κατα)(pa) what *always* seemed (δοκουν>δοκεω)(vppaa-s) (best) to them (αυτοις)(nprdmz); but (δε)(ch) he (ο)(dnms=determiner/definite article nominative masculine singular / apdm-s=adjective pronominal demonstrative nominative masculine singular)(God) (disciplines us) for (ει)(pa) our 'good' (profit) (το συμφερον>συμφερω)(vppaa-s), so that (εις)(pa) we may share (εις το μεταλαβειν>μεταλαβανω)(vnaaa) in his (αυτου)(nprgmzs) holiness (η αγιοτης)(n-gf-s).

<sup>41</sup> **12:11.** All (πας)(a--nf-s) discipline (η παιδεια)(n-nf-s) for (προς)(pa) the present (το + παρον>παρειμι)(vppaa-s) does not (ου)(ab) seem (δοκει>δοκεω)(vipa--zs) to be (ειναι>ειμι)(vnpa) pleasant (η χαρα)(n-gf-s), but (αλλα)(ch) painful (sorrowful) (η λυπη)(n-gf-s). However (δε)(ch) afterwards (υστερον)(apman-s / abm *comparative*) it *time and again* produces (give back, repay, yield) (αποδιδωσιν>αποδιδωμι)(vipa--zs) a peaceful (ειρηνικος-η-ον)(a--am-s) fruit (ο καρπος)(n-am-s) of righteousness (η δικαιοσυνη)(n-gf-s) for those who (τοις)(ddmp / nprdmz) have been trained (*and have reached a trained condition*)(γεγυμνασμενοις>γυμναζω)(vprpdm-p *perfect tense*) by (δια)(pg) it (αυτος-η-ον)(nprgfzs).

<sup>42</sup> The problem of pain, p81.

a. Christians are commanded to remain spiritually fit.

**12:12.** Therefore, you *must* strengthen your feeble (drooping) arms and weak (paralysed) knees<sup>43,44</sup>

**12:13.** You *must keep on* making straight tracks for your feet, so that what is lame (crippled) may not be turned aside (put out of joint, dislocate).<sup>45</sup>

The present tense. Christians must *keep on* making straight tracks for their feet.

The writer reverts to his athletic figure of speech and exhorts his readers to straighten their drooping arms and brace their wobbling knees. Dislocation of spiritual limbs and deviation on the spiritual road are not God's will. Sprains must be bound up and injuries must be healed, so that the whole Christian community may complete the race course without one loss<sup>46</sup>. *Modern physical fitness programmes should be complemented by spiritual fitness programmes*<sup>47</sup>.

b. Christians are commanded to pursue what is right and holy.

**12:14.** You *must keep on* pursuing peace with all (kinds of people) and (keep on pursuing) holiness; without which no one will see the Lord ...<sup>48</sup>

The present tense. Christians must *continually* pursue peace and holiness. The writer abandons his athletic figure and speaks in direct ethical terms. 'Peace' is:

- *the absence of* irritation, anger, strife and war (things that break into pieces)
- *the presence of* wholeness (things that heal and restore to completeness).

'Holiness' or 'sanctification' is practical holiness, keeping apart from sin and being dedicated to righteousness (12:10)<sup>49</sup>.

c. Christians are called to reject what causes bitterness.

**12:15.** ... *all the time* seeing to it that no one lacks (falls short of the grace of God, that no single root of bitterness springs up that causes trouble and through this would defile the many).<sup>50</sup>

Grace to help in a time of need is constantly available (4:16), but then that grace must be sought, asked, received and lived! Christians should 'oversee' one another (like overseers or elders oversee the church) that no one in their community fails to seek and find grace. People who lack this grace may become the cause of bitterness (an unforgiving spirit) and the cause of defiling many within the Christian community. *It is never grace that is inaccessible, but always people who do not avail themselves of God's grace!* That is why they fail to reach the goal, which is only attainable through grace.

d. Christians make a difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow.

**12:16.** (all the time seeing to it<sup>51</sup>), that no one is a sexual immoral person or a godless person like Esau, who for a single (one) meal *once for all* sold his own birthright<sup>52</sup>.

**12:17.** Because you know that when he wanted afterwards also to inherit this blessing, he was rejected, because a place for repentance he could not find, although he sought it with tears.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Isaiah 35:3

<sup>44</sup> **12:12.** Therefore (διο)(ch), you *must* strengthen (set up straight) (ανορθωσατε<ανορθωω)(vmaa-yr *iMperative*) your feeble (drooping) (a perpetual condition) (παρειμενας<παριημι)(vrpraf-p *perfect tense*) arms (η χειρα)(n-af-p) and weak (paralysed) (a perpetual condition) (παρалаελυμενα<παρалаω)(vrpran-p *perfect tense*) knees (το γονυ)(n-an-p).

<sup>45</sup> **12:13.** You *must keep on* making (ποιειτε>ποιεω)(vmra-yr *iMperative*) straight (level) (ορθος-η-ον)(a-af-p) tracks (athletic tracks, course, ways) (η τροχια)(n-af-p) for your feet (ο πους, ποδος, ποσιν)(n-dm-p), so that (ινα)(cs) what is lame (crippled) (το + χωλος-η-ον)(ar-nm-s) may not (μη)(ab) be 'turned aside' (in a race or putting a limb out of joint)(dislocated, put out of joint, paralyzed) (εκτραπη>εκτρεπομαι) (vsap--zs), but (δε)(ch) rather (μαλλον) (ab *coMparative*) healed (ιαθη<ιαομαι)(vsap--zs).

<sup>46</sup> John 17:12

<sup>47</sup> 1 Timothy 4:8

<sup>48</sup> **12:14.** You *must keep on* pursuing (διωκετε>διωκω)(vmra—yr *iMperative*) peace (η ειρηνη)(n-af-s) with (μετα)(pg) all (kinds of people) (πας, παντων)(ar-gm-p) and (και) (*keep on* pursuing) holiness (ο αγιασμος)(n-am-s); without (χωρις)(pg (holiness) which (ου)(arpgm-s =adjective pronominal *relative* genitive masculine singular)(without holiness) no one (ουδεις)(arpcnm-s *cardinal*) will see (οψηται<οραω) (vifd--zs) the Lord (ο κυριος)(n-am-s)...

<sup>49</sup> cf. Romans 6:19,22; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:3,4,7; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 1:2

<sup>50</sup> **12:15.** ... *all the time* seeing to it (overseeing) (επισκοπουντε>επισκοπεω)(vrpanmyr r=participle *imperative sense*) that no (μη)(ab) one (τις)(arinnm-s *indefinite*) lacks (falls short)(υστερων<υστερεω)(vrpanm-s) of (απο)(pg) the grace (η χαρις)(n-gf-s) of God (ο θεος)(n-gm-s), that

no (μη)(ab) single (τις)(a-inf-s *indefinite*) root (η ριζα)(n-nf-s) of bitterness (η πικρια)(n-gf-s) springs (φουσα<φωω)(vrpanf-s) up (ανω)(ab) that causes trouble (annoys) (ενοχλη<ενοχλεω)(vspra--zs) and (και) through (δια)(pg) this (αυτος-η-ον)(npgfzs) would defile (μυανθωσιν<μυαινω)(vspra--zp) the many (πολλυς-πολλη-πολυ)(ar-nm-p).

<sup>51</sup> verse 15

<sup>52</sup> **12:16.** (all the time seeing to it, verse 15) that no (μη)(ab) one (τις)(a-inm-s *indefinite*) is a sexual immoral person (ο πορνος)(n-nm-s) or a godless

person (worldly, irreligious, accessible to everyone) (βεβηλος-ον)(ar-nm-s) like Esau, who (ος)(arinnm-s *relative*) for (αντι)(pg) a single (one) (εις, ενος, μια)(a-cgf-s *cardinal*) meal (food) (η βρωσις)(n-gf-s) *once for all* sold (απεδετο<αποδιδωμι)(viam--zs) his own (εαυτος-η-ον)(npgmzs=noun pronoun genitive masculine 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular) birthright (privilege of the firstborn son) (τα πρωτοτοκια) (n-an-p).

<sup>53</sup> **12:17.** Because (γαρ)(cs) you know (ιστε>οιδα)(vira—yr= indicative defective perfect with present meaning active 2<sup>nd</sup> plural / vmra—yr= *iMperative*) that (οτι)(cc) when he wanted (θωλων>θελω)(vrpanm-s) afterwards (μετεπειτα)(ab), also (και) to inherit (κληρονομησα>κληρονομεω)(vnaa) this blessing (η ευλογια)(n-af-s), he was rejected (disqualified) (απεδοκιμασθη>αποδοκιμαζω)

Rabbinical (Jewish) literature enlarges the sins of Esau. The Palestinian Targum of Genesis 25:29 says that Esau came home exhausted on the day he sold his birthright to Jacob. On that day he had committed 5 transgressions, one of which consisted in adultery with a betrothed maiden (cf. 13:4). But Christians do not add their own ideas to the Bible<sup>54</sup>!

*The sorrow of Esau was a worldly sorrow.* A person with worldly sorrow is sad because he damaged his own reputation and profit; because he lost wealth, honour and power; because he lost 'face' and is overwhelmed by the feeling of being shamed in front of people who know him. Worldly sorrow always seeks the fault with / blames the other party.

But a person with godly sorrow is sad because he damaged his relationship with the living God; because he lost his perfect holiness, righteousness and peace. Godly sorrow always acknowledges that it is his own fault, repents and seeks to restore the broken relationship<sup>55</sup>. Esau regretted his action, but God did not change his mind. Isaac had rejected and disqualified Esau and would not call back the blessing he had pronounced on Jacob (cf. 4:1).

## 12:18-24. Christian faith involves realising their citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem.

### a. Jewish Christians are sternly warned against falling back into Judaism.

The writer reverts to Hebrews 2:2-4, to the occasion of giving the law on Mount Sinai and the reception of the gospel.

**12:18.** For you have not come (*and have not become proselytes*) at (a mountain) that can be touched and that is burning with fire; with darkness, with gloom and with a storm;<sup>56</sup>

The perfect tense. The Israelites had drawn near and were standing at the foot of the earthly Mt. Sinai. *They had become proselytes of the Old Testament law.*

**12:19.** And with the sound of a trumpet and with a voice (sound) of spoken words which those who heard (it) begged that no word be added to them,<sup>57</sup>

**12:20.** For they could not *continue to bear* (endure) what was commanded: "Even if an animal would touch the mountain, it *must* be stoned."<sup>58</sup>

**12:21.** And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling."<sup>59</sup>

The present tense. The sight of the holy and righteous God revealing his law to Israel continued to inspire the Israelites with fear and trembling.

The giving of the law in the Old Testament was awesome, but the rejection of the gospel in the New Testament is far more awesome! The Israelites in the Old Testament approached the earthly Mount Sinai and then remained at a distance in fear of the awesome holiness and majesty of God.

The Hebrews in the New Testament are sternly warned against having begun to make an approach to the heavenly Mount Zion and then to fall back due to unbelief and disobedience. They are reminded that *the consequences of despising the gospel is even more dreadful than were the consequences of despising the law.*

### b. Jewish and Gentile Christians have become permanent citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

**12:22.** But you have come to (*and are now proselytes of*) Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to countless angels in joyful assembly,<sup>60</sup>

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(via-*p*--*zs*), because (γαρ)(cs) a place (ο τοπος) (n-am-s) for repentance (η μετανοια)(n-gf-s) he could not find (ευρεν>ευρισκω)(viaa--*zs*), although (καιπερ)(cs) he sought (εκζητησας>εκζητηω) (vpaanm-s) it (αυτην)(n-pfzs) (the blessing) with (μετα)(pg) tears (το δακρυον) (n-gn-p).

<sup>54</sup> Revelation 22:18-19

<sup>55</sup> 2 Corinthians 7:8-11

<sup>56</sup> **12:18.** For (γαρ)(cs) you have not (ου)(ab) come (and have become proselytes) (προσεληλυθατε<προσερχομαι)(vira—*yp* perfect tense) at (a mountain) that can be touched (ψηλαφωμενω<ψηλαφωω)(vpppdn-s) and that is burning (κεκαυμενω<καιω)(vprpdn-s perfect tense) with fire (το πυρ)(n-dn-s); with darkness (ο γνοφος)(n-dm-s), with gloom (ο ζοφος)(n-dm-s) and with a storm (hurricane) (η θυελλα)(n-df-s);

<sup>57</sup> **12:19.** And with the sound (ο ηχος)(n-dm-s) of a trumpet (η σαλπυξ)(n-gf-s) and with a voice (sound) (η φωνη)(n-df-s) of spoken words (το ρημα)(n-gn-p) which (ης)(aprgfs relative) those (οι)(dnmp / prnmzp) who heard (ακουσαντες>ακουω)(vpaanm-s) (it) begged (παρητησαντο<παραιτεομαι)(viad—*zr* d=mid dep) that no (μη)(adverb) word (ο λογος)(n-am-s) be added (προστεθηναι<προστιθημι) (vnap) to them (αυτους)(n-pdmzp),

<sup>58</sup> **12:20.** For (γαρ)(cs) they could not *continue to bear* (endure) (εφερον<φερω)(viaa--*zp*) what was commanded (το διαστελλομενον>διαστελλω) (vpppan-s): "Even if (καν)(ab+cs) an animal (το θηριον)(n-nn-s) would touch (θιγη<θιγγανω)(vsaa--*zs*) the mountain (το ορος)(n-gn-s), it *must* be stoned (λιθοβοληθησεται<λιθοβολεω) (vifp—*zs* / vmap--*zs*)."

<sup>59</sup> **12:21.** And so (thus, in this way)(ουτω/ουτως)(ab) 'terrifying'(fearful) (φοβερος-α-ον)(a--*nn*-s) was (ην>ειμι)(viaa--*zs*) the sight (appearance) (το φανταζομενον<φανταζομαι)(vpprpn-s) that Moses said (ειπεν>λεγω)(viaa--*zs*), "I am (ειμι)(vira--*xs*) terrified (εκφοβος-ον)(a--*nm*-s) and trembling (εντρομος-ον)(a--*nm*-s)."

<sup>60</sup> **12:22.** But (αλλα)(cs) you have come (drawn near) to (*and are now proselytes of*) (ο προσηλυτος) (προσεληλυθατε>προσερχομαι)(vira—*yp* perfect tense) Mount (το ορος)(n-dn-s) Zion, the city (η πολις)(n-df-s) of the living (ζωντος>ζωω)(vppagm-s) God (ο θεος)(n-gm-s), the

**12:23.** to the church of the firstborn, whose names *stand forever* written in heaven, and to a Judge, (who is) God of all people, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,<sup>61</sup>  
**12:24.** and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks a better (word) than (the blood) of Abel.<sup>62</sup>

The perfect tense. The Jewish Christians had drawn near and were standing (present) on the heavenly Mt Zion. *They had become proselytes*<sup>63</sup> of the New Testament gospel. Like with all other Christians, *their names have been written in the heavenly book of life and remain forever recorded in that book.* Like all other Christians that have already died, *they have been made perfect by the blood of Christ.*

The present tense. The blood of Christ continues through the ages to speak a better word (a much more gracious and hopeful message of forgiveness) than the blood spilled by revengeful murder and devilish terrorism (the blood of Abel).

The events of the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings are treated in the apostolic age as parables of Christian experience. The Christians have ‘come’ (the word is the basis for the word ‘proselyte’)<sup>64</sup> to the heavenly dwelling-place of God and it *denotes their conversion to Christianity.*

Mount Zion was the site of the Jebusite stronghold which David captured and made his royal residence in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. He made it the religious centre of his kingdom by installing the ark there<sup>65</sup>. Thus, Zion became the earthly dwelling-place of God, the city which the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there<sup>66</sup>. Later, when Solomon built his temple on the hill to the north of Zion and installed the ark there, the name Zion was extended to include this further area, and became in practice synonymous with Jerusalem. As the earthly Zion was the meeting point for the tribes of the old Israel, so the heavenly Zion is the meeting point for the new Israel, the 144,000<sup>67</sup>.

The heavenly Jerusalem. The moveable tabernacle in the wilderness was constructed according to the pattern of the sanctuary in heaven, so that the temple and the city of Jerusalem were material copies of the eternal archetypes.

- 1 Chronicles 28:19. The plan of the temple given by David to Solomon is made clear “as the writing from the hand of the Lord upon David”.
- Psalm 122:3 in Masoretic text: “Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together.” And in in a Jewish Targum. “Jerusalem is built like the city that is its fellow”.
- Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch<sup>68</sup> (A.D. 70). Baruch is told on the eve of the destruction of the first temple that this is not the true city of God; the true city was revealed by God to Adam before his fall, to Abraham when God made a covenant with him, and to Moses at the same time as he was shown the pattern in the mount”.
- Galatians 4:26. The Jerusalem that is above is free and is the mother of New Testament believers.
- Hebrews 12:22-24. The writer to the Hebrews views the heavenly Jerusalem as the spiritual realm to which believers on earth already have access. They have become fellow-citizens with Abraham of “the city with foundations of which God is the architect and builder” (11:10). It is a heavenly reality (12:22-24), which will become an earthly reality at the second coming (13:14). Its citizens on earth are still pilgrims treading the highways to Zion, even though their names are already written in the citizen register in heaven.
- Revelation 21:2. The holy city, the new Jerusalem, which has existed eternally in heaven, is seen coming down to earth, so that henceforth the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them as their covenant God.

The myriads of angels in festive gathering.

- Daniel 7:10. Daniel saw uncountable angels serving God in heaven.
- Revelation 5:11. John saw uncountable angels worshipping God in heaven.

The Church of the firstborn, whose names are recorded in heaven.

- Luke 10:20; Revelation 21:27. The names of believers still living on earth are recorded in heaven.

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heavenly Jerusalem (Ιερουσαλημ επουρανιω)(n-df-s) and to countless (η μυριας)(n-df-p) angels (ο αγγελος)(n-gm-p) in joyful assembly (festive

gathering, religious festival in OT or sports gathering in Greece)(η πανηγυρις)(n-df-s),

<sup>61</sup> **12:23.** to the church (η εκκλησια)(n-df-s) of the firstborn (ο πρωτοτοκος)(ap-gm-p), whose names *stand forever* written (απογεγραμμενων<απογραφω) (vprgm-p *perfect tense*) in (εν)(pd) heaven (ο ουρανος)(n-dm-p), and to a Judge (ο κριτης)(n-dm-s), (who is)

God (ο θεος)(n-dm-s) of all people (πας, παντων)(ap-gm-p), to the spirits (το πνευμα)(n-dn-p) of righteous men (δικαιος-α-ον)(ap-gm-p) made perfect (who have already died)(τετελειωμενων<τελειωω)(vprgm-p *perfect tense*),

<sup>62</sup> **12:24.** and to Jesus (Ιησου)(n-dm-s) the mediator (ο μεσιτης)(n-dm-s) of a new (νεος-α-ον)(a-gf-s) covenant (η διαθηκη)(n-gf-s), and to the blood (το αιματι) (n-dn-s) of sprinkling (ο ραντισμος)(n-gm-s) that speaks (λαλουντι>λαλεω)(vppadm-s) a better (κρειττον)(apman-s / abm *comparative*) (word) than (παρα)(pa) (the blood) of Abel (n-am-s).

<sup>63</sup> proselyte = a convert from one to another faith

<sup>64</sup> ο προσηλυτος>προσερχομαι ελευσομαι ηλθον εληλυθα

<sup>65</sup> 2 Samuel 6:2

<sup>66</sup> 1 Kings 14:21; Psalm 78:68f

<sup>67</sup> Revelation 14:1

<sup>68</sup> II Baruch 4:2ff

- The reference is to the Church of the Old Testament<sup>69</sup> and the Church of the New Testament<sup>70</sup>.
- The firstborn (plural) refers to all believers in Christ, who together with Christ as the Firstborn (singular, 1:6) par excellence will inherit the rights of firstborn sons. Their inheritance cannot be bartered away, like Esau did.

#### A Judge who is God of all.

- Genesis 18:25. “The Judge of all will do right”.
- Hebrews 4:13. “The eyes of God to whom we must give an account”.
- Hebrews 10:30. God says, “I will avenge. It is mine (God’s prerogative) to repay”.

#### The spirits of just men made perfect.

- Hebrews 11:40. They include believers of the Old Testament period, who could not be made perfect apart from the first coming of Christ (10:14). It is equally true that New Testament believers cannot be made perfect (complete) without the first coming of Christ.
- Hebrews 11:35. A Christian’s life is now hidden in Christ with God<sup>71</sup>. They look forward to a better resurrection. When Christians die, the souls/spirits of believers do not need to wait for the resurrection to be made perfect. They are perfected already in the sense that they are with God in the heavenly Jerusalem<sup>72</sup>.

#### Christ, the Mediator between God and men.

- Hebrews 7:25. People coming to God through him are saved.
- Hebrews 10:19. People enter the presence of God through the blood of Christ.
- Hebrews 11:28. The sprinkling of blood during the Passover has as its antitype the blood of Christ symbolically applied to the hearts of believers, sprinkled clean from an evil conscience (10:22). The removal of the evil conscience does away with the barrier between man and God. That is why the blood of Christ speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Abel’s blood cried out to God from the ground, protesting against his murder and appealing for vindication (11:4), but the blood of Christ brings a message of cleansing, forgiveness and peace with God for all who believe in him.

### **12:25-29. Christian faith involves paying heed to the voice of God<sup>73</sup>.**

a. Jewish and Gentile Christians are warned that the present universe will once more be shaken.

**12:25.** You *must* see to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. For if those people did not escape when they refused him who *again and again* warned them on the earth, how much less will we, the ones who *again and again* turn away from him (who warns us) from heaven?<sup>74</sup>

**12:26.** Of him (God) (whose) voice shook the earth at that time, but now he promised (*and the promise is still valid*), “Still once more I will *certainly* shake not only the earth, but also the heavens”<sup>75, 76</sup>

The present tense. Christians must continually see to it that they do not refuse God when he speaks to them.

The perfect tense. God promised to shake the universe once more and that promise stands unshakeable until it is fulfilled!

The Old Testament history about the wilderness wandering of Israel records how Israel time and again failed to pay heed to the commandments of God. They suffered for their disobedience. The New Testament Hebrew believers are likewise warned to give heed to God’s voice (3:7ff).

God spoke the statutes of the old covenant (law) from an earthly mountain (Mt. Sinai) and then the whole mountain quaked<sup>77</sup>. Likewise, God spoke the gospel from the heavenly Jerusalem (Mt. Zion) and promises, “Once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens (12:26).”

<sup>69</sup> Judges 20:2 “The assembly of the people of God”. Psalm 107:32 “The assembly of the people”.

<sup>70</sup> Matthew 16:18 “Christ’s Church”.

<sup>71</sup> Colossians 3:3

<sup>72</sup> Philippians 1:20-23; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9

<sup>73</sup> Do not refuse Him who speaks. He will shake everything. He is a consuming fire.

<sup>74</sup> **12:25.** You *must* see to it (βλεπετε>βλεπω)(vmpa—yp iMperative) that you do not refuse (dismiss, reject) (παραιτησιθε>παραιτεομαι) (vsad—yp d-mid dep) him who speaks (τον + λαλουντα>λαλεω)(vppaam-s). For (γαρ)(cs) if (ει)(cs= conjunction subordinating) those (more remote) people (εκεινος-η-ον)(apdnm-p demonstrative) did not escape (flee successfully) (εξεφυγον<εκφευγω)(viaa--zr) when they refused (παραιτησαμενοι>παραιτεομαι)(vpadnm-p d=mid dep) him who *again and again* warned (τον χρηματιζοντα>χρηματιζω)(vppaam-s) them on (επι)(pg) the earth (η γη)(n-gf-s), how much (πολυς-πολλη-πολυ)(ap-an-s / ab) less (μαλλον)(abm coMparative) will we (ημεις)(nprn-xr), the ones who (ου)(dnmp=determiner / aprnmxr relative) *again and again* turn away (αποστρεφομενοι>αποστρεφω)(aprrnmxr) from (απο)(pg) him (τον)(dams)(who warns us) from heaven (ο ουρανος)(n-gm-p)?

<sup>75</sup> Haggai 2:6-7, LXX

<sup>76</sup> **12:26.** Of him (God) (whose) (ου)(aprgm-s relative) voice (η φωνη)(n-nf-s) shook (εσαλευσεν>σαλευω)(viaa--zs) the earth (η γη)(n-af-s) at that time (τοτε)(ab), but (δε)(ch=conjunction hyper/superordinating) now (νυν)(ab=adverb) he promised (*and the promise is still valid*) (επηγγελαται<επαγγελομαι)(virm-zs perfect tense n=mid/pas dep) saying (λεγων>λεγω)(vppanm-s), “Still (ετι)(ab) once more (απαξ)(ab) I (εγω)(nprn-xs) will *certainly* shake (σεισω>σειω)(vifa--xs) not (ου)(ab) only (μονον)(ap-an-s / ab) the earth (η γη)(n-af-s), but (αλλα) (ch) also

(και)(ab) the heavens” (ο ουρανος)(n-am-s)

<sup>77</sup> Exodus 19:18

In the Old Testament *the earthquake* marked the coming of the Lord<sup>78</sup>. “In a little while I will *once more shake the heavens and the earth*, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all the nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory.<sup>79</sup>” In their context, these words declare God’s purpose in the day when he arises to vindicate his cause, to put down Gentile dominion (thee dominion of unbelieving nations), to exalt the throne of David and to make Jerusalem and its temple the centre of worship and allegiance for all the nations.

*The writer to the Hebrews interprets these words as the end of the present world order*, similar to the words in Revelation 20:11 and Revelation 21:1. The present heavens and earth will flee away from the presence of the Judge on his great throne and will be replaced by the new heaven and new earth on which righteousness dwells<sup>80</sup>.

#### b. Christians receive the beginning stage of the unshakeable kingdom.

**12:27.** The (word): ‘Still once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken such as created things so that what cannot be shaken may remain.<sup>81</sup>

*The present tense.* Christians received the unshakeable kingdom at the time they believed. But it is only the beginning, because they will receive the experience of the kingship of Christ more and more in their hearts as they submit more and more areas of their life to his reign. *God is all the time a consuming fire (12:29) that continues to completely consume the godless and wicked in his present judgements.*

Plato said that the present created world is eternal. But the Bible says that it is temporary! The heavens with its uncountable stars and the earth will pass away (perish), but Jesus Christ will remain; in time they will all wear out like old clothes; Jesus Christ will fold them up like a robe; they will be changed (not annihilated) like any old garment, but Jesus Christ will remain the same for ever (1:10-12). The present created world, including created human beings must be changed and will be changed, because “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable”<sup>82</sup>. In Hebrews 1:10-12, the writer emphasises the transiency (quickly passing away) of the present world in order to set in contrast the eternity of the Son of God. In Hebrews 12:26-27 he emphasises the transiency of the present world in order to set in contrast the eternity of the new world order into which the Son of God has brought his people.

At the first coming of Christ, he made atonement for sins, bound the devil and threw this accuser out of his presence. At his first coming Christ began to rule from his heavenly throne at the right hand of God. The unshakeable kingdom has come on this earth at the first coming of Christ<sup>83</sup>. The people of God (their souls or spirits) receive eternal life at the moment they believe in Jesus Christ<sup>84</sup>. That is why the present tense is used: “We are *receiving* a kingdom that cannot be shaken”. Christians enter the unshakeable kingdom of God when they are born again<sup>85</sup>. From that time onwards they have the unshakeable kingdom of God in them<sup>86</sup>. And when Christians die, their souls are translated alive into heaven, where they will sit with Christ on his throne and reign together with Christ<sup>87</sup>.

#### c. Christians will certainly receive the final phase of the unshakeable kingdom.

**12:28a.** Therefore, *since* we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken,<sup>88</sup>

At the second coming of Christ, the whole universe will be shaken ‘once more’. Then only what cannot be shaken will remain (survive)<sup>89</sup>. Then Christ and Christians will inherit the unshakeable kingdom of God in its final phase<sup>90</sup>. The kingdom of God in its final phase is the same as the heavenly Zion or Heavenly Jerusalem that has descended onto the new earth to become the New Jerusalem on the new earth<sup>91</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Isaiah 2:19,21; cf. Revelation 6:12-17

<sup>79</sup> Haggai 2:6-7

<sup>80</sup> Matthew 24:35; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 6:12-14; Revelation 16:18-20; Revelation 20:11; Revelation 21:1

<sup>81</sup> **12:27.** The (το)(dnns=determiner/definite article) (word)(ρημα): Still (ετι)(ab) once more (απαξ)(ab) indicate (make clear) (δηλοι<δηλω) (vipa--zs) the removing (η μεταθεις)(n-af-s) of what can be shaken (σαλευομενων>σαλευω)(vpppgn-p) such as (ως)(cs) created things (πεποιημενων>ποιεω)(vprpgn-p *perfect tense*) so that (ινα)(cs) what (τα)(dnnp /nprnzp) (μη)(ab) cannot be shaken (σαλευομενα>σαλευω)(vpppnn-p=verb participle present passive nominative neuter plural) may remain (μεινη<μενω)(vsaa--zs).

<sup>82</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:50

<sup>83</sup> Matthew 10:28-20; Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 2:13-15; Revelation 12:10

<sup>84</sup> John 3:16; John 5:24; John 10:28

<sup>85</sup> John 3:3-8; Colossians 1:13

<sup>86</sup> Luke 17:20-21

<sup>87</sup> Revelation 3:21; 20:1-4

<sup>88</sup> **12:28a.** Therefore (διο)(cs), *since* we are receiving (παραλαμβανοντες>παραλαμβανω)(vppanmxp) a kingdom (η βασιλεια)(n-af-s) that cannot be shaken (ασαλευτος-ον)(a--af-s),

<sup>89</sup> cf. Revelation 21:27

<sup>90</sup> Matthew 25:34; Revelation 11:15,18

<sup>91</sup> Revelation 21:1-2

This unshakable kingdom is the Sabbath-rest in its final form, when not only the souls or spirits of departed believers find rest with God in heaven<sup>92</sup>, but also their bodies will be resurrected from the dust and find rest on the new earth<sup>93</sup>. The resurrected Christians will forever reign together with Christ over the new earth<sup>94</sup>.

d. Christians are therefore people that are thankful, deeply respectful and hopeful.

12:28b let us be grateful, through which we worship God in an acceptable manner with reverence and awe,<sup>95</sup>  
**12:29.** for also our God (is) a *completely* consuming fire.<sup>96</sup>

The transitory nature of this present world and its final renewal at the second coming of Christ is a fact and a matter of faith and hope for believers<sup>97</sup>.

In the face of the transitory nature of our lives the writer of Hebrews exhorts us to be thankful for all our privileges and blessings at the present time and to worship God acceptably with reverence and awe<sup>98</sup>.

*God is a consuming fire. This is a symbol of his perfect holiness and righteousness that will consume all evil either on the cross or in judgement.* This fact causes sinners to be terrified and the godless to tremble. Isaiah asks, “Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?” And he answers, “He who walks righteously and speaks what is right; who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes; who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil”<sup>99</sup>. In the white heat of his perfect purity he still consumes everything that is unworthy of himself<sup>100</sup>.

Reverence and awe before God’s holiness and righteousness are not incompatible with thankful trust and love in response to his mercy.

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<sup>92</sup> Revelation 14:13; cf. Philippians 1:21-23

<sup>93</sup> Revelation 21:4; cf. Philippians 3:20-21

<sup>94</sup> Revelation 22:5

<sup>95</sup> **12:28b** let us be (εχωμεν>εχω)(vspa—xp) grateful (η χαρις)(n-af-s), through (δια)(pg) which (ης)(aprgf-s = adjective pronominal *relative* genitive feminine singular) (through this gratefulness) we worship (λατρευομεν>λατρευω)(vspa--xp) God (n-dm-s) in an acceptable manner (ευαρεστως)(ab) with (μετα)(pg) reverence (η ευλαβεια)(n-gf-s) and (και) awe (godly fear) (το δεος)(n-gn-s),

<sup>96</sup> **12:29.** for (γαρ)(cs) also (και)(ab) our (ημων)(npg-xp) God (ο θεος)(n-nm-s) (is) a consuming completely (καταναλισκων>καταναλισκω) (vppann-s) fire (το πυρ)(n-nn-s)”.

<sup>97</sup> Romans 8:17-25

<sup>98</sup> cf. John 4:24-25

<sup>99</sup> Isaiah 33:14-15

<sup>100</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:13-15