

A HOLY LIFE FOR A HOLY PEOPLE | HEBREWS 12:15-17

- Verse 15:
 - **Looking Diligently:** The word ἐπισκοπέω [episkopeo] is an intensified form of *skopeo* from which we get "scope." Therefore, **looking diligently** or "scoping it out thoroughly."
 - **Fail:**
 - The word is ὑστερῶν [husteron] ("to lack") is from the root ὑστερος [ysteros] from which we get "yesterday." It conveys the idea of something being spent or used, thus it involves a need, lack, or shortage.
 - The writer is not warning about falling from grace. Rather, he is urging the Hebrew nation to "scope out" the nation so that no one of the nation is "left out" of God's grace.
 - **Any root of bitterness:** This is the second thing the Hebrew nation was to be looking diligently for. First, that none miss out on the grace of God. Second, they were to be watching for any **root of bitterness**. This instruction / warning is appropriate for believers of any age.
 - **Many be defiled:** Since this is singular, the **thereby** is a reference to the **root of bitterness**. Such a root has the ability to defile.
- Verse 16:
 - **Any fornicator** - This is third in the list of things the nation was to be **looking diligently** for.
 - **Profane person** - The fourth in the list of things the nation was to be **looking diligently** for. The underlying word for **profane** has the meaning "to walk on," thus an ordinary "everydayness," as Esau disregarded rather than respected his birthright. Genesis 25:34 says "thus Esau despised his birthright."
 - Concerning **Esau**, What an ignoble comparison to the heroes of the faith in chapter 11.
- Verse 17:
 - **He found no** place, that is, though he **sought it carefully with tears**, there was no **place** where he could go and have this undone, even with a subsequent change of mind.
 - Note that this illustration is incompatible with the message of grace, in which there is always an open door.

TWO MOUNTAINS | HEBREWS 12:18-27

- In vv. 18-23, the writer compares Mt. Sinai with Mt. Zion (given symbolically as the Kingdom). Sinai was a **mount that might be touched** (v. 18) while Zion is **the city of the living God** (v. 22). This is a further way of saying, "The age of the law is passed, the age of the Kingdom is at hand."
- Verse 22 –
 - **Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem** - These are all given as symbolic of the promised Kingdom.
 - **An innumerable company of angels** - The same words are used (in Greek) in Rev. 5:11, speaking of "myriads" of angels before the throne of God.
- Verse 23 –
 - **The general assembly** - The Greek πανήγυρις [panaguris] is from *pan* (all) and *agora* (market). It is only used here in the New Testament. It is a word only used of festival gatherings. It would

have been better to have reserved the word *assembly* for *ekklesia* immediately following. And this assembly is an amazing one indeed!

- **The church of the firstborn** -
 - The **church of the firstborn** (more accurately, *assembly*) is an assembly of all who can be considered *firstborn* in this spiritual sense.
 - Grammatically, it is not "the assembly of the firstborn (who is Jesus)" but "the assembly of those who can themselves claim status as firstborn."
 - Who is this **assembly of the firstborn**? We must allow Scripture to be its own dictionary, and find the answer in Exodus 4:22, where Israel is declared God's **firstborn**.
- **Which are written in heaven** - The "elect" is the nation of Israel, and this election is **written in heaven**. The 70 Kingdom witnesses were told to rejoice over this in Luke 10:20.
- **The spirits of just men...** - This phrase seems to make a distinction between the **church of the firstborn and just men made perfect**, since a normal reading of the words would show that both of these groups are in the list. And because these are still spirits then they have not been given glorified bodies (thus pre-resurrection).
- Verse 24-
 - **Jesus the mediator** - Because Jesus is presented as the **mediator of the new covenant** then the covenant has not yet been delivered.
 - **The blood of sprinkling** - That is, the blood of Jesus Christ as the *lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world*.
- Verse 25-
 - **Him that speaketh** - This is likely the author speaking in third person, saying, "don't refuse what I am saying." If this is the case, then all translations should make this a lowercase "him." NASB, NLT, NKJV, HCSB, use uppercase. However, the context of the rest of the verse does give merit to consider **him that speaketh** to be God. I take it as the author's way of saying, "listen to me, because what I am saying is God-breathed."
- Verse 26:
 - Further evidence that **him that speaketh** in 25a is the writer is that this **him that speaketh from heaven** is an introduction to a quote from God in the Haggai 2:6.
 - **Yet once more...** quoted from Haggai 2:6, the passage is prophetic of the coming Day of the Lord, which precedes the Kingdom.
- Verse 27:
 - **Yet once more** - The word **more** is neither in the Greek text nor the Hebrew quote in Hag. 2.6. The text simply says, "yet once." The word **yet** speaks of a future event. Translators have often added "more" due to the reference and comparison to Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:18).
 - **The removing of those things that are shaken** - That is, the shaking has a purpose: the removal of that which is *shakeable* for that which is *unshakable*.
 - From George N.H. Peters: The student who has followed our argument will at once anticipate such a result, for the Kingdom, in its *Theocratic aspect*, with its design and connections (e.g. restored Jewish nation), *cannot possibly* be erected here on earth without *a fearful commotion, the most terrible convulsions* among the nations, in which nature itself is represented as partaking. The Millennial descriptions are introduced by

this preparatory shaking, and every prophet, more or less, has portrayed its *dreadful* nature.ⁱ

THE FINAL KINGDOM MESSAGE | HEBREWS 12:28-29

- Verse 28 – **A kingdom that cannot be shaken** – The kingdom being received is yet future, as is clear in this passage. Yet many commentaries have made this "shaking" to be past tense, having come with the birth of Jesus. Consider these examples from Albert Barnes (Barnes Notes on the New Testament).ⁱⁱ
 - "The words here quoted are taken from Haggai 2:6, where they refer to the changes which would take place under the Messiah. The meaning is, that there would be great revolutions in his coming, *as if* the universe were shaken to its center. The apostle evidently applies this passage as it is done in Haggai, to the first advent of the Redeemer."
 - "The shaking of the earth here evidently refers to the commotions among the nations that would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah."
 - "This may refer either (1) to the extraordinary phenomena in the heavens at the birth, the death, and the ascension of Christ; or (2) to the revolutions in morals and religion which would be caused by the introduction of the gospel, as if everything were to be changed—expressed by "a shaking of the heavens and the earth;" or (3) it may be more literally taken as denoting that there was a remarkable agitation in the heavens—in the bosoms of its inhabitants—arising from a fact so wonderful as that the Son of God should descend to earth, suffer, and die."
 - "The effect of the gospel would be to overturn everything which was of a temporary character in the previous system, and everything in morals which was not founded on a solid basis, and to set up in the place of it principles which no revolution and no time could change."

ⁱ Peters, George N. H. *The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ*. Vol. 2. New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884. Print.

ⁱⁱBarnes, Albert. *Notes on the New Testament: Hebrews*. Ed. Robert Frew. London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885. Print.