

Fact Sheet for **“An Uncomfortable Truth”**
Hebrews 12:18-29

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The author of Hebrews continues with his same line of thought... salvation is to be found in Jesus Christ.

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."** ²

The Old Covenant, the Mosaic Law, was ushered in with fear. Verses 18-20 refer to the events of Exodus 19. Moses went up on Mt Sinai and came down when Aaron had listened to the people and made the golden calf. Verse 21 quotes Deuteronomy 9:19 when Moses came down and confronted Aaron and Israel.

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.**

The New Covenant, the Gospel, was ushered in with joy. These are all joyful things to come to.

What does the author of Hebrews mean by the blood of Abel? Abel had faith in what God told him about how to sacrifice, and he followed those directions (11:4). Jesus had faith in the Father about what he had to suffer (12:1-2).

But even though the Old Covenant was brought in with fear and the New Covenant with joy God has not changed. He is still holy. He is still sovereign. He still will judge sin. But the New Covenant offers something that the Old Covenant did not, the propitiation (full payment) for sins.

Now in the days of the Old Covenant people were still saved by grace through faith, but the Old Covenant highlighted works.

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."** ³

We're going to come back to verse 25. Right now look at verse 26. The wording comes from one of the Minor Prophets, Haggai. These events have not yet happened. They are yet future (compare Revelation 20:11).

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**

¹ Exodus 19:12f.

² Deuteronomy 9:19.

³ Haggai 2:6.

us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship (λατρεύω)⁴, with reverence and awe,²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

ESV Hebrews 9:13-14 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve (λατρεύω) the living God.

ESV Romans 12:1 ¶ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (λατρεία).

Now, let's come back to verse 25.

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.

God warned them on earth when the Mosaic Law was given. Christ came from heaven to warn us. The author of Hebrews then asks how people will escape judgment if they reject Jesus. It's a rhetorical question. The answer is, "They won't." I am reminded of other verses indicating the same thing (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). This biblical truth does not fit well with the culture we live in. Our society would like us to affirm everyone, no matter what they believe.

Let's approach this from a different direction. How do we know anything about God? A limited amount can be seen in nature (Psalm 19:1-4a). But nature cannot tell us about God's will for us, or how to be saved. For those things we need God to reveal (or unveil) his thoughts for us. Otherwise we would never know much of anything specific about God. There were the OT and NT prophets, but Jesus Christ was the supreme revealer of God's thoughts. In fact, the author of Hebrews began his book with this (1:1-2). To these two I would add the apostles (Ephesians 2:19-20). We have the words of Christ, the prophets, and the apostles written down for us in the Bible.

But is the Bible right? What about the other major religions with their holy books? This is where the Bible stands absolutely alone as being correct with science, archeology, and specific prophecy. There is no other book in existence that can come even remotely close to the Bible. In fact it would have been virtually impossible for this book to have been written if God did not inspire it (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

God revealed himself to the prophets and apostles then inspired the words of what they wrote. There are no contradictions in it even though it was written over a period of 1,500 years by 40+ human authors.

Hence, the goal of interpretation is to find the meaning that is resident in its words, not to bend its words to current societal trends.

Does God love all people? Yes (John 3:16). Does God affirm everyone's behavior? No. Does God save everyone? No. Is there salvation apart from Jesus Christ? No.

Although this is not consistent with our society it is what the Bible teaches, and it is what we must teach. The clear message of the Bible is...

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.

This may be an uncomfortable truth in our world, but it is God's truth. Tell others about God's love for them in Christ.

⁴ The verb λατρεύω (la-treu'-o) and the noun λατρεία (la-trei'-a) speak of our service to God, not just our words or attitudes.