

Prayer

We praise You, Lord Jesus Christ, for the incredible privilege of sharing our faith with others. As we worship You today, may our souls be lifted up by the majesty and glory of Your presence, and may we contribute to the great chorus of praise which comes from all Your servants on this special day of worship. May we be united in our faith, and may we honour Your Holy Name. Glory be to You, Lord Jesus Christ: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Personal Decisions

Life is full of decisions which we have to make. When things are going smoothly, our decisions are routine and require little thought; but the Lord sometimes asks us to be obedient to Him in the midst of our daily routines, and we have to learn to listen and do what He says; and this may mean doing things differently. Pray that you will be alert to His call, whenever it comes.

Meditation

When life is quiet, Lord Jesus, fill my mind with what is good,
So that the enemy is kept far away from my thoughts.

When life is routine, Lord Jesus, give me the concentration I need
So that I honour You in all I do, in every detail of my work

When life becomes difficult, Lord Jesus, save me from panic,
So that I focus on truth and trust Your spiritual guidance.

When life is awful, Lord Jesus, give me courage and perseverance;
So that Your Spirit may give me energy to overcome trouble.

When life becomes easier, Lord Jesus, may I not forget Your love;
So that I remember Your faithfulness, and follow Your guidance

When life is quiet, Lord Jesus, fill my mind with all that is good;
So that I am ready and alert; a faithful and committed servant.

Bible Study - Hebrews 12:25-29

²⁵ See that you do not refuse the One who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they ignored Him who warned them whilst on earth, how much less will our chance of escape be if we reject Him who warns us from heaven! ²⁶ His voice shook the earth at that time, but now He has promised, 'I will shake once more not only the earth but the heaven.'²⁷ The words 'once more' indicates the removal of what can be shaken, meaning created things, so that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ So let us be grateful because we are receiving a Kingdom which cannot be shaken, and therefore offer God acceptable worship with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire!

Review

As Hebrews draws to its climax, the letter appeals to its readers not to disregard its essential message. The powerful words 'see that you do not refuse the One who is speaking' is an appeal to people to accept the offer of Christ's salvation which enables them to worship God in the new way described in the previous passage (12:22-24). This new worship of God through Jesus Christ reflects the heavenly celebration of Jesus' victory on the Cross and the all-sufficient salvation which He has achieved through His death ('the sprinkled blood which speaks more eloquently than the blood of Abel' – 12:24). However, as with so much of Hebrews, we have to be careful to understand exactly what the writer is saying because it is couched in the complex language of the religious devotion of the early Christian church, and the Judaism from which it was beginning to emerge.

When we read verse 25, it may not be immediately clear to us what contrast is being made, but the passage is clearly a warning to pay attention to God's revelation. The problem is solved if we remember that the previous contrast in verses 18 to 24 was between Moses (12:21) and Christ (12:24). With this in mind, verse 25 says that if the Jews have not escaped God's justice after they ignored the laws of God given them by Moses, then our chance of escaping God's justice now if we ignore what Jesus has done for us (remembering He is now in heaven), is perhaps less! This is a rather strong way of saying that we ignore celebrating the wondrous work of God through Jesus Christ at our peril, especially if we know about it!

Following this verse, the intention of Hebrews is to encourage God's people to look forward to what He has for them in a 'kingdom which cannot be shaken', where we can offer 'acceptable worship with reverence and awe' (12:38). However, what Hebrews says explain this is characteristically difficult and needs explaining. The writer's intention is to describe the Kingdom of God as 'unshakable', but the things of this earth including the religious system of the Jews as 'shakeable'. In this way, he connects the idea of being shakeable with that of being mortal or earthly, and by contrast the unshakable is what is eternal, that is, the glorious Kingdom of God.

Going through these verses, the quote 'His voice shook the earth at that time' refers to the quaking of the mountain when God gave the law through Moses (Ex 19:18). The next quote 'I will shake once more not only the earth but the heaven' comes from Haggai 2:6, though his version of it is not the same as in our Bibles. Haggai spoke at a time when God's Temple was being rebuilt, and he meant that God would shake out all the rubbish from the old Temple (all the religious paraphernalia that had gathered since the time of Solomon) in order to fill it with His glory. Haggai was speaking about was the rebuilding of the Temple which had already taken place, so Hebrews says that God would do a new shaking 'once more' (see v27) to get rid of the rubbish of religious paraphernalia. It was His purpose to dispose of anything that was worldly, earthly and temporary, and replace it with His new Kingdom which was permanent. As in yesterday's reading, there is a clear connection here with John's revelation of a 'new heaven and a new earth' (Rev 21:1f.)

The final words of our passage, 'our God is a consuming fire' are an awesome declaration of truth. God will eventually consume all that is mortal. The world will come to its end and His judgement will come on all things and everyone, and all that will be left will be His 'unshakeable' new Kingdom, a new creation in which Christ is King. When we worship our Lord even now, it is with this remarkable vision before us! We worship Him because He is our Creator and our Saviour, and He has the power to deal with all evil and sin, and complete what He has begun in Christ!

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Does this passage convince you that anything about the way you worship God should change?
2. If his world this 'shakeable', then what is left after God 'shakes' it, which we can recognise in the Kingdom of God?
3. In what ways does this passage inspire you to worship God?

Discipleship

Thinking about our future in the Kingdom of God is quite difficult. We need to read a significant number of passages in the New and the Old Testaments if we are to obtain a good general picture of the final destination of all things. Yet we are asked to be excited and inspired by the idea of God's victory, His new Creation, the Glory of Christ etc. Therefore, spend some time praying about the future glories of God's Kingdom, and ask the Lord to show you how you may better understand your own destiny. You may be surprised at what He will show you!

Final Prayer

Glory be to You, O Lord Most High. You have been worshipped for centuries by people in many different ways; but You look for the worship of the heart, the hungry desire for spiritual things which arises in the heart of a saved soul. May we worship You in spirit and truth, and may You find in us a true heart of worship: AMEN