
Words of Truth

Hebrews 12:28-29

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We left off our previous study considering that which cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:25-27). In this study we pick up with this: *“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire”* (Hebrews 12:28-29).

The language concerning the kingdom was not foreign to the children of Israel (Exodus 19:6, Psalms 22:28, Psalms 103:19, and Psalms 145:9-13). They knew that the kingdom given to David (I Chronicles 10:13-14) was prophesied to be established forever (Isaiah 9:1-7). They knew to expect a kingdom to come (Daniel 2:31-45 and Daniel 7:13-14). They knew to look forward to the coming of the last days because of the words of the prophets (Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5). The angel Gabriel told Mary that Jesus was going to sit on David’s throne and that of His kingdom there would be no end (Luke 1:26-33). John and Jesus both preached that the kingdom of heaven was “at hand” (Matthew 3:2 and Matthew 4:17). Jesus prayed for the kingdom to come (Matthew 6:10). We know when the last days began (Acts 2:1-41). The Hebrew letter began with the fact that they were living in the last days (Hebrews 1:1-2). So, the phrase “wherefore we receiving a kingdom” proves that the promises of God concerning the kingdom were fulfilled.

Things were not always clear for disciples of Christ in the first century. You might recall that they thought the kingdom was earthly (John 6:15 and Acts 1:6). The fact is, there are still people today that don’t understand the kingdom has come. They can even read the verses we are discussing and still not see it. No matter how confused someone might be for whatever reason, the establishment of the kingdom in the first century is not mistakable. Those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ were then and now citizens of the kingdom. Notice: *“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins”* (Colossians 1:12-14). If you read the contexts of our current study as well as the previously quoted Scriptures, you see the church and the kingdom refer to the same body of God’s people (Colossians 1:12-18 and Hebrews 12:22-29).

The Jews that had converted to Christ were seeing a lot of changes. They had seen what was known as the kingdom of Israel (cf. I Samuel 15:28) go through changes throughout

their history. Now, they've seen the physical kingdom of Israel come to an end in Christ. In this message they see something that will not end. The kingdom, unlike the earth and other things that have changed, cannot be moved. This should be comforting. The kingdom of Christ is everlasting (II Peter 1:11). Even when the end comes, the kingdom will reside eternally under the oversight of our Heavenly Father (I Corinthians 15:24-28).

The phrase "let us have grace" is very interesting. The phrase indicates that they needed to accept the gift of being in the kingdom of God. Does that imply they were struggling? Yes, that is evident throughout the New Testament. Think about the churches of Galatia being carried away because of wanting to go back to some things contained in the Law of Moses (Galatians 1:1-6:18). As not to fall like the churches of Galatia, they needed to avoid receiving the grace of God in vain (II Corinthians 6:1).

Being in the kingdom and recipients of the grace of God carries the responsibility to serve God (Romans 12:1-2) with reverence (Hebrews 12:9) and godly fear (I Peter 1:17). This was not intended to draw them back to the fear they had under the Law of Moses. Earlier in this letter they were taught about how Jesus delivered them from the fear of death they had under the Law (Hebrews 2:14-18). Nor was this message intended to get their knees shaking at the thought of God (I John 4:18). In light of the context, the message was to get them to consider the consequences of not pleasing God (I Corinthians 10:1-12). Remember, the contextual message is to not refuse Him that speaketh from Heaven (Hebrews 12:25).

Receiving grace and citizenship in the kingdom of our Lord should not have been taken for granted. God is a consuming fire. The Law of Moses stated such: "*For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God*" (Deuteronomy 4:24). As we addressed in our last study, this was seen of the children of Israel in the days of Moses on the mount (Exodus 19:18, Exodus 24:17, Deuteronomy 5:4, etc.). When the Lord led the children of Israel, He was as a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 9:3).

Since it should be supposed that those addressed in this letter had some knowledge of what was written aforetime, they should have known what God's anger was like. Think about this: "*And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp*" (Numbers 11:1). It is wise to understand the danger of the wrath of a king (Proverbs 16:14). Seeing that the Lord is our King and His ability to punish is greater than any earthly king, He is to be feared by those who would disobey Him.

When one considers our Lord as a consuming fire from the Old Law, that has a little different message than now. When we think about consuming fire as it relates to our Lord we need to consider the eternal measure of such (Matthew 25:31-46 and II Thessalonians 1:3-9). Serving God as to not spend eternity in Hell is certainly a motivator.