

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Hebrews (Chapter 12)

Hebrews 12 (NKJV)

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. 20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.” 21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”) 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, 26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” 27 Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore, 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. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.”

A Great Cloud of Witnesses

Chapter breaks in the Bible often cause a mental disconnect—causing the casual bible reader or even a conscious bible student to miss the connections. In this case the chapter break has caused many concerns.

Many believers have falsely assumed that “*since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses*” (vs. 1a) that there are believers who have passed from this temporal and natural life and are looking on and observing us from the dimension of the heavenlies. This is not at all what the author to the Hebrews is referencing. He is simply suggesting that those persons named in chapter 11 are witnesses to the faith and that they surround us with the testimonies of their persevering faith—thus serving as an encouragement. Believers are encouraged (or should be) by the faith and testimony of other believers. For this reason, the author mentions these witnesses. Moreover, with this add what the Hebrews (and all of us) were told earlier in chapter 10, “*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*” (Hebrews 10:24–25 NKJV). Together with the “great cloud” of the earlier faithful, and the present faith of those with whom we gather, great encouragement is found—and needed.

We all need encouragement and will benefit greatly by seeing how God has worked in the lives of other believers. Although those men and women named in chapter 11 may be referred to as “Heroes of the Faith,” we can see that these “heroes” are simply persons God has used to be a blessing to other believers—and to this world—as previously discussed (see Hebrews 11:38a).

This fact will be of great value to the Hebrews who were struggling with discouragement, temptation, persecution, and trial. We have already addressed the fact that some in the writer’s view were looking back at the Old Covenant system and were tempted to return to the “Old” ways in order to avoid some of the rejection and persecution they were enduring. This could not occur! Therefore, the author wrote, “*let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us*” (vs. 1b). To look back with the intention of returning was a weighty and hindering snare. Moreover, to return was indeed a sin—as stated in Hebrews 6:4–6. The Hebrews were called to move forward in *the faith*. For a believer to return was impossible. (See also Hebrews 10:26–31 where the “sin” referenced is a turning away from Jesus as Messiah, the now blessings of the inaugurated New Covenant, and attempting to find hope, consolation, or salvation in the then and now obsolete “Old.”)

(As a short note: It is worth brief mention that the author of Hebrews was a Hebrew himself and enduring the same season of trials with and of those in his audience. For this reason, we see that he uses the terms “*we*,” “*us*,” and “*our*.” This should come as no surprise! Those who serve in the ministry are subject to the same trials and afflictions faced by those they serve—sometimes even more so. Moreover, those who serve need the same encouragements!)

Men and Women—Just Like You and Me!

The men and women being addressed in this letter were just like those of Hebrews 11. They would be empowered by the Lord—with enduring faith—even as those in the so-called “Hall of Faith.” The “*cloud of witnesses*” were no more capable of heroic faith than the Hebrews then in the first

century—nor those (or we) today. Perseverance would come of the Lord—and would be granted to those who look to Him, keep their eyes on Him, and trust Him for all He provides.

It is for this reason the author segues to Jesus Himself, suggesting that they should be *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (vs. 2). Unlike looking to the great cloud of witnesses, *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith”* was the high water mark—the greatest example. He was the faith’s *“author and finisher.”* Moreover, He was and is the *“author and finisher”* of *“our”* faith. The one who began the work in us will be of a certainty the one to finish it. As the Hebrews look to Jesus through this lens, they would receive the greatest encouragement. Likewise, you and me!

The “heroes of the faith” of chapter 11 looked ahead by faith. The Hebrews in the first century (and beyond) look back. The endurance testified to by those of the Old Covenant was of great encouragement, but the *“author and finisher”* of the faith—Jesus Himself—became the greatest example of suffering, endurance, faithfulness, and victory. He *“endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (vs. 2)—victory indeed! Moreover, He did it by divine power, in harmony with the purposes of the foreordained plan of God, planned from before the foundation of the world, by love, in mercy and grace. He did it to secure the believers—and would fail in no way! Likewise, the Hebrews who were to “look unto Jesus” could not and would not fail when fixing their eyes, their sights, their vision, their hope, their faith on Him.

Jesus endured the cross, and we may indeed endure a certain cross of our own—yet, not at all comparable to the one He endured. Jesus, as victor, is now seated *“at the right hand of the throne of God”*—so too the Hebrews (and you—and me) who overcome by faith in Jesus. May we recall that Jesus, *“who being the brightness of His [God’s] glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (Hebrews 1:3 NKJV) and that, *“God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2:4–7 NKJV).

Jesus said, *“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne”* (Revelation 3:21 NKJV).

Enduring Hostility

In contrast to the then present sufferings the Hebrews were enduring, these men and women were exhorted to *“consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls”* (vs. 3). These believers had been and were facing hostility from other Jews who were persecuting them—not to mention the trials and difficulties they endured from the Romans. By contrast, these Hebrews were not to forget what Jesus had done for them and should gladly join in *“the fellowship of His suffering”* (see Philippians 3:10) and thus take courage. To them it was said, *“You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin”* (vs. 4). Of note is the fact that by this time in history others had given their lives for the faith. But not yet these in his audience! Some had endured rejection, beatings, imprisonment, other forms of abuse, and seen their brothers and sisters lose their lives, but for those who would be reading these words—not yet. They

would need to prepare spiritually and mentally for what was indeed ahead—and much was! In fact, since then and continuing, the Church has endured persecution.

(Now in 2021: According to several engaged organizations, it is reported that in certain parts of the world persecution against the Church is greater than in any other time in history. In particular, they reference China, Egypt, Eritrea, India, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Turkey. Christians in the USA and Canada are of a certainty enduring various forms of persecution today—more is expected.)

The Training Gained Through Trial—AKA Discipline

As much as it may seem an odd application, the author seems to connect the trials and temptations the Hebrews were enduring as disciplinary training—leading to greater hope and a vision for the better things awaiting the faithful. *“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’”* (vss. 5–6).

This citation is taken from the Proverbs where we read, *“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights. Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her”* (Proverbs 3:11–18 NKJV). With this we can see the better things the author intended as encouragement via the passage.

He continues to elaborate saying, *“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”* (vss. 7–11).

Herein we can glean several applications:

- 1) Sons are chastened and therefore the Hebrews can be encouraged by knowing they belong to the Lord: for as the author said, *“God deals with you as with sons.”*
- 2) The citation suggests that earthly fathers chastened their sons for a limited period of time, *“they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them.”* Likewise, believers who endure hardness must be aware of the time/eternity perspective. Paul said, *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:18 NKJV). So too the Hebrews can take comfort in the fact that the sufferings they were enduring or would endure are temporary.

- 3) The author points out the fact that the difficulties these and others would endure would be for their benefit. As stated, God allows these things *“for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.”* Indeed! Difficulties can be used to call us away from the temporal creature comforts, and the sinful practices often engaged in by those at ease. During trials, believers tend to cry out to God more than when things are pleasant and easy. The thought that comes to mind right away is, *“Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy”* (Ezekiel 16:49 NKJV). A scathing rebuke indeed!
- 4) It is also of note that the trials (though used of God) are unpleasant when being endured. For, *“no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful.”* This we all understand!
- 5) Finally, the author points out that *“afterward it [the difficulties, the persecutions, the discipline] yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”* In other words, God uses all of this for His purposes and for our good.

Job gave some reflection to the difficulties he faced and mentioned his hope when saying, *“when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”* His monolog is worth reading: *“Then Job answered and said: ‘Even today my complaint is bitter; my hand is listless because of my groaning. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me. Would He contend with me in His great power? No! But He would take note of me. There the upright could reason with Him, and I would be delivered forever from my Judge. Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him. But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. But He is unique, and who can make Him change? And whatever His soul desires, that He does. For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him. Therefore I am terrified at His presence; when I consider this, I am afraid of Him. For God made my heart weak, and the Almighty terrifies me; because I was not cut off from the presence of darkness, and He did not hide deep darkness from my face”* (Job 23:1–17 NKJV).

Also of mention is the fact that one of Job’s “friends” mentioned that the disciplines of the Lord are with purpose. Eliphaz said, *“Yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. But as for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause—Who does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number. He gives rain on the earth, and sends waters on the fields. He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot carry out their plans. He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the cunning comes quickly upon them. They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope at noontime as in the night. But He saves the needy from the sword, from the mouth of the mighty, and from their hand. So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts her mouth. Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole. He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you. In famine He shall redeem you from death, and in war from the power of the sword. You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, and you shall not be afraid of destruction when it comes.*

You shall laugh at destruction and famine, and you shall not be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For you shall have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you. You shall know that your tent is in peace; you shall visit your dwelling and find nothing amiss. You shall also know that your descendants shall be many, and your offspring like the grass of the earth. You shall come to the grave at a full age, as a sheaf of grain ripens in its season. Behold, this we have searched out; it is true. Hear it, and know for yourself” (Job 5:7–27 NKJV).

We know that the Lord was not bringing discipline upon Job for any wrongdoing or shortcoming within him. If fact, it was the Lord who pointed out that he was indeed *“a blameless and upright man”* (Job 1:1, 8).

This supports the fact that the Hebrews who were being persecuted were suffering for no fault of their own per se’, but were being rejected, persecuted, tortured, imprisoned, and even put to death, in and for the name of the Lord. For this reason, they too might be named among those for whom it was said, *“the world was not worthy.”* The same is true for the many Jews and Gentiles who in our history, and even now, willingly laid or will lay down their lives for the faith. Indeed, *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:10 NKJV).

Take Action and Be Strengthened!

With the needed reminder having been given, the author now points to the action items the Hebrews needed to undertake: *“Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed”* (vss. 12–13).

The struggling Hebrews needed to regain their vision and focus, they needed to stop looking back and look ahead to what the Lord had set before them. The *“hands which hang down”* and the *“feeble knees”* indicated weakness and fatigue. They needed strength from the Lord—and He was ready to give it. Setting *“straight paths”* for their feet indicated a need to regain their focus, turn from the temptation or propensity to wander, and fix their eyes on Jesus. Their act of faith and move to action would benefit those who took the action—and would also serve to inspire and invigorate others who might be negatively affected by the weakened testimony of those so struggling. The ones referred to as *“lame”* are those without the present ability to walk; *“dislocated”* refers to being unattached and therefore without proper function.

It seems best to suggest that the *“lame,”* who could be threatened with dislocation, did not refer to those who had already come to faith in Jesus—for that might indicate a forfeiture of salvation—a salvation that is secure. Therefore, I would suggest that the *“lame”* refers to Hebrews who had yet to come to faith in Jesus—and thus had no present *“walk”* in the Lord. These Hebrews who were once *“located”* as members of the household of *the faith* during the Old Covenant Dispensation would need to transition the dispensational change and thus remain in *the faith*—by faith in the Lord Jesus—their Messiah. The Hebrews who were unwilling to move from the Old Covenant (which is obsolete and vanishing way—see Hebrews 8:13) and into the New would be *“dislocated”* by rejection of Jesus as Messiah. However, the active faith and walk of the believing Hebrews would encourage and inspire the *“lame”* to join with those who were indeed *“walking”* in the truth. Therefore, and thus, the added exhortation that the believing Hebrews *“pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no*

one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled” (vss. 14–15).

The believing Hebrews must *“pursue peace with all men.”* The same is true for you and me! These Hebrews who were being ridiculed and persecuted by the unbelieving (think of Saul/Paul prior to his conversion) might be tempted to write off their *“enemies,”* push them away, or even develop an unholy attitude toward them. Therefore, they must *“pursue peace”*—and *“holiness”* with and toward these men and/or women. The holiness in view here would relate to a separation from the worldly dispositions of selfishness, self-preservation, and/or rejection of their *“countrymen according to the flesh,”* and in addition, the Gentiles. This is evident as the result of the author’s use of *“all men,”* as stated. Paul said he would have suffered (if it were possible) being accursed from Christ if it would have meant the salvation of his *“countrymen”* (see Romans 9:1–5). Moreover, as the apostle to the Gentiles (see Romans 11:13), Paul was a leading example of this *“holiness”* and *“pursuit of peace.”* The expression *“without which no one will see the Lord”* (vs. 14b) broadens the definition of holiness and should be understood as a general principle of God’s *“separating”* work when sanctifying the believer—not the believer’s behavioral performance. Were this not the case—indeed, *no one would* see the Lord! No believer will ever see the Lord, be accepted in the Lord, make heaven their home, etc. by personal performance or so-called sanctifying behavior.

A *“root of bitterness”* would certainly spring up (history documents this thoroughly), but it was not to be the result of the believing Hebrews’ disposition toward the unbelieving. The believers were called to *“love their enemies,”* much more their *“countrymen.”* Therefore, I suggest that the call for the believing Hebrews to look *“carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God”* or *“lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many [might] become defiled”* (vs. 15) should be thought to focus both inwardly—among those saved—and with a call toward those without: those who had not embraced Jesus as Messiah. Toward the *“lame,”* a focus would include the threat of dislocation from the family of *the faith*, and therefore, toward the people of *the faith*, that all of their dealings of others might demonstrate the fullness of God’s grace. May we all likewise take heed.

Addiction to the Past and Temporal

The author’s illustrative use of Esau shows the fact that Esau was more concerned with the temporal creature comforts a bowl of stew would provide than for the eternal future blessings of the birthright passed down from his father, Isaac. He does not want any of the Hebrews to follow Esau’s example and thus warns against any *“profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears”* (vss. 16–17).

Of interest is the question of the said *“repentance,”* to whom that repentance referred (Isaac or Esau), and why the author brings it out.

First of all, the repentance refers to a change of mind (heart).

Secondly, we need to understand that the *“repentance”* refers to Isaac. It is clear that Esau, who later in time was sorrowful and remorseful, was nonetheless fully aware of his choices. He could not be provided any excuses, as though deceived, when trading his birthright for the bowl of stew. However, later in time, when the birthright was actually given, it was Isaac who would not and did not change course and thus recant his blessing over Jacob and give it to Esau. Therefore, it seems best to suggest that although Esau sought to have Isaac change his mind, *“though he sought it diligently with*

tears,” is was Isaac who was unrepentant—would not change his mind, and thus the action. One might argue that the birthright blessing was given to Jacob through the cooperative deceptive acts of Jacob and his mother Rebecca, but the blessing had been given, and thus there was no turning back (see Genesis 27:30–40).

Finally, it seems best to suggest that the author brings this up in order to illustrate the fact that the Hebrews were the ones for whom, and to whom, the New Covenant belonged (just as was true of the Old) and that there would be no room for excuses should they refuse the “birthright” given them: all the blessings of the New Covenant. If the Hebrew people were to trade these blessings for the Old “temporal” Covenant—that was then and now obsolete—the ramifications would be *eternally* deadly. Moreover, on the day of final judgment, even if one were to seek for a “repentance” of the “guilty verdict” and thus seek to regain the forfeited blessings, the decision (by that point) would have been made, and the consequences sure and unchanging.

Moreover, it seems that the author had “spiritual fornication” in mind when saying “*lest there be any fornicator*” (vs. 16a), when he wrote the passage. It may be that he was in like or similar mind to what Paul had in his focus when he wrote to the Romans: “*...Do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God*” (Romans 7:1–4 NKJV).

In this case the believing Jews in Rome were said to be dead to the Law (as the Law was then indeed dead), so that they could without guilt of “spiritual adultery” per se’ be married to Jesus through the New Covenant. Therefore, in a sort of illustrative word play, the author to the Hebrews may have been suggesting that those who refused to move through the dispensational change and trust Jesus for salvation (through the New Covenant) might be considered “fornicators” in spirit.

The application would be the same as that through the illustration provided with Esau—the blessings of the birthright forfeited.

The Great Contrast

There can be no doubt that the author has made his point again and again: The Hebrews were called to move from the Old Covenant to the New. The whole of this book drives this home repeatedly using various illustrations and objective arguments.

In concluding the point, the author provided a final illustration using factual history and soon-to-be understood realities in the heavenly dimension. “*For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: ‘And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.’ And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.’) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits*

of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel” (vss. 18–24).

The contrast is evident. You have not come to the mountain—where the Old Covenant Law was given (see Exodus 19–20:21), and where the people experienced fear, trembling, dread, and threat (vss. 18-21). No! They were being invited to and had come to Mount Zion (used in this case as a nomenclature for the heavenly city of God—the New Jerusalem), the dwelling place of God, His angels, and the home of the redeemed—who apart from the Law (see Romans 3:21–28), by faith alone, in Jesus the Messiah alone, through the grace of God alone, are *“made perfect”* (vs. 23b). *“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14 NKJV). The redeemed are *“the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven”* (vs. 23) through the precious shed blood of Jesus—the Mediator of the New Covenant (vss. 22–24) who has saved them—and all who believe.

The Hebrews were not being called to go back into the bondages of the Old Covenant, the Laws and ordinances written in stone, the ceremonial sacrificial system that could never take away sins and weighed heavily upon the people, or the formerly sanctioned priesthood—led by and serviced by faulty men. They were being called to go forward and on into the perfection provided them through the provisions of the Great High Priest—Jesus—who once and for all offered up His own life as a sacrifice for sin(s), the sins of the whole world, and through whom the laws of the New Covenant would be and are written into the hearts of the believers.

The formerly promised blessings of the New Covenant were now unfolding (with so much more to come—including the literal physical reign of Jesus as King, in the finally and fully realized and possessed Promised Land of Israel), to which every Hebrew was invited. They (and now all the Gentiles too) were (and are) called to come and “dine” with Jesus. He draws them (and us) by His Spirit, saying, “Take,” “eat,” “drink,” “this cup is the New Covenant in my blood”: words spoken at a symbolic meal—remembering Israel’s deliverance from Egypt on the first Passover—but then fulfilled by *“the Lamb of God”* Himself (see John 1:29) to represent total deliverance from the sin and death every man and woman without Him will suffer. Jesus is our Passover, says Paul (see 1 Corinthians 5:7b); and indeed, He was crucified that Passover fulfilling the type as expected/predicted.

“Why go back?!” says the author. “Why go back?” says the Spirit. “Come and dine!”

“Why go back?!” the author is essentially asking. “Why go back?” the Spirit is essentially speaking to their hearts. *“Come and dine!”*

A Few Beautiful Details

Within the final illustrative plea, the author tells the Hebrews that *“the heavenly Jerusalem”* (vs. 22) is the dwelling place of *“the general assembly and church of the firstborn”* (vs. 23). The *“general assembly”* may be argued to reference the redeemed from all dispensations excluding the Church Age. Likewise, the *“church of the firstborn”* may be argued to reference the Church Age saints. However, I must also mention *“that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He [will] gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him”* (Ephesians 1:10 NKJV). Therefore, the New Jerusalem is of certainty the dwelling place of all the redeemed—from every dispensation.

Secondly, the expression “*firstborn*” does not simply mean first born as in the consecutive order, but declares the preeminent, and rightful place associated with the one to whom the reference belongs.

One cannot help but make the connection to the illustration concerning Jacob and Esau. Although Esau was the first born, he forfeited his birthright and thus Jacob became the heir to the covenant typically belonging to the firstborn. Moreover, as Jesus is the “*firstborn*,” He is “*appointed heir of all things*” (Hebrews 1:2), and therefore, all who believe become “*heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ*” (Hebrews 8:16–17a). His inheritance becomes the inheritance of all the people of *the faith*. The Hebrews—and all of us—should take heed and insure that we are joint heirs with Jesus—by faith alone, in Jesus the Messiah alone.

Thirdly, “*registered in heaven*,” speaks to the eternity of God and His great foreknowledge. Believers are foreknown to God (see Romans 8:29–32) and are registered in heaven.

Fourthly, the author mentions that God is “*the Judge of all*” (vs. 23). This is a reminder that “*every knee shall bow*” (see Isaiah 45:23 and Romans 14:11–12), and that no one will escape answering to the Lord. This is true for the Hebrews and for all others. Moreover, and of great encouragement is the fact that those who bow their knees now are the ones referred to as “*the spirits of just men made perfect*” (vs. 23), by faith in Jesus.

Fifthly, as “*Mediator of the New Covenant*,” Jesus, of necessity, has to be risen from the dead. No dead man can mediate The New Covenant, or any covenant for that matter. (See Romans 8:34 and 1 Corinthians 15:1–28)

Finally, the author mentioned, “*the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel*” (vs. 24). This expression is loaded with information.

Better Than the Blood of Any Animal

We cannot overlook the primary and obvious fact that Jesus’ blood “*speaks better things than that of Abel[’s]*” sacrifice. In other words, Jesus’ blood was and is superior to any blood “sprinkled” via the sacrifice of any animal. This fact is clearly and correctly communicated throughout the entire epistle. Jesus’ blood cannot be compared to the blood of a lamb, bull, or goat, etc. However, I see (in addition) a bit more herein, and in particular, because the sentence reads, “*the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel*”—not than that of Abel’s; more may be included.

a. Abel’s Sacrifice Speaks

A careful examination of Abel takes us back to Genesis 4 and Hebrews 11. In Hebrews 11 we read that “*by faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks*” (Hebrews 11:4 NKJV).

Here we see that Able was called “*righteous*” and that Abel’s sacrifice (“*it*”) was “*more excellent*” than that of Cain’s.

By looking closely at the Genesis account we can see that Abel offered to God an acceptable sacrifice—by faith—through obedience. However, Cain offered an unacceptable sacrifice. Moreover,

even when Cain was offered the opportunity to make right his wrong, he refused. Rather than repent, and in obedience to the Lord—by faith—offer the Lord the proper sacrifice, he rejected the gracious offer of God, became angry, and killed his brother Abel (see Genesis 4:1–16). (Also see the section “Abel” and “Abel—Still Speaks” in the chapter 11 lesson.) Therefore, a certain focus must relate to Abel and not just to the sacrifice itself. Thus, *“through it he being dead still speaks.”* Please allow me to emphasize this in the event it slips by. “Through it he...speaks.” That is, through the sacrifice he offered, Abel still speaks!

b. Abel’s Faith Speaks

In addition, it is of note to mention that the preceding verse tells us *“the spirits of just men [were] made perfect”* (vs. 23b). Therefore, inasmuch as Abel was called *“righteous”* in Hebrews 11:4, and is of a certainty one of the many *“just men made perfect,”* we know that his “righteousness” and “perfection” was imputed to him “by faith” and not of works—nor of any human merit or excellency. Therefore, it is clear that it is Abel’s faith that also *“still speaks.”*

c. Not Abel’s Blood

It could be suggested that Abel was an innocent victim of his brother’s wrath and that his so-called “innocent” or *“righteous”* blood *“crie[d] out to [God] from the ground”* (see Genesis 4:10). However, Abel’s blood was not to be compared to the blood of Jesus—who “sprinkled” His absolutely innocent and righteous blood for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, it is not Abel’s blood that *“still speaks.”*

My point is that the blood of no other man than that of our Savior Jesus, the Messiah, could be *“sprinkled”* to provide efficacious or salvific satisfaction to God for the sins of another man or woman, the sins of the Hebrews, and moreover, for the sins of the whole world. Jesus’ blood: *“the blood of sprinkling”* (vs. 24a) *“speaks better things than that of Abel.”*

d. The Blood of Vindication—Redemption

Abel’s murder (the shedding of his blood), at the hands of his brother Cain, did indeed warrant vindication. The blood of Abel cried out from the ground for vindication (Genesis 4:10). In fact, so does the blood of every martyr, and likewise the blood of every sacrificial pigeon, dove, goat, lamb, ewe, ram, bull, and heifer offered during every pre-cross dispensation—even those prior to the giving of the Law. All death was the result of sin, and all sin needed to be dealt with. Jesus the redeemer brought about the only redemption possible and therefore vindicated, in His death, the shed blood of Abel, et al.

e. On Sprinkling

The *“sprinkling”* refers to what was done with the sacrificial animal’s blood in the Old Covenant. The blood of *“sprinkling”* referred to in Hebrews 11:24 is the blood of Jesus *“that speaks better things than that of Abel.”* This was part of the author’s address beginning back in chapter 9 when he wrote, *“Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.’ Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood,*

and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:18–26 NKJV). Moreover, Peter when writing to the Hebrews of the diaspora referred to them as the *“elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied”* (1 Peter 1:2 NKJV). Therefore, we can see that all believing Jews can claim the same in application—and likewise, all believing Gentiles. For in Jesus the Messiah there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond or free, male or female (see Galatians 3:26–28).

The sprinkling of sacrificial blood provided a symbolic cleansing (as a type) in the Old Covenant Ceremonial system. Those things sprinkled were considered sanctified, holy, clean. Therefore, in the antitype (Jesus—by His blood), those things sprinkled are indeed sanctified, made holy and clean.

f. Blood Like That of No Other

The blood of Jesus was blood like that of no other. His blood, referred to as precious, was indeed the blood of the sinless lamb of God. It was nothing like the blood of any other man.

Jesus was born of a virgin and was not carrying in His body the blood of an earthly father. He was (as fully man and fully God) carrying the blood of the incarnational person of God in the flesh—His flesh. This made him unique to any other man.

The Holy Spirit overshadowed and impregnated Mary, not by intercourse, but nonetheless miraculously, bringing into existence a physical sperm, and thus causing a literal physical pregnancy—with the “Son of God” (see Luke 1:26–56).

Jesus Himself is the Son of God. In Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily (see Colossians 2:9). He was and is therefore, as the physical Son of God, genetically and Spiritually unlike any other man. He is fully God in the flesh by the miraculous work of God. His blood was the blood of the incarnate God!

g. Better than Abel Himself

One final thought on this subject. It should be noted that the words *“that of”* at the end of verse 24 have been added by the translators. It might otherwise read, *“to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than ~~that of~~ Abel”* (vs. 24). Moreover, *“Abel”* is defined specifically with a definite article and would (read unnaturally in English) *“than the Abel.”* This occurs often in Greek and is clumsy in English. Therefore these definite articles are often omitted—understandably. (I might note that at times they should be included.)

This article may be thought to specify the person Abel specifically and those things that may be connected to and with him. I suggest it does! This may seem insignificant to some but it seems that this fact leads to the conclusion that we are talking here about Jesus being greater/better than Abel himself, Abel’s testimony, Abel’s blood, and the blood of the sacrifice(s) he offered. Yes, his blood spoke from the ground—crying into the ears of God for vindication. Yes, he had (and has) a great testimony—being

called righteous. And, yes, his obediently offered sacrifice was acceptable to God—through and by faith. But, Jesus is greater!

Jesus' righteousness is self-manifest and immutable! His blood is precious beyond description! Jesus' blood is unlike that of any other—greater than that of any sacrificial animal, martyr, or any other man. Jesus is indeed the "*Mediator of the New Covenant*," and has by His blood "sprinkled" those things in the heavenlies—and every person who trusts Him for salvation. We have been cleansed, are clean, and will be preserved clean—through the precious blood of Jesus.

Jesus' blood is better! Only in and through the blood of Jesus will anyone (Jew or Gentile) be redeemed, vindicated, saved!

Sin brought about death, and the death of Jesus was the only redemptive sacrifice that could "*take away*" sins and provide redemption. Jesus died in our place, for our sin(s). He was the only one who could! The "*sprinkling*" of Jesus' blood was and is the only cure.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 NKJV).

Do Not Refuse Him

The Hebrews have been exhorted, challenged, provided illustrations, and warned about their need to move forward and believe the previously promised word of the Lord—or suffer the consequences. We now come to the final warning given in the book. "*See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.'*" (vss. 25–26).

Moses or Jesus?

The comment regarding "*Him who spoke on earth*" (vs. 25) requires a little thought. Some may correctly suggest that the one "*who spoke on earth*" was Moses. However, the Holy Spirit (by way of this text) has clearly indicated that it was the Lord who "*spoke*" through Moses—by divine inspiration. This is discovered within the statements, "*whose voice then shook the earth...*" and "*yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.*" Moses' voice did not shake the earth and in no way will it shake heaven! Therefore, the statement points out that it was God Himself who "*spoke.*"

God did speak to Moses—and through Moses. He was given the Law and instructions concerning both the Old and New Covenants (see Deuteronomy 30:1–6 for samplings about the New Covenant). Moses was clearly used of God! Therefore, the Jews were correct to see the voice of Moses as the voice of God, even while knowing that he himself was only a man—a frail and faulty man.

You and Me?

We should recognize that the Lord speaks to us through the written word. However, we should also note that God uses us and will speak through us as the Holy Spirit leads. This may come by way of a faithful evangelistic appeal, a pastoral encouragement/exhortation, or some other Spirit-led

utterance. However, this should not suggest that the words spoken (or written) are on par with the Scriptures. Those who fail to recognize this will themselves be misled and may also lead others astray. The Book of Mormon is one such example.

Anyone who speaks for the Lord must be certain that they are properly representing the Lord and are careful when communicating in His name. Too many pastors/teachers misrepresent the truth and therefore misrepresent the Lord. We should all be reverent when handling the word of God—be it by teaching the Scriptures or when sharing what we believe God has given us to write or say.

Heed the Call

Returning to the text we understand that the author is warning the Hebrews that they must recognize that the same Lord who spoke to Moses, and through Moses, must not be refused. He did indeed speak to them in the past, has spoken to them during His first incarnational earthly ministry (see Hebrews 1:1–2), and is speaking to them through the author of this letter.

Invitation to Escape the Wrath to Come

When we read, *“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,”* there is a sense of invitation coupled together with a stern warning—of judgment.

Invitation

Jesus’ first incarnational earthly ministry was gracious and inviting. During those years He proclaimed the Gospel of the coming Kingdom and provided miracles to demonstrate His Kingdom authority. The Kingdom Age (Millennium) will be significantly marked by the binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1–6), the restraining of the curse, and bountiful blessings upon the restored Israel (Isaiah 11,12,65, Ezekiel 36, Amos 9:13–15, Micah 4:3, etc.)—along with the rest of the living Gentile mortals who will be granted access into that dispensation (see Matthew 25:31–46).

With certainty there were rebukes and confrontations toward the unruly and religiously indifferent. However, Jesus’ first incarnational earthly ministry provided the ministry of reconciliation and hope. Jesus came to suffer in our place, for our sins.

Beware

This present warning, *“See that you do not refuse Him,”* reflects another aspect of Jesus’ ministry—a firm exhortation. The King is coming again and those who have rejected Him will be sternly handled. Those from the Church Age who are left behind at the time of the Rapture will suffer the greatest difficulties know to mortal men (see Jeremiah 30:7, Daniel 12:1, Joel 2:1–11, Matthew 24:21, etc.), and then, prior to the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, Jesus will return to the earth in Judgment against those mortals then living who have refused to repent during the Great Tribulation (see Revelation 19:11–21). Moreover, even once Jesus sets up His Earthly Kingdom a potential judgment is still warned against on behalf of the then living mortals—for Jesus will rule His Millennial Kingdom with a rod of iron. This description (“rod of iron”) signifies both leadership and non-redemptive judgment upon the rebellious. Thus, the warning provided by the author to the Hebrews is a warning that precedes the judgment while offering the good news of the Kingdom to those who believe the Gospel.

The Coming Shaking

The coming seven-year tribulation is noted in the expression, *“Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven”* (vs. 26). For during that time there will be a great change in the dimension of the heavens and the earth. During that time, Satan will be climactically cast out of heaven and will do all he can to destroy Israel and the nations (see Revelation 12).

The coming shaking is referred to in Haggai 2 where we read, *“For thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘And in this place I will give peace,’ says the LORD of hosts”* (Haggai 2:6–9 NKJV). This prophecy clearly indicates that the “shaking” is a future event—occurring prior to the Millennial Kingdom—for *“the Desire of All Nations,”* who will *“fill this temple [the temple in Jerusalem] with glory,”* is the Lord Jesus Himself.

(Note: For a fuller understanding of the details of this “shaking,” see Revelation 4–19 in total. Isaiah 13 also has many insights into this time of judgment with a double reference implied over the judgment of Babylon: Its destruction by the Medo-Persian empire and also during the Great Tribulation as described in Revelation 18. See also Ezekiel 38–39 and Joel 3)

Some would also suggest that a final and climactic “shaking” might include the Great White Throne Judgment and the final creation renewal described in 2 Peter 3:10–13 and Revelation 20:7–22:5.

Eschatology: The Study of the End Times

The fact that the author points out that the “shaking” is *“once more”* certainly points to a climactic future event. *“Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain”* (vs. 27). Moreover, it is clear that the time of which the author writes is an all-inclusive event with many facets. The point being, the Hebrews (and all others) are being given ample opportunity to “escape the wrath to come” (see 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9) and enjoy the blessings and benefits of the coming ages.

From our vantage point, the major future events include the Rapture of the Church, the Tribulation, the Second Coming of Jesus, the Millennial Kingdom, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the New Heaven and New Earth. Of course there are many details related to these events and all should be understood by the thoughtful Bible student. However, the primary focus for the author here is the coming “shaking” that will lead up to the unveiling of the unshakable kingdom he (and all true believers) look forward to enjoying.

Believers *are* Receiving the Unshakable Kingdom

“Therefore, 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. For our God is a consuming fire” (vss. 28–29).

The Universal vs. Theocratic Kingdom

There is an aspect in which believers are presently enjoying the Kingdom but are nonetheless anticipating a future literal physical Kingdom. The distinction is found in the understanding of the difference between the Universal Kingdom and the Theocratic Kingdom.

The Universal Kingdom is the rule of God over the whole of creation—for all time. In particular, believers are called to joyfully walk in the revelation of that rule today—through faith in the Lord Jesus—and by embracing the injunction to experience the *“grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”* Unbelievers, are likewise subject to the Universal Kingdom by the overarching sovereign rule of God. However, they live in rejection of and rebellion against Him. As a result, the unbeliever will suffer the consequences. In this context, God is in control but does not completely control the actions of man. This is where the concept of “free will” comes in. Man (within certain limits) has been given the freedom to obey or disobey the Lord. This is also true for the believer. Christians can disobey—but shouldn’t. As stated above, we are called to experience the outworking of God’s grace in our lives and by doing so demonstrate reverence to the Lord. This is what the author indicated in the expression *“godly fear.”*

The Universal Kingdom cannot be confused with the future literal physical Theocratic Kingdom. The Theocratic Kingdom is defined as the time in which Jesus (the King of the Jews) will physically return to the earth and establish His throne in Jerusalem (see Isaiah 2:1–4, Luke 1:31–33, etc.). This literal physical Kingdom will come (see Matthew 6:10). The Theocratic Kingdom is not to be viewed as mystical or allegorical—it is a future reality. The dangerous errors of Kingdom Now Theology and Replacement Theology misapplies the promises of a future literal physical earthly Kingdom by suggesting they are fulfilled in/with the Church. This error makes God a liar and either unable or unwilling to fulfill His promises to Israel/the Hebrews.

Jesus will come again and He will establish His Kingdom here on earth—ruling the obedient with grace and truth, and the rebellious with a rod of Iron. His Kingdom will bring about the literal fulfillment of the promises He made to the Hebrews and the rest of the world. The Hebrews who wish to enjoy entering into the Kingdom Age must be born again (born from above) and trust Jesus as Messiah (see John 3:3); those who refuse Him will be cast into outer darkness (Matthew 8:11–12).

Consuming Fire

Serving God here and now is both a privilege and command. Obedience is granted by grace and should be the manifestation of the life of genuine saving faith. The reverent and honorable will serve the Lord as the outflow of the faith they profess. This fact does not suggest that those who know the Lord have come to full maturity or that they may not or will not fall short. However, the consuming fire of the Lord’s work within us will burn out the “chaff” and leave the “golden kernels of wheat” He alone is maturing in us—even our fruitfulness (see Matthew 3:11–12).

One might also suggest that the *“consuming fire”* of God will either purge out the sin and sinful nature or be poured out in wrath upon the unbeliever. Either way, *“our God is [indeed] a consuming fire.”* The Hebrews who have or will trust in Jesus for salvation will be purged by that *“fire.”* Those who reject Him will be thrown into the fire of His wrath (see Ezekiel 15 and Matthew 3:1–12). The same is true for every man. Jew and Gentile alike may be purged by the *“consuming fire”* or be cast into the flames of hell—to suffer the fiery wrath of the One and Only, Sovereign, Almighty, God.

Questions:

- 1) **True or False:** Believers who have passed from this temporal and natural life are looking on and observing us from the dimension of the heavenlies.
- 2) **True or False:** The Hebrew believers were facing hostility from both the unbelieving Jews and also from the Romans.
- 3) **True or False:** The author seems to connect the trials and temptations the Hebrews were enduring as disciplinary training—leading to greater hope and a vision for the better things awaiting the faithful.
- 4) **True or False:** The “*hands which hang down*” and the “*feeble knees*” indicated weakness and fatigue.
- 5) **True or False:** The author’s illustrative use of Esau shows that Esau was more concerned with the temporal creature comforts a bowl of stew would provide than for the eternal future blessings of the birthright passed down from his father, Isaac.
- 6) **True or False:** The New Jerusalem will be the dwelling place of all the redeemed Jews—from every dispensation—but not the redeemed Gentiles.
- 7) **True or False:** Jesus was born of a virgin and was not carrying in His body the blood of an earthly father. He was (as fully man and fully God) carrying the blood of the incarnational person of God in the flesh—His flesh. This made him unique to any other man.
- 8) **True or False:** Anyone who speaks for the Lord must be certain that they are properly representing the Lord and are careful when communicating in His name.
- 9) **True or False:** From our vantage point, the major future events include the Rapture of the Church, the Tribulation, the Second Coming of Jesus, the Millennial Kingdom, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the New Heaven and New Earth.
- 10) **True or False:** The Theocratic Kingdom (Millennial Age) is not to be viewed as mystical or allegorical—it is a future reality.
- 11) **True or False:** One might suggest that the “*consuming fire*” of God will either purge out the sin of the believer or be poured out in wrath upon the unbeliever.

Notes: