

# New Covenant Worship Part II

*Already. Not Yet.*

- <sup>18</sup> For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest
- <sup>19</sup> and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.
- <sup>20</sup> For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."
- <sup>21</sup> Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." "And I was greatly terrified because of the wrath and anger, because the Lord was provoked with you utterly to destroy you; yet the Lord hearkened to me at this time also." (Deut 9:19 LXA)
- <sup>22</sup> 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,
- <sup>23</sup> 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,
- <sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.
- <sup>25</sup> 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.
- <sup>26</sup> 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." "For thus saith the Lord Almighty; Yet once I will shake the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;" (Hag

2:7 LXA)

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> 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,

<sup>29</sup> **for our God is a consuming fire."**

Hebrews 12:18-29

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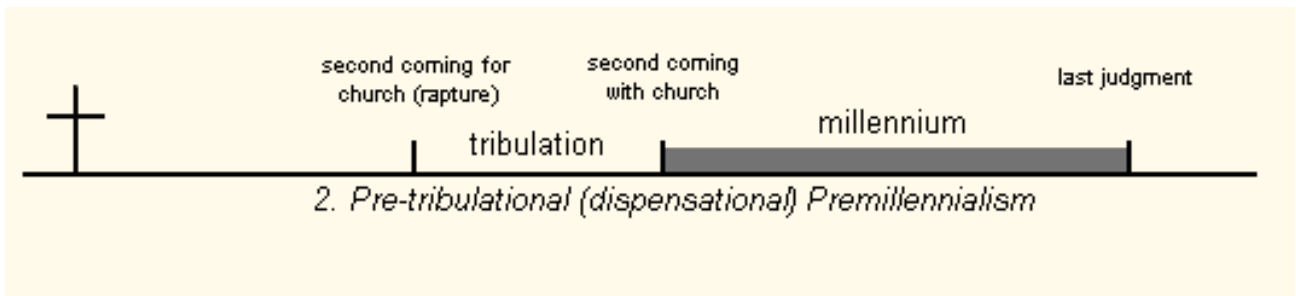
## Eschatology

YOU REALLY CAN'T GO VERY FAR in the Bible before you come to a passage on eschatology. Eschatology. It is a word that gets people's attention. It sells lots and lots of books, fills church conferences, and gets tons of hits on Youtube—if you have the kind that lends itself to wild futures, crazy charts, and newspaper speculation. Growing up, this word meant something very different to me than it now does.

In the Christian circles I grew up in, eschatology was **the study of the end times**, and the end times meant a pre-trib rapture, seven years (or at least three and a half years) of

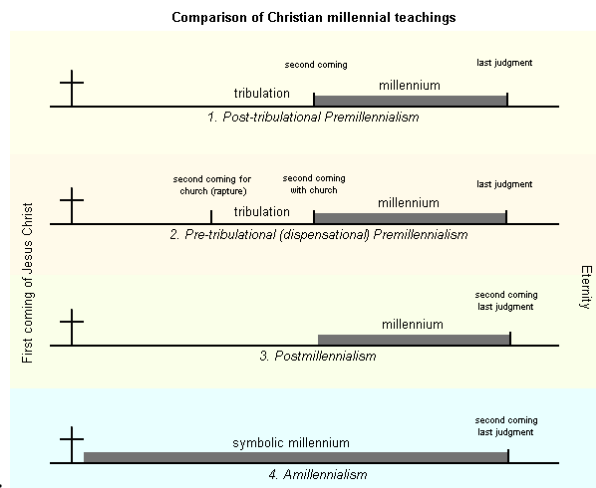
horror for those who converted after the rapture, and lots and lots and lots of date setting, which of course was always just a couple of years or months away. We are the generation who is living in the end times. The fullness of all the prophecies is for us. Therefore, in these circles, eschatology is [the study of our future](#).

But there are several views on how eschatology plays out in the Bible rather than just one. The one I grew up in was classical [Dispensational Premillennialism](#). This has a sharp division between Israel and the church in every sense, and reads most if not all prophecy physically—as in referring to things that happen in space and time on earth. If it says seven years, it means seven 365 solar-day years. If it says there will be shaking of the earth then it is talking about a physical earthquake on the earth, etc. This view sees all of history as a one-dimensional flat line where all of history is essentially earthly physical history. There is the OT age of law, the NT parenthesis age of grace and the church, the seven-year Great Tribulation dealing with national Israel, a 1000 year millennial reign of Christ in the city of Jerusalem, a rebellion that leads to Armageddon after that.



The far opposite of this view, but still presenting history as a one-dimensional flat line, is [postmillennialism](#). For the postmillennialist, history is all about gaining victory here and now through Christ on earth. Life gradually gets better and better, there is less and less suffering as more and more people become Christians, until virtually the whole world is saved and we enter the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

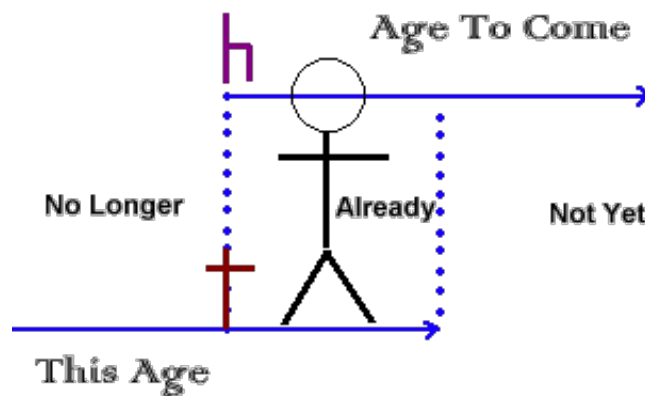
Many people, when they try to represent the other views of eschatology, incorrectly draw them as one-dimensional as well.<sup>1</sup> But this is to badly mischaracterize



<sup>1</sup> The common drawings look something like this:

those views. These views are **Historic Premillennialism** and **Realized Millennialism** (aka Amillennialism). These differ from one another on the nature of the millennium, but not on the nature of eschatology more generally speaking. These are the two views that have dominated church history for 2,000 years.

When the Bible speaks about eschatology, it sees **two-dimensions, not just one**:



This is the most important thing you can remember here for our sermon today. History and the future is not just about earth, but also heaven. There is an overlap between heaven and earth, such that **heavenly things are real and true and present on earth now**.

For example, even though all living saints are on the earth in mortal bodies now, nevertheless, we can simultaneously be seated with Christ in heavenly places (**Eph 2:6**) with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places (**1:3**). Even though we will have eternal life in the future, we are granted eternal life now. Even though God will say “**well done good and faithful servant**” in heaven, today we are counted as righteous in Christ. Heaven is essentially intruding on the the earth. The Kingdom of heaven is here now and it is “**within you.**”

The book of Hebrews starts with this view of eschatology. “**In these last days God has spoken to us by his Son**” (**Heb 1:2**). It doesn't say “end times,” it says “last days.” It doesn't have our future in mind only, but also our past. Living in the Old Testament, the last days were future. Today, they are not. Living 2,000 years after the cross, the last days began a long time ago. They begin with Christ's first coming, not his second. Therefore, “eschatology” is not precisely the study of the future, but the study of last (*eschaton*) things. What bearing does this have on our passage? Almost everything.

# Mountain Peaks of Eschatology

We begin with [the mountains of God](#). The book of Jubilees taught the ancient Jews from the OT well. It says, “The LORD has four sacred places upon the earth: the garden [mountain] of Eden and the mountain of the East (probably Ararat) and this mountain which you are upon today, Mount Sinai, and Mount Zion.” It continues, “Mount Zion will be sanctified in the new creation for the sanctification of the earth. On account of this the earth will be sanctified from all sin and from pollution throughout eternal generations” ([Jub 4:26](#)). Two of these mountains are in our passage. These are cosmic nexus points where heaven and earth touch like the fingers of God and Adam in the Michelangelo’s famous ceiling painting in the Sistine Chapel. Just like biblical eschatology when heaven collides with earth.

The first is [Mt. Sinai](#). It was a mountain where God dwelt for a time. He came down to us, but stayed at a distance. He came there to give the law. This law was put into place by the hosts of heaven. And myriads of myriads were there, meaning that it was a symbol of heaven itself. Of

the throne of heaven we read, “A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands (*muriades* in Greek) stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened” (Dan 7:10). This scene predicted the glorious moment when the Son of man would approach the throne and be given the kingdoms of the world.

This is what Psalm 2 predicted, which has been quoted by Hebrews of the First Coming of the Lord Jesus. “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance” (Ps 2:6-7). This is what Psalm 110 predicted, which has been quoted time and again in Hebrews. “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool’” (Ps 110:1). This is what Jesus said at the Great Commission, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt 28:18; cf. 1Co 15:27; Eph 1:20-21; 1Pe 3:22; etc.). The point is, though his last enemy, death, has not been destroyed and there is a future to its final defeat, his victory is also **present now**. Eschatology concerns the now.

Returning to Sinai, if the myriads are a picture of heaven and of eschatology, then so also is the mountain upon which he dwells, for this is where the myriads also show up. “The



LORD came from Sinai ... he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand.” “The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them as at Sinai, in the sanctuary” (Ps 68:17). Something earth shattering happened at Mount Sinai. It was both earthly and heavenly, both physical and spiritual. But it still wasn't the last days.

God gave the people his law. The mention of Sinai in Hebrews 12:18-21 becomes the source of even the laws given earlier in Hebrews 12. But it is so much more than the giving of the law. It is heaven itself intruding among men. God came to men. Think about how stunning this is, how glorious, and how frightening. He came with the company of angels. He came, as it says, in a blazing fire, in darkness, in gloom, and a trumpet (Heb 12:18). He came with the sound of a trumpet and the voice whose words made the hearers beg that no more messages be spoken to them (19). It was an absolutely terrifying sight (20-21). The earth shook. The people froze. God was here in his Shekinah, his shining brilliant heavenly glory. They heard him speak and they melted in fright.

That was heaven coming down upon a mountain. Heaven came down. But in the NT, in Christ Jesus, heaven came down a different way. He came down in human flesh. This veiled his glory. He seemed as one of whom no one would give a second thought. He had nothing that we should chase after him. Nothing that we should desire him. He was not shining. He was not tall. He was meek. He was humble. He was ordinary. God became man. The word became flesh. And no one melted in fear at this coming, though some did realize who he was.

But what he did, this is how everything changes. What came down also went back up. He ascended into the heavenly temple and made an offering for our sins once-for-all. He opened up the way to the Most Holy Place by his blood. He tore the veil in two. And now, to those who believe in his Name, he presents them before God not only on that day, but today. He raises us up and seats us with him in heavenly places. In the old, God came down. Heaven met earth. In the new, God who came down now goes back up. Earth meets heaven through the nexus-temple of Jesus Christ and his body on earth, the church.

The contrast, and the eschatology here, is found between the fires of Sinai and all of its terrors and **Mt. Zion**. Mt. Zion does not singe the hairs on the back of the neck like Sinai does. Its image is of king David. Its city is the king's City. God came down, but he dwelt in the temple where only the high priest could enter once a year. Thus, the people did not fear Zion. Rather, they sang songs of joy about it. "Sing us one of the songs of Zion" (**Ps 137:3**). "Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion" (**Isa 12:6**). "Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion" (**Zeph 3:14**). God shielded himself from the people causing them to rejoice in his presence.

But that Zion is still earthly Zion. That Jerusalem is still earthly Jerusalem. The contrast here is not one earthly place for another, but one earthly place for a heavenly place. And this heavenly place is where we have come, just now, through Christ Jesus by faith. "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (**Heb 12:22**). When we worship, we worship in heaven, not just on earth. We are there, now. This is eschatology.

# Worship: Already and Not Yet

## *ANGELS*

“**And to innumerable angels in festal gathering.**” This is another glimpse of heaven. The angels gather round the throne of God. They gather in worshipful celebration. As far as the eye can see. And we have come to them, now. This is eschatology. When you look at the old liturgies of the East, be they from Chrysostom or Basil or others, you find those liturgies, both in word and in form, depicting this very thing. They sing to the angels, about the angels, with the angels about the Lord Jesus. They attempt to lead you in a procession into the presence of heaven through a journey into the most-holy place, by the priest, using physical symbols to stir you up so that you may know with your senses where you have come.

The angelic liturgies are like the Psalms, “**I give thanks O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise**” (Ps 138:1). David is reaching up into the divine council and telling the sons of God to worship the LORD. The Hebrew has Elohim. But the LXX has “angels.” “**Praise**

him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!” (Ps 148:2). Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him all creatures here below. Praise him above you heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

People are being drawn back to these liturgies today, for good and for bad reasons. The good reasons are that they know there is something that transcends this earth to which they belong and they just aren't getting that from Pop-Culture Christianity. They are led with their eyes to see that which is true in spiritual places. But beloved, the eyes of faith don't see with physical eyes in order to believe. They need to be taught the truth from the word of God and to apprehend that truth by faith, reaching up and taking hold of that truth with the heart.<sup>2</sup> What is that truth? **God has given us access into heaven** itself where those angels are worshipping even now. And when we gather **together as his church**, this is that much more true.

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that physical sensations are unimportant in worship or to say that physical space is irrelevant or must be made as sterile as possible as some have done. But it is to say that faith does not need these things and we do not need them in order to apprehend the truth of God's word and to be lifted up in our spirits to God in worship. Where there are physical sensations and where physical space is possible to think through, these should be led by the word and Spirit of God and not by the inventions, methods, and good-intentions of man.

## *FIRSTBORN EKKLESIA*

God gives us a privilege here. He calls us the “assembly of the firstborn” (Heb 12:23). The firstborn is a son of God. Being his firstborn is that privilege. This title was originally given to the angelic sons of God. Then it was given to Adam and his descendants. Finally, it is given to Christians, who recapture the seat at the divine council lost by Adam, but regained by Jesus Christ, who is The Firstborn. To the firstborn belonged the birthright, the inheritance of the father. Esau was an example of someone who gave up his birthright in sin in this very chapter. But God orchestrated history that so that you might come to see that in his kingdom, the first shall be last and the last shall be *first*.

This is not a kingdom of physical birth privilege. It is a kingdom of election, of God’s granting to lastborns the rights of the firstborn. Giving Eunuchs and Gentiles the rights to become Levitical priests who can serve in the temple of God. The meek inherit the earth. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs in the kingdom of heaven. God’s

program is backwards to man's, and that is why Christianity has always spread fastest among those who have the least. They hunger and thirst for something that God can give them. Their eyes are not on the shining jewels of the earth. And when he grants it, they are satisfied.

This firstborn is not one person however. It doesn't refer to Jesus here, but to the saints. The only one who is truly Firstborn gives us this status when we believe in him and are united in mystical union by faith. Jesus is **the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom 8:29)**. He is the Eternal Son of God, the unique, only-begotten of the Father. But he grants to those who conquer the right to sit on his throne with him (**Rev 3:21**). This firstborn is the "assembly," the *ekklesia*, the church. And its people are those whose names are enrolled in heaven.

This is where we left off last time, when we saw that this church includes those who are now **no longer visible** on earth because they have died. Hence, the term **invisible church**. That idea simply conveys that God has one people of God from Abel onward. Many have passed now into glory. Many are being called today. But all have their names written in the book of life that belongs to the Lamb who put

them there in eternity past. This is the glory of election, which is such a comfort to the suffering soul.

In this biblical eschatology, remember that you who truly trust in Christ are in this invisible church though you are also visible. You are presently surrounded by a great cloud of witness. And they lead you onward by their example not to finally give in to temptation, but to reach the City that we have come to already. This is the **already-not yet**. If you know Christ, you **are** in heaven positionally. You **will be** in heaven when your soul leaves your body and when you are given a new body at the resurrection. This is to be a great comfort and power to overcome temptation in your life.

## *JUDGMENT OF GOD*

The eschatology continues. We have come ... “**to God, the judge of all.**” Most people realize that in the OT, God is a judge. Most people don’t like this very much. Unbelief will not accept that it is even true, otherwise it would turn from its wickedness immediately. But God is. And God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He has never



ceased being Judge.

We know that judgment is belongs to the future. That is the Second Coming. But there is judgment that has already come. Satan has been judged. Those who have been justified have been judged and freed of their terminal sentence. The Spirit is here judging men for all they do. This is the First Coming. Both are eschatology.

But who is the Judge in mind here? Jesus says, “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.” (John 5:22). Why? “He has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man” (John 5:27). The Lord Jesus knows exactly what it means to live under law and to do so perfectly. As the new Adam, he has gained the highest seat possible for man, and that is the seat of judge in heaven. “Do you not know that we will judge angels,” Paul says? Well, Jesus is the Great Judge of all men.

Since all people are born under law—either directly through revelation or indirectly through conscience, no one will escape the judgment seat of Christ. All will be repaid according to what they have done. Some will go to everlasting perdition where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Others will go to heavenly glory. But all will be

judged.

By what measure will you be judged? It will be by the measure of merit. What you did in this life. Part of the judgment regards guilt against God's law and treason against heaven. All have fallen short here. Some will be judged on their own merit and they will fall mightily into the fires of hell. Others who will believe the good news are judged by the merit of the Lord Jesus himself, who offers to all his righteousness in exchange for the punishment that he endured on our behalf. What glory is this that Jesus would judge anyone by his righteousness?

The rest of the judgment will determine rewards, however that all works out. It is clear that **not all in hell will have the same form of punishment**—for it will be better on the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for Capernaum because they rejected their Messiah. **The same holds true in heaven.** For some will have greater and some will have lesser rewards based on what they do. And yet, those works if done for self-glory are the exact opposite of why they are to be done. Which is why those who receive rewards in heaven will return them back to their king and glorify him all the more. For they are meek and their goal is

to glorify God rather than themselves. Jesus alone knows how to judge others in perfect righteousness. This is our worship.

## *RIGHTEOUS MADE PERFECT*

This is a good thing, because if all men fall short of his glory what hope is there? Some don't think the gospel that Jesus would save us and make us perfect by his merit through faith is even possible. Some have called it a great fiction. Yet, the next phrase tells us that we have come to “*the spirits of the righteous made perfect*” (**Heb 12:23**). This refers to those who have *gone before us into glory*, to the great cloud of witnesses who are in heaven, to the invisible part of the universal church. God has made them perfect in Christ. But God has also counted *us righteous in Christ by faith*. This is eschatology, heaven and the future come down to earth now. We can mingle with the righteous perfect cloud now, because we in Christ are counted as righteous.

# JESUS, THE NEW COVENANT, AND THE BLOOD

In this biblical eschatology, it also says that we have come to “Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant” (Heb 12:24). The focus here is on the new covenant, which Hebrews has spent half of the book explaining. Out of all the references in the NT to a “new” covenant, this is the lone verse that uses a different word. The others use *kainos*, which seeks to make something better. This one uses *neos*, which refers to something that is indeed brand new, never seen before. Why would he switch words like this? How is it here *brand* new?

I think it is because of the blood. The blood of this covenant is unlike the blood in any other covenant. Adam and Eve on Mt. Eden were clothed with an animal which had to die. Noah sacrificed animals on Mt. Ararat. Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac on Mt. Morah, but no blood was spilled. Moses sacrificed animals on Mt. Sinai which became the blood of the covenant. David and the priests slaughtered many animals on Mt. Zion. But Jesus offered his own blood on the heavenly Mt. Zion which overlaps the earthly Zion upon which he died. The blood of man. The blood of God.

Brand new.

Hebrews uses yet another story to teach us how great this blood is. He goes to the first martyr as he brings our thoughts back to Hebrews 11. The blood of Jesus “**speaks a better word than the blood of Abel**” (24). This verse actually views Abel’s death as a sacrifice. It is a sacrifice of faith in the promise to come. Abel died as a martyr for Christ. Abel’s blood still speaks loudly for the need of justice, the need of vindication, and the need of peace on earth. Teach your children the story of Abel. But don’t forget to then teach them the story of Christ’s death, for that is how the Bible does as it teaches you about biblical eschatology. Jesus’ death cuts a new covenant by which men can be saved, justice can be dispensed, and men can have peace with God. Jesus blood is better.

## **The Proper Application of Eschatology**

So how does any or all of this matter? Since I’m focusing on eschatology today, let’s consider **how different eschatologies are often applied** in our day. If we take **Dispensationalism** as an example, what we discover is that

the focus, and therefore the application, is on given charts and setting dates, scaring people into heaven through fiction books and movies, and making the blood pressure of most people rise on a permanent basis from the anxiety and anticipation of the Rapture, the Tribulation, and all that comes with those things. “Tell me when Jesus is coming back.” “Tell me what is going to happen and when it is going to happen so I can tell my friends.”

**Postmillennialism** is quite different in its application. It rightly sees Jesus’ victory has having great application here on earth already. Jesus has defeated Satan and his kingdom is intruding into the whole world. If Dispensationalism is utterly pessimistic about the near future, postmillennialists are totally optimistic. This causes them to become heavily involved in the world political structures, and often times in trying to re-implement God’s law upon civilization. In this case, the focus is often on trying to make the world a better place, because that’s what it means for the kingdom of God to be here.

Now, I’m stereotyping to some degree because we don’t have time to get into this in lots of detail. And also, I don’t want to suggest that we shouldn’t be involved in the world,

in politics, wanting to make the world a better place or that we shouldn't think about the future. What I'm pointing out is that if you want to look at the most immediate applications of these two views of eschatology, these are the things that come to mind first. **This is not how Hebrews applies its eschatology**, though in what it says it does focus on the present and it does focus on the future.

It begins, **“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” (Heb 12:25)**. Refuse him in what way? Why, in trusting in Christ and worshiping the Son and living by faith and obey what he commands as this whole letter has been telling you.

But not refusing comes with a warning. To when does he refer to when he says God warned them from earth? The next verse tells you, **“At this time his voice shook the earth” (26)**. It refers back to Mt. Sinai, when they actually heard God's voice and the mountain shook. They did not obey the LORD there, but broke covenant with him and were forced to wander the desert for forty years. This story has been in mind throughout Hebrews.

But we are being warned from heaven? How so? Through all he has said. This is the eschatology being applied now. We have come to heavenly Jerusalem. We have come to angels in heaven. We have come to saints made perfect who are in heaven. We are seated in heavenly places. Most of all, we have come to Jesus who has ascended to heaven where he sits at the right hand of the Father. Right now, right this very moment, Jesus is warning you from heaven to pay attention, to listen carefully, and to obey.

But why would you need such a warning? It is because you don't understand this with your physical senses. Do you see Jesus with your eyes right now or hear him with your ears? No. Are you afraid because a storm of doom has suddenly come upon this building, shaking your seats, rumbling the rafters? No. Is Long's Peak on fire?

Throughout the centuries, people have tried to help Christians "feel" things in worship with their senses for just these reasons. Some are worthy attempts, I suppose. Others are completely misguided. Some are even dangerous to your eternal soul, and frankly, too many people are engaging in them at this moment in Christian America. But all do it because new covenant worship is an ordinary thing as far as



the senses go. It doesn't matter where you are, you can worship. When God's people gather together, it is not the building that matters, nor the ambiance, but the promise of God to lift them to heaven.

But many people can't believe this is true. If they can't sense it, then it isn't real. They are functional materialists, even though they claim to believe in a spiritual realm. And so they have to feel something, and if they don't, then it must be "dead" worship, dead liturgy. Hence, the massive shifting of what worship looks like in Evangelicalism over the past forty years.

But this is precisely why you must take this warning all the more seriously. It is not that God has left us, but that in his grace, he has come to us in a way that no longer terrifies us. And, he has allowed us to come to him in a way that lifts us up without consuming us. If he didn't do this, it would be at best like the people at Mt. Sinai. But they didn't listen to him even with their physical senses going berserk. All they wanted to do was die and to stop God from speaking to them.

So what is he saying now? He is saying that even though the form of coming has changed and the covenant made is

better, **he has not changed** and his program for the world is coming to completion. “**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’**” (**Heb 12:26**). This is actually a quote from the LXX of **Haggai 2:7**.

The context here is important for not jumping the gun on the meaning of what is being said. But that again is the eschatology speaking. Haggai is a book about the post-exilic **Jews rebuilding the temple**. Curiously, it starts off with something similar to what I just said. God exhorts the people to rebuild and gives sobering words of warning that their current state of affairs exists because of their apathy toward the project.<sup>3</sup> God then presents them with “**words of encouragement**” that speak of God shaking the world. The people are discouraged because the temple does not approach its former glory, but the Lord is with them and his Spirit is among them. But this shaking of the earth is the shaking of the nations, and “**the riches of the nations will be used to restore the temple to an even greater state than its former glory.**”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 989.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Therefore, the original context of this is not bad news or scary news for God's people. It is good news. News of comfort and encouragement. Though you may not see it with your eyes, I will do a marvelous thing in your midst. I will rebuild my temple.

Most people when they hear that God is going to shake the all things move straight to Ragnarok and Armageddon and the end of the world. It creates the same kind of response in them that God's coming on Sinai created. This is ironically, the exact opposite response that Hebrews is trying to garner. *You have not come to Mt. Sinai*, but to Mt. Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem. And therefore, the original context of Haggai should be kept in mind when it says, “**Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.**” God is coming in power for the good of his people and for the glory of his Son and Spirit. This news is meant, as Gregory says, to persuaded us rather than force us (Gregory of Nazianzus, *On the Holy Spirit* 5.31.25). Force, he says, is used to keep things in check and it is despots who require force. But persuasion is spontaneous and arises in your own heart therefore lasting and being secure. That is why you must read this as good news rather than bad and

with regard to what has already come first.

Then, and only then, should you let your mind start to think beyond. But you must do this too. “‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of things that are shaken,” it says (**Heb 12:27**). Things that are shaken are “things that have been made.” This firstly is talking about the world systems, governments, politics, and cultures of men. Those who put their trust in princes will fall. Those who trust in a nation or a president or who believe that one country or political view or candidate will save people are greatly mistaken. You are not to be anxious about the current political season, for these things have been and are being and will be shaken. That is the way of things. If you are, then you need to retreat to the safe place where Christ is and stop worrying about what God has ordained. You are the firstborn children of heaven, not of earth.

Second, these shaken things include the heavenly powers called principalities. These are they who stand behind the earthly powers. They are the *elohim* of Psalm 82 decreed to die like any prince: the prince of Greece, the prince of Persia and so on. “The earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken. The earth

staggers like a drunken man; it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again. On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven in heaven, and the kings of the earth on the earth” (Isa 24:19-21).

Isaiah is looking far into the future. That future began when the Son of God conquered and became king in his resurrection and ascension. Satan was put under. The kings of the earth scoff, but find no way to undermine his rule. This is already. This is eschatology. And yet, this looks forward to a day in the future when the King will come in his glorious Second Coming to make all things new and right. The evil, the corruption, the sin, the rebellion will all be stopped suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, for these things are shaken. These things have tainted the whole world so that even the very creation itself groans in anticipation of its liberation from its bondage to decay.

Thus, the Lord Jesus will usher in a Day when heaven and earth will be made new and that which is not able to be shaken can remain (Heb 12:27). This is eschatology. And so what is its application of eschatology of this? Worship.

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom

that cannot be shaken” (Heb 12:28). The kingdom of God is here. It is within you. You can’t see it or touch it. You can’t find it on a map. But it is here and you have come to it. Therefore, you are to be grateful. That is exactly why we have gathered this new Lord’s Day—to worship the King and be thankful that he has put us into his kingdom.

Giving thanks from your heart for all of these things is the beginning of the offering up of “acceptable worship” (28). There is worship that is unacceptable—when it is forced, when it is wrong, when it is fleshly. Acceptable worship begins here “with reverence and awe” at things that you do not see, but know are true.

This is just the beginning of our worship, as we will see when we come to the last chapter of the sermon. Until then, we need to root our reverence and awe in the person of God and his immutability of God who is the same always. People like to think that the God of the OT was fiery hot. But this tells us *in the NT* that God is a **consuming fire**.

This comes from **Deut 4:24** and reveals that it is the same God throughout the Bible. The image is both frightening and yet strangely comforting. The fire of God in the Pentateuch is the place to begin understanding it. Often

times, the fire of God consumes his adversaries. Sodom—destroyed by fire. Fire fell upon the land of Egypt and burnt it to tinder. Korah and 250 men who rebelled against Moses—consumed by fire. The fires of hell await those who refuse God’s grace in Christ.

But when Moses approached the fiery bush, neither he nor the bush was consumed. The pillar of fire went before Israel and fought for him. The fire from God consumed ... the sacrifices and God forgave their sins.

This then is [the duel edge of the consuming fire](#). Will it be the raging prairie or forest fire of God’s unmitigated wrath apart from the sacrificial death of his Son? The blazing eyes of fire of Christ returning on a white steed at the Second Coming with the voice of the trumpet to make the whole world shake? Or will it be the purifying fire that consumes impurities but leaves the gold of one declared righteous in Christ, who in his first coming hid the Shekinah-glory that he might win us salvation? Overwhelming fire to scald and devour? Seeing God face to face like Mt. Sinai? Or fire contained to warm and delight? God hidden in human flesh and ascended to the heavenly Jerusalem?

Perhaps Moses said it best. “Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, we shall die” (Deut 5:25). And yet in the Lord Jesus, the thundering sound is a gentle voice calling you to worship him in spirit and in truth. Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe. This is biblical eschatology. This is our spiritual act of worship.