

Run the Race Looking Forward to Victory

Hebrews 12:18-29

Look back to witnesses, up to Christ, forward to the finish line.

Big Idea: Jesus brings us to the City of God; so, we live to worship God.

¹⁸ For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." ²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." ²² **But you have** come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷ This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken-- that is, things that have been made-- in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire. (Heb 12:18-29 ESV)

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1. Live by Faith not Fear (vv. 18-24).
2. Warning: None escape judgement (vv. 25-29).
3. Live a worthy life (vv. 28-29).

1. Live by Faith not Fear (vv. 18-24).

¹⁸ For you have not come to [Mt Sinai] ... a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them... ²² **But** you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to *innumerable angels in festal gathering*, ²³ and to *the assembly of the firstborn* who are *enrolled in heaven*, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of *the righteous made perfect*, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Fear (Sinai) arises from
one's awareness of the
infinite gap between their
humanity and God's divinity
(Heb 12:18-21; *cf.* Ex 19-20; Isa. 6:1-7).

You've come to Zion, not Sinai (vv. 22-25).

6 Truths about Zion/Jesus

- i. We celebrate with angels (v. 22; 2:12, Ps 22:22).
- ii. The Son removes fear; he takes us to Zion (v. 22).
- iii. We join the assembly of saints (v. 23; 11).
- iv. We're already enrolled (v. 23; Eph 2:6).
- v. The Judge see us as perfect (v. 23; 7:25; Rom 3:24-26).
- vi. Because Jesus cleansed us (v. 24; 9:14).

Focusing on our future home, empowers us to *live radically* until we get there.

Live radically, looking to Zion.

- i. Prioritize intimacy with God.
- ii. Re-evaluate cultural norms for living and legacy.
- iii. Emphasize discipleship/community over comfort.
- iv. Live well in the midst of suffering (Heb 10:32).

2. Warning: none escape judgement (vv. 25-27).

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Shaking == Judgment

Hell, Yes! None escape judgement (vv. 25-27).



- i. If they couldn't escape judgement, we can't either, don't try (v. 25).
- ii. Sinai is just a taste of God's power (vv. 26-27; Hag 2:6).
- iii. Final judgement is coming (Rev 19:11f).

Photo credit: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/110606-chile-volcano-lightning-science-ash-eruption>

It's a lightening storm over an erupting volcano in Chile.

The warning isn't just for 'that' guy.

5 important warnings in Hebrews

- i. Pay attention so you don't drift away (2:1-4).
- ii. Nothing is hidden from God (4:12-13).
- iii. If we reject Christ we cannot be restored (6:4-8).
- iv. No sacrifice remains for the deliberate sinner (10:26-31).
- v. If they didn't escape, we won't (12:25-29).

We might be tempted to dismiss these as not applicable because once we're saved, we're always saved. But they're here for a reason written to people who know Christ.

Let the warnings be a call to diligence and perseverance in the Christian faith. Lead us to avoid complacency and embrace the promises of God.

3. Live a worthy life (vv. 28-29).

²⁸ Therefore *let us be grateful* for receiving a **kingdom that cannot be shaken**, and thus *let us offer to God acceptable worship*, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

Our God is a Consuming Fire (v. 29)

- i. **v. 29** is subordinated to v. 28. The combined expression “indicates that it is God’s essential character that provides the reason for the fear and awe that are appropriate to his worship.”
- ii. Alludes to **Deut 4:24** where Moses told the exodus generation that God is “a consuming fire, a jealous God”
- iii. We shouldn’t limit the fire to only judgement.
 - i. The fire is also in the immediate context of priestly worship from v. 28. And in fact from the epistle as a whole. The notion of consuming fire evokes images of the burnt offering in Lev 6:10. It may be the author is engaging here in something of a double entendre where “consuming fire” speaks of judgement from the apocalyptic imagery of Heb 12:26-27 and of priestly sacrifice from the imagery of Heb 12:28.
 - ii. As we offer up acceptable worship, *God consumes it!*

Because Jesus has brought us to Zion
and has kept us from being shaken:

Be grateful
(v. 28a; 1Thess 5:16-18).

**Offer acceptable
worship**
(vv. 28b-29; Rom 12:1; Ex 20).

When Christ returns ...

Those who cling to
“created things” will be
shaken with the creation.

Those who hold Christ will
reside in the “kingdom that
cannot be shaken.”

What are you holding onto this morning?