

LIVING IN AND INHERITING AN UNSHAKABLE KINGDOM

by John Pester

*"What is man, that You bring him to mind?
Or the son of man, that You care for him?"
(Heb. 2:6).*

The divine answer to these questions informs the content of the Epistle to the Hebrews, from a succinct answer in verse 7 to an extended unveiling of this same answer in all thirteen chapters. In the succinct formulation of this answer, man, who was made inferior to the angels for a little while, has been crowned with glory and honor and set over the works of God's hands. This speaks of the fulfillment of God's stated intention in His creation of humanity in Genesis 1:26:

Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

God's intention is focused on the expression of His image and the exercise of His dominion through humanity. In the extended unveiling of this answer throughout the entirety of Hebrews, Christ, who is the effulgence of God's glory and who is sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high (1:3), exemplifies the attainment of God's desire for expression in humanity through His heavenly ministry, and He exemplifies the attainment of God's desire for the exercise of dominion through humanity by His righteous judgments. Furthermore, Hebrews shows that Christ is enlarging His attainments in the believers through His succor and care for us as our High Priest and through His righteous judgments on us as our ascended and enthroned King (2:16-18; 10:30; 12:23). Both in this age and in the coming inhabited earth, Christ is bringing us, God's many sons, into glory for the corporate expression of His image and into an

unshakable kingdom for the corporate exercise of His dominion (2:10; 12:28).

In Hebrews Christ's priesthood is closely associated with His kingship. Through His heavenly ministry, Christ is enlarging God's image in redeemed humanity, and through the application of His righteous judgments, He is enlarging the realm of God's kingdom in and through redeemed humanity. Hebrews is focused on bringing ignorant, erring, weak, and wavering believers (5:2; 10:23), whose immature testimony falls short of the full expression of God's image (5:13—6:1; Eph. 4:13), into a living that is according to the reality of God's unshakable kingdom in this age (Heb. 12:28). Hebrews also confirms that the believers who respond to the warnings of the King by giving heed to what is spoken concerning the Son (2:1-4), by not coming short of the promised rest (3:7—4:13), by being brought on to maturity (5:11—6:20), by coming forward to the Holy of Holies and not shrinking back to old covenant practices (10:19-39), and by running the race and not falling away from grace (12:1-29)¹ will inherit the manifestation of God's unshakable kingdom in the next age (4:9; 6:12; 12:28).

The Shaken Condition of the Believers in Hebrews

The unshakable kingdom unveiled in Hebrews is the issue of the fulfillment of God's desire for image and dominion in the person of Christ as the unique God-man, who, like us, was made a little inferior to the angels (2:7), who was tempted in His human living in all respects like us (4:15), who endured the suffering of death on the cross (2:9; 12:2), who was declared to be the deified Son in His humanity as the Firstborn (1:5-6), and who was given the scepter of the kingdom in His resurrection (v. 8). Against this bright background of Christ's attainments, however, there is a sobering depiction of weak and wavering believers, who, like

us, are falling short of their heavenly calling (3:1; 9:15) and whose condition can best be described as shaken. The factors that cause our hands to hang down (12:12), making our labor in the Lord ineffective (cf. Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 15:58), that cause our knees to be paralyzed (Heb. 12:12; Isa. 35:3), making our walk unworthy of the Lord (cf. Eph. 4:1; 5:8), and that cause our members to be put out of joint (Heb. 12:13), making our service in the Body of Christ uncoordinated and individualistic (cf. Rom. 12:4-8), are environmental, constitutional, and dispositional in nature.

Living in a Creation and Constitution Shaken and Corrupted by Sin and Death

Although all believers have been transferred into God's unshakable kingdom in this age (Col. 1:13), the reality of the kingdom is hidden within the old creation, within an environment that has been corrupted by sin and death. Consequently, when our eyes are influenced by sight rather than by faith (2 Cor. 5:7), it is easy to be shaken, especially when we grant more weight to the momentary lightness of our afflictions than they deserve in comparison to the eternal things of God's great salvation (4:17-18). All humanity lives in a creation that has become old like a garment, a creation that will be rolled up like a mantle (Heb. 1:10-12). By its very nature, the old creation is an environment of instability; it can and will be utterly shaken when there is a removal of the things that have been made (12:26-27). Although we should have no confidence in or rely upon things that are subject to the slavery of corruption (Phil. 3:3; Rom. 8:21), the prominence of the materiality of our existence in the old creation causes us to habitually rely more on things that are seen than on things that are not seen (2 Cor. 4:18). Consequently, when the shakable elements in our environment are shaken, we are shaken as well. When, for example, we fail to hold fast to the confession of our hope and there is a plundering of our possessions, which are subject to plundering in the old creation, we have little joy in the knowledge that there is a better possession and little endurance unto the obtaining of the promise; there is only a shaken response and a shrinking back (Heb. 10:23, 34-36, 39).

Apart from the reality of the kingdom, the weight of living in the old creation is a heavy burden to bear, involving a great conflict of sufferings (v. 32).² As a consequence of the fall and the subsequent corruption of God's creation through the entrance of sin and death into the world (Rom. 5:12), it is not possible to avoid sufferings related to our environmental circumstances. These sufferings vary only in degree of intensity, but this intensity is compounded by the fact that our human constitution, our human nature, has also been encumbered with sin and death. As part of the creation, all humanity has been subjected in slavery to sin (8:20-22). Through the various

forms of our dissoluteness, sin weakens and compounds our suffering through its dissipating effects on the vitality of our life. There is no enduring strength or stability to the human condition because of the impact of sin and death on creation and because of the operation of sin and death within us (7:23-24). The scorching heat of the sun causes our flesh to wither in weakness as grass (James 1:11; Isa. 40:6-8) and our souls to faint in a vain struggle against sin (Heb. 12:3-4). Being shaken, therefore, is the unavoidable and constant condition of humanity. There is no escape from the suffering and shaking of the human condition for an unbeliever other than believing, and there is equally no escape from these sufferings for a believer whose heart is filled with unbelief. As believers, however, we have been freed from the slavery of sin and enslaved to the righteousness of the kingdom (Rom. 6:17-19), and we have been given a spirit of faith (2 Cor. 4:13). Consequently, we are not consigned to being shaken like unbelievers even in the midst of the same environmental and dispositional constraints.

Living in a Disposition Shaken by Unbelief

Although it is ordained that we would live in the reality of God's unshakable kingdom in this age, our response to God's great salvation will determine whether or not we escape the corruption which is in the world (2 Pet. 1:4). Escaping corruption does not imply an absence of suffering or even an exemption from the discipline that enables us to partake of His holiness (Heb. 12:10); rather, it means that in the midst of our suffering and discipline, there is grace for timely help, grace that will make us more than conquerors in the midst of suffering circumstances, including tribulation, anguish, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword (Rom. 8:35-37). This grace is in our regenerated human spirit, which is the reality of the Holy of Holies, and just as in the type, our regenerated human spirit is the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22). When we hold fast the confession of our faith and come forward with boldness to the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:22-23), there is a supply of the divine life as grace to sustain us in our journey through wilderness environments to the Sabbath rest that is the reality of God's kingdom. In such a journey, there will be suffering but not shaking.

If, however, we do not hold fast to the confession and instead nurture an evil heart of unbelief (3:12), the good news of Christ's great salvation and the active operation of Christ in His heavenly ministry as our High Priest will not profit us (4:2). Without faith and in a condition of unbelief, we can be as shaken as any unbeliever. And without faith, we will not have the long-suffering that is needed to inherit the promises unveiled in Hebrews. Instead, we will only have a sluggish and shaken response to our environmental circumstances and shrink back to ruin (6:12;

10:38-39). In principle, this ruin mirrors the end of unbelievers because it involves a certain fearful expectation of fiery judgment that brings us near a curse both in this age and in the next (v. 27; 6:8). All unbelievers and believers are shakable, but believers who live in the reality of God's unshakable kingdom are not consigned to living in a shakable condition delimited by sin, death, and unbelief.

Living in an Unshakable Kingdom

It is God's desire that redeemed humanity would live in His unshakable kingdom,³ and for this He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises (2 Pet. 1:4). These promises are unveiled in Hebrews as the elements of Christ's great salvation and His ongoing heavenly ministry. The efficacy of these elements are eternal and available to all believers, but if these elements are neglected (2:3), their efficacy will not be realized in our experience. Hebrews unveils the ability of these provisions to free us from the bondage of the fear of death (v. 15), to embolden us to come forward to serve the living God (9:14), and to restore and shepherd our soul in sanctification unto a living that expresses the righteousness of the kingdom (10:38). Hebrews also shows that these provisions are received when

we do not harden our hearts to the voice of the Lord in the midst of our weaknesses (3:15). When we hear the voice of the Lord and our heart is softened, the faith that is produced enables us to come forward to the throne of grace (4:16), to enter the Holy of Holies (10:19), to endure (6:12-18; 10:32), to accept discipline (12:5-11), and to come forward to Mount Zion in this age (v. 22). When Christ's divine provisions are received by faith and substantiated in our practice of coming forward, entering, enduring, and accepting discipline, there is an expression of a practical living that is according to the reality of God's unshakable kingdom.

Knowing the Divine Provisions of the Kingdom

The divine provisions that empower us to live in the reality of the kingdom are realized by us through faith. Through faith we are freed from the fear of death and its slavery so that we can partake of our heavenly calling (2:15; 3:1). Through faith our weaknesses become opportunities to receive grace as a divine supply in Christ's service to us as our merciful and faithful High Priest (2:17-18;

4:15). Through faith we are emboldened by Christ's better blood and better sacrifices to enter into the Holy of Holies with a pure conscience to serve the living God in the kingdom of God (9:14, 23; 10:19). And through faith we are shepherded by Christ as our great Shepherd (13:20), the One who restores our soul in sanctification so that we can walk on paths of righteousness, subdue the adversaries of God, and dwell in the house of God, the kingdom (Psa. 23). All these provisions come out of the person and work of Christ, and they are applied to and received in our person for our work in the reality of the kingdom as His anointed partners (Heb. 1:9; 3:14).

Sin is inextricably linked with death, and the fear of death enslaves and debilitates those who live in the old creation rather than in the reality of the kingdom (2:15). For both unbelievers and believers alike, death is the antithesis of life, and it is manifested in weakness. Although unbelievers cannot escape the bondage and weaknesses brought about by sin, we as believers have a merciful and faithful High Priest (v. 17), who can sympathize with us in our weaknesses because He was tempted in all respects like us, yet without sin. He knows our specific weaknesses because He is able to be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses

(4:15), and He meets our needs with His supply of grace. The weaknesses of an unbeliever are only a source of shaking to him, but in His mercy and through His faithfulness as our High Priest, our weaknesses are opportunities for us to gain His heavenly supply of grace (2 Cor. 12:9). When we consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession in the midst of our weaknesses, we are able to partake of our heavenly calling, the Holy Spirit, and His holiness (Heb. 3:1; 6:4; 12:10). Christ has freed us from the fear of death through His propitiation of our sins, and He is able to supply us with grace in the midst of our weaknesses, enabling us to live in the reality of the kingdom, unshaken, secure and firm (6:19-20).

Without Christ's propitiation of our sins by His better blood and better sacrifices, we would have no boldness toward God and no ability to live in the reality of the kingdom of God. Those who live in the old creation, both unbelievers and believers, invariably shrink from coming forward to God out of a sense of shame related to their sins and their constitution of sin. Such ones have no boldness because they have no confidence in their standing

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before God. Unlike unbelievers, however, we have the divine provision of Christ's better blood and better sacrifices, which deals with all our sins—past, present, and future—and covers our constitution of sin. When God sees the blood of Christ, He passes over us (Exo. 12:13). Knowing that He is satisfied by the propitiating blood of Christ and knowing that He sees us in Christ, apart from sin (Heb. 9:28), we have boldness to come forward to the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies, which is our regenerated and mingled human spirit. Although our coming forward is to receive mercy and find grace for timely help, Hebrews charges us to come forward with boldness (4:16). There is no sense in Hebrews of a need for obedience or meekness toward God. Such an attitude, in principle, insults the Spirit of grace because it denigrates the person and work of Christ (10:29). Thus, through faith we know and realize the efficacy of Christ's better blood and better sacrifices, and we are emboldened to enter into our regenerated and mingled human spirit with a pure conscience to serve the living God in the kingdom of God (9:14, 23; 10:19).

In contrast to our regenerated human spirit, which is the focal point of God's unshakable kingdom, our soul, consisting of our mind, emotion, and will, is the focal point of our shakable condition. There is no escape from a reprobate mind with thoughts that rise up in opposition to God, from a divergent will that is hardened against God's ways, and from emotions that overwhelm with feelings of weakness if we live in the old creation according to the impulses of our soul. Thankfully, we have the divine provision of Christ as a great Shepherd (Psa. 23; Heb. 13:20), who leads us beside waters of rest in His promised land of rest (4:1, 3, 8-9), who restores our soul as the anchor of our soul (6:19), who guides us on the paths of righteousness to perfect us in righteousness (12:23), who comforts us with His disciplining rod and cherishing staff (vv. 5-8, 10), who spreads a table before us in the presence of our adversaries to make them a footstool (1:13; 10:13), who anoints our head with oil as His partners (1:9), and who makes us His house for the mutual indwelling of God and redeemed humanity (10:21-22). Our entrance into the land of rest that remains, the Sabbath rest, is dependent upon hearing His living and operative word (4:2, 9, 11-12), which divides soul from spirit and deals with every wayward thought and intention in our heart.

Hebrews also unveils Christ in His person and work as a merciful and faithful High Priest, who is ministering Himself to us as grace based on His better blood and better sacrifices and who is shepherding our souls by perfecting us through His living and operative word. When the superiority of the divine provisions that have been granted to us is unveiled, as in Hebrews, and received by us, it is possible for us to live in the reality of the kingdom. In our

experience these provisions are received through the hearing of faith. When we hear the voice of the Lord in the Word of the Lord, there is a response of faith that begins with our appreciation of Him and our calling out to Him. In our calling out, He supplies us with grace, and we receive and accept His divine provisions. When we accept His divine provisions, our human spirit is joined to the divine Spirit in an organic union (1 Cor. 6:17). Following this union in life and nature, the Spirit is able to inscribe Himself as the law of the Spirit of life on our hearts, enabling us to live in the reality of God's unshakable kingdom.⁴

Receiving the Divine Provisions of the Kingdom

Through the hearing of faith, the reality of the divine provisions for living in God's unshakable kingdom in this age are made known to us, and through the hearing of faith, we receive these divine provisions. Receiving is the unique and indispensable requirement of a believer.⁵ Receiving is the basis for our entrance into the kingdom, and practicing the things that we have learned, received, heard, and seen of these provisions is the basis for our living in the kingdom (Phil. 4:9). The main impediment to receiving the provisions that have been prepared for us through the person and work of Christ, however, is a hardened heart.

There are many factors that converge in our circumstances to affect the condition of our heart and lead to its hardening. Sin is not an insignificant factor, but in Christ's redemption, there was the purification of sins (Heb. 1:3), a taking away of sin (John 1:29), and a propitiating for our sins before God (Heb. 2:17), which delivers us from the guilt and shame associated with sin and sins. Thus, our heart of stone was softened at the moment of our regeneration, making it a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26). The moment of our initial salvation was a moment of gladness, release, and jubilation (Psa. 51:12; Luke 4:18-19); it was not a moment associated with hardness. The hardness that deprives us of access to the divine provisions of Christ's person and work begins in our responses to the testing circumstances that we encounter in our wilderness journey in this age following our initial salvation. Even though we may have seen His works in our initial salvation, we may not see His ways in our journey to His land of rest (Psa. 95:9-10; Heb. 3:10), and thus, we may test the Lord, often by questioning whether or not He is even among us (Exo. 17:7). In such a situation our heart hardens and becomes an evil heart of unbelief, and there is a falling away from the living God (Heb. 3:12). With a hardened heart, the word of the Lord that comes to us through His speaking in the Word is rendered profitless (4:2).⁶

The writer of Hebrews underscores the importance of not

hardening our heart to the voice of the Lord by his repeated references to Psalm 95. In Hebrews 3 and 4 he quotes the central verse in the following passage three times:

Today, if you hear His voice, / Do not harden your heart as at Meribah, / As in the day of Massah in the wilderness; / When your fathers tested Me; / They tried Me, even though they had seen My work. / For forty years I loathed that generation, / And I said, They are a people who go astray in heart; / And they do not know My ways; / Therefore I swore in My anger: / They shall by no means enter into My rest! (Psa. 95:7-11, emphasis added)

In Hebrews 3:7 the charge to not harden our hearts to His voice is attributed to the Holy Spirit. In verse 15 the antecedent for the speaker of the same charge is Christ. In 4:7 the charge is associated with God's representative on earth, David. These three speakers correspond to the speakers whom the writer of Hebrews identifies as the sources of the word concerning God's great salvation in 2:3-4—the Lord, the representatives of the Lord who heard the Lord's word, and the witnessing Holy Spirit. There are three sources of the word of the Lord, and in Hebrews, each appeals to us to not harden our heart.⁷

Hebrews, however, also wonderfully reveals that when we hear the voice of the Lord with a softened heart, we are assured and empowered by faith to come forward to the throne of grace (4:16), to enter the Holy of Holies (10:19), to endure (v. 32), to accept the loving discipline of our Father (12:5-11), and to ultimately come forward to Mount Zion in this age (v. 22). All the provisions related to the person and work of Christ are received by faith, but they are substantiated in our practice and experience of coming forward, entering, enduring, and accepting discipline.

Hearing and knowing that the way to the throne of grace has been opened by the better blood and better sacrifices of Christ, we must, in faith, practice coming forward by entering through the veil into the Holy of Holies. Hearing and knowing that we have a merciful and faithful High Priest, who was tempted in every respect like us, who knows our weaknesses, who endured a far greater contradiction by sinners than we (v. 3), and who struggled

against sin, resisting even unto blood (v. 4), we need to practice endurance in order to obtain His promises (6:12-18; 10:32; 12:1). Hearing and knowing that we have a great Shepherd who oversees our soul to sanctify us in His divine life (1 Pet. 2:25), we need to practice accepting the loving discipline of our Father in this age in order to partake of His holiness (Heb. 12:5-11). And hearing and knowing that there is a rest in Christ as our land of promise and in the church as the place of God's dwelling, we need to practice coming forward to the reality of God's kingdom in this age, Mount Zion,⁸ as overcomers who refuse to be related to the fallen condition of the sin-corrupted old creation, and instead, are faithful over God's house (v. 22; 11:24-27; 3:2, 6).

Practicing the things that we have heard speaks of our responsibility to cooperate with Christ in carrying out God's desire for image and dominion in the kingdom, but this cooperation is not a work apart from Him, because we are His anointed partners (1:9). When we practice coming forward to the throne of grace, our practice must be in the One who was the Forerunner through the veil (6:19-20). When we practice endurance, our practice must be in the One who endured (12:2). When we practice accepting the discipline

of the Father, our practice must be in the One who learned obedience and was perfected in His sufferings (5:8-9). And when we practice coming forward to Mount Zion by overcoming, our practice must be in the One who prevailed to overcome (Rev. 5:5; 1 John 4:4). The faith that assures and empowers us is a faith that joins us to Christ, and through our union with Him in our mingled spirit, our practice is His practice and His practice is our practice. In this mingled practice there is also a mingled expression of the divine provisions of the kingdom.

Expressing the Divine Provisions of the Kingdom

Those who are living in the reality of God's unshakable kingdom in this age express the divine provisions in their mingled living with the Lord. There is a general description in Matthew 5:3-12 of the expression of these divine provisions, but there is a correspondingly more detailed and practical description of this expression in Hebrews. Matthew 5:1—7:29 is characterized by Witness Lee as the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens, which is

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a “revelation of the spiritual living and heavenly principles of the kingdom of the heavens” that depicts the “nature of the people of the kingdom of the heavens, who are under nine blessings” (Recovery Version, 5:3, note 1). These nine blessings are contained in verses 3 through 12 of chapter 5, which say,

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are you when they reproach and persecute you, and while speaking lies, say every evil thing against you because of Me. Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens; for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

“To be poor in spirit is not only to be humble but also to be emptied in our spirit, in the depth of our being, not holding on to the old things of the old dispensation but unloaded to receive the new things” (Recovery Version, v. 3, note 2). Those who are poor in spirit do not hold on to the things of the old covenant. In Hebrews this blessing is manifested in our living when we experience the inscription of the divine provisions of the new covenant on our hearts (8:6-11), when we are perfected by coming forward to God (7:19, 28), when we do not shrink back to ruin (10:39), and when we do not abandon our own assembling together (10:25). In order to live in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens, we need to be poor in spirit but not passive. We need to be open to the work of the inscribing Spirit, and we need to be aggressive to come forward to God to be perfected, knowing that the things of the old covenant are ineffective for our perfection (7:11, 19, 28; 8:7; 9:9). We also need to realize that the way of the old covenant is a path to ruin because there has been a transfer of both the priesthood and of law (7:12) and that the new covenant way of assembling together is the ordained way to receive the new covenant supply in the corporate fellowship of the kingdom.

To mourn is related to the situation of the world that is negative toward the fulfillment of God’s economy.

Satan, sin, self, darkness and worldliness predominate among all people on earth. God’s glory is insulted, Christ is rejected, the Holy Spirit is frustrated, the church is desolate, self is corrupt, and the whole world is evil. God wants us to mourn over such a situation. (Recovery Version, Matt. 5:4, note 1)

Those who mourn recognize and respond to the fallen condition of the old creation that frustrates the fulfillment of God’s economy. In Hebrews this blessing is manifested in our living when we run the race with endurance according to the examples in chapter 11. Like Abel, we should recognize the need for a proper sacrifice to propitiate for our sinful constitution (v. 4). Like Enoch, we should understand the need to obtain a testimony of being well pleasing to God in a world dominated by Satan and sin (v. 5). Like Noah, we should live in pious fear, knowing that the world is both condemned and in a condition worthy of condemnation (v. 7). Like Abraham, we should recognize the illusory nature of our human circumstances, which is confirmed by our being called out from them by God, and we should be willing to dwell in a land of promise as foreigners (vv. 8-9). Like Sarah, we should recognize the operation of corruption in our flesh, but not be willing to allow this corruption to deter the stronger operation of God that can manifest the conception and expression of Christ as the divine seed in us (v. 11; Gal. 1:15-6; 3:16, 29). Like Moses, we should recognize the allure of Satan’s kingdom, but refuse to be aligned with his worldly house, and instead, be faithful over God’s house (Heb. 11:24-26, 3:5). In order to live in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens, we need an awareness of these mournful conditions, but rather than being subdued by them, we need to run with endurance toward the realities of God’s kingdom—His sacrifices, as typified in the experience of Abel; His divine instructions, as typified in the experience of Noah; His calling, as typified in the experience of Abraham; His divine life, as typified in the experience of Sarah; and His house, as typified in the experience of Moses—knowing that these are our only sources of solace and comfort (Matt. 5:4).

“To be meek means not to resist the world’s opposition but to suffer it willingly” (Recovery Version, v. 5, note 1). Those who are meek recognize that there is opposition from the world, but they are not compelled to resist. In Hebrews this blessing is manifested in our living when we are joyfully shorn of our material possessions through the plundering by the unrighteous. It is also manifested in our willingness to be shorn of the dignity that the self seeks when we are made a spectacle of public derision, a public gazingstock (10:33-34). Such meekness is not informed by weakness or by passivity, but by the knowledge that God has no need for immediate vindication (v. 30) and that in due time there will be a reckoning of all accounts of unrighteousness (1 Pet. 4:5; 5:6).

To be righteous denotes “being right in our behavior. We need to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to seek after such righteousness, that we may enter into the kingdom of the heavens” (Recovery Version, Matt. 5:6, note 1). Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness recognize the experiential sources of unrighteousness—the lust of

the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life (1 John 2:16)—and react according to God in circumstances when they are manifested. In Hebrews this blessing is manifested in our living when we avoid profane behavior by treasuring our promised inheritance (12:16-17), when we hold marriage in honor (13:4), when we remember the leading ones and hold them in honor (v. 7), when we avoid strange teachings (v. 9), when we obey and submit (v. 17), and when we are able to receive and bear with words of exhortation (v. 22). Above all, in our hungering and thirsting for righteousness, we should not depart from tasting the good word of God or the word of righteousness that enables our faculties to be exercised for discriminating between both good and evil (6:5; 5:13-14). Profane behavior and the inability to hold marriage in honor are related to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. When we hold marriage in honor, there is an avoidance of situations and circumstances that can lead to unrighteous behavior and contact. Remembering the leading ones and holding them in honor is an indication that our pursuit of the vainglory of life has been limited by the inner operation of the Son who submitted in all things and who took the Father's will as His will and His way. Avoiding strange teachings is a living response that comes out of an

experiential knowledge that different teachings only produce questionings and cause us to turn aside to vain talking. It is also an indication that we have developed a taste for the healthy teaching that has been laid before us as nourishing words of the faith (1 Tim. 1:3-6; 4:6; 2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:9). Strange teachings come from those who are always learning but who are never able to come to the full knowledge of the truth, and they only heap sins on those who are captured by their teachings (2 Tim. 3:6-7). Thus, they are the antithesis of the word of righteousness that a believer who lives in the reality of the kingdom knows from its taste. Eating solid food is the precursor to bearing with a word of exhortation, because both the word of righteousness and the word of exhortation have the same purpose of bringing us on to maturity. If we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we will not regard an exhorting word as a criticism, but we will simply receive it as a righteous exhortation, knowing that there are many unrighteous elements, unrighteous thoughts, and unrighteous intentions in our being. We will not analyze or subjectively parse the nuances of every word; instead, we will accept and appreciate the

words that the Lord has used to divide our soul from our spirit.

To show mercy is to serve others without any sense of obligation and without any desire for recompense; it is to lovingly provide what is not deserved. "If we are merciful to others, the Lord will give us mercy (2 Tim. 1:16, 18), especially at His judgment seat" (Recovery Version, Matt. 5:7, note 2). Those who are merciful express the God of mercy, who has reached us with His love in circumstances that were anything but lovable. In Hebrews this blessing is manifested in our living when we minister to the needs of the saints (6:10) and when we manifest brotherly love in hospitality and care for others (13:1-3). We have received mercy and often know from personal experience the depths to which we can fall in our human living, but we also have a history of the Lord's mercy reaching us through the thoughtful, ministering care of the believers. Thus, we can show mercy to others in similar circumstances. Seeing other believers in a pitiful situation is not an occasion for boasting on our part but an occasion for responding with mercy in meekness (Gal. 6:1). And when mercy is shown, there is no desire for recompense; there is only joy in seeing the restoration of those whom we need

for our joint pursuit of God's corporate perfection.

To be pure in heart is to be single in purpose, to have the single goal of accomplishing God's will for God's glory...For the kingdom of the heavens we need to be poor in spirit, empty in our spirit, that we may receive Christ. Also, we need to be pure, single, in our heart that Christ may grow in us without frustration. (Recovery Version, Matt. 5:8, note 1)

The pure in heart see God because only God is in their heart; their eyes are not focused on other things or other desires. In Hebrews this blessing is manifested in our living when we know the Lord and build His corporate dwelling place, His tabernacle, according to the pattern that He has shown us (8:5, 11), which carries out His singular will (10:36). When the Lord's detailed divine directives are imparted into our mind,⁹ we know the Lord through our experiential realization of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2). In this inward operation of the Spirit, there is no deviation from the pattern that He has revealed concerning how to carry out

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 WHEN THEY ARE MANIFESTED.

His will related to building a place of rest for His dwelling within redeemed humanity (Isa. 66:1-2). To touch the Spirit is to touch the one God who has one will and one way, the God who is pure in His intentions and actions.

To be a peacemaker begins by being born of the God of peace and by receiving His peaceful life with its peaceful nature (Rom. 15:33; 16:20). “We must be those who make peace among men,” and “as those born of Him...we must walk in His divine life and according to His divine nature” (Recovery Version, Matt. 5:9, notes 1 and 2). The gospel produces peace both between God and redeemed humanity and between all classes and divisions of humanity, including Jew and Gentile. In Hebrews this blessing is manifested in our living when we partake of the heavenly supply of grace that is ministered by Christ as a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, which expands the realm of God’s kingdom of peace and produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness in our pursuit of peace with all men (Heb. 12:11, 14; Rom. 12:18).

Melchizedek means *king of righteousness*, and *king of Salem* means *king of peace* (v. 2). As the King of righteousness (Isa. 32:1), Christ made all things right with God and made all things right with one another. Righteousness issues in peace (Isa. 32:17). As the King of peace (Isa. 9:6), Christ, through righteousness, brings in peace between God and us, and in such a peace He fulfills the ministry of His priesthood. (Recovery Version, Heb. 7:1, note 2).

Through the Son’s ministry, the Father’s life of peace was imparted into our being when we received the Holy Spirit in our spirit (John 20:21-22). And when we set our mind on our mingled spirit, which is joined to the Lord, our mind becomes life and peace (Rom. 8:6), which enables us to respond to situations of rebellion and strife according to the peaceful life and nature of God within us, which marks us out as sons of God in this age.

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

The whole world lies in the evil one (1 John 5:19) and is filled with unrighteousness. If we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we will be persecuted for the sake of righteousness. For the sake of the kingdom of the heavens, we need to pay a price for the righteousness that we seek. (Recovery Version, Matt. 5:10, note 1)

The price of righteousness is persecution from unrighteous sources,¹⁰ but this persecution also deals with the unrighteousness in our being so that we can live in the reality of the kingdom now and inherit the manifestation of the kingdom as a reward in the coming age. In Hebrews this blessing is manifested in our living as we are

being brought on to maturity through our experience of the word of righteousness (5:13—6:1). This word is “deeper than the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God because it embodies the deeper thought of God’s justice and righteousness in His dispensational and governmental dealings with His people” (Recovery Version, 5:13, note 1). All the persecution that comes to us is allowed and even ordained by God so that we can be brought on to maturity and become full-grown, which is the prerequisite for the kingdom reward. Thus, when we are reviled, we can bless, and when we are persecuted, we can endure (1 Cor. 4:12).

Those who “live a life for the kingdom of the heavens, in the spiritual nature of the kingdom and according to the heavenly principles of the kingdom” will be “reproached, persecuted, and evilly spoken of, mostly by religious people, who hold to their traditional religious concepts” (Recovery Version, Matt. 5:11, note 1). The persecution in Matthew 5:10 is related to the believers’ pursuit of righteousness; the persecution in verse 11 is related to Christ and to our following of Him. In Hebrews this blessing is manifested in our living when we endure contradiction by sinners and willingly join ourselves to the Lord, go outside the religious camp, and bear His reproach (12:3; 13:13), and when we endure the cross with joy, victoriously bearing the shame of holding forth the Lord and His name (12:2; 13:15).

All the expressions in Hebrews of living in God’s unshakable kingdom in this age are related to the blessings of the kingdom of the heavens in Matthew 5:3-12. These blessings are a cause for rejoicing, and in Hebrews this rejoicing is expressed when we offer sacrifices of praises in our confession of His name and when we sing hymns of praise to the Father in the Son and in the church (2:12). When we know the divine provisions associated with Christ’s person and work and receive these provision in faith, the resulting expression will qualify us to inherit God’s unshakable kingdom when it is manifested in the next age.

Inheriting an Unshakable Kingdom

From the beginning to the end of Hebrews, the reward of the coming millennial kingdom serves as the silent subtext in the unfolding revelation of the superiority of Christ in His new covenant ministry to bring God’s many sons, His brothers, into glory (vv. 10, 12). In this revelation Christ is superior to angels (1:4—2:18), to Moses (3:1-6), and to Aaron (4:14—7:28), and His new covenant ministry is superior to the old based on His better blood and better sacrifices (8:1—10:18). The purpose of the writer’s unveiling of the superiority of Christ, however, involves more than just a desire to turn the Hebrew believers away from dispensational practices that are no longer efficacious before God.¹¹ Instead, Christ’s superiority is unveiled so

that the believers can share in Christ's inheritance of the kingdom in the coming age through their experience of the superiority of His divine provisions in this age. In His deified humanity and as the Heir of all things, Christ has fulfilled God's desire for an expression of His image and for the exercise of His dominion within humanity, but this desire for image and dominion also includes redeemed and regenerated humanity. Consequently, in the realm of faith, Christ, in His work as a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, is carrying out God's will by ministering the content of His person and work as grace to those who come forward to God through Him (7:25).

If we come forward, there will be a dispensational reward in the millennial kingdom, but if we shrink back in neglect of the Son's divine provisions, there will be a dispensational punishment during the age of the kingdom, although not a loss of our eternal salvation.¹² Hebrews faithfully and righteously records the fact that our inheritance of God's unshakable kingdom in the millennial age is contingent upon our living in the reality of His unshakable kingdom in this age. It is God's intention to gain an enlarged expression of Himself, and to this end, He created the universe through the Son, He sent the Son in order to redeem fallen humanity, He set the resurrected Son over all things as a ministering High Priest to sanctify redeemed humanity, and He will bring the Son yet again to openly display His kingdom on the coming inhabited earth. The goal of this process is the manifestation of God's enlarged expression through the kingdom. We can participate in this process because the Son has established the kingdom as a reality in this age, and if we participate in this process in this age, we will inherit the visible manifestation of the kingdom in the coming age.

The Son Establishing the Kingdom

In order for God's invisible power and divine characteristics to be visibly displayed, the universe was created through the Son (Rom. 1:20; Heb. 1:2). Within this visible, material realm, God formed a vessel in His image and according to His likeness to receive His divine life and nature for His expression and to share in the exercise of His dominion over the things He created. The visible manifestation of God's image and His dominion will be forever associated with creation—in its establishment in reality

within the old creation following the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, in its initial manifestation in the coming millennial kingdom following the Lord's coming back, and in its consummate manifestation in the new heaven and new earth following the defeat of Satan at the end of Christ's millennial reign. The importance of Christ's work in establishing the kingdom within God's visible realm of creation is highlighted in Hebrews by the numerous associations of Christ with various aspects of His creation, including His making of the universe (1:2), His being brought again as the Firstborn into the inhabited earth (v. 6), His laying the foundation of the earth (v. 10), His hands working to produce the heavens (v. 10), His coming to the coming inhabited earth (2:5), His being set over the works of God's hands and all things being subjected under His feet (vv. 7-8), His coming into the world to do the will of God (10:5-9), and His shaking of the heavens and the earth related to the manifestation of His kingdom (12:26-28).¹³

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WHEN IT IS MANIFESTED IN THE NEXT AGE.

The created universe is for the display of God's eternal kingdom, and this kingdom has been established in the Son and for the Son, who has been appointed Heir of all things (1:2). The establishment of God's unshakable heavenly kingdom began with Christ's incarnation, and while He was on the earth, the Lord

manifested the kingdom of God through His expression of God's life and nature within His humanity. In the Gospel of Luke, His birth heralded the coming of the kingdom (1:33), He announced the gospel of the kingdom (4:43), He taught concerning the kingdom (6:20), He veiled the kingdom in mysteries (8:10), He charged His disciples to proclaim the kingdom (9:2), He unveiled the kingdom resident within His being on the Mount of Transfiguration (vv. 27-29), He prayed for the kingdom (11:2), He demonstrated the kingdom (vv. 14-20), He affirmed the Father's desire to give us the kingdom (12:32), He warned the disciples concerning the loss of the kingdom in the coming age (13:27-29), He encouraged the disciples concerning the reward of the kingdom in the coming age (14:15; 22:16, 30), He affirmed the centrality of the kingdom in relation to His person (17:20-21), He identified the signs pointing to the coming of the manifestation of the kingdom (21:31), and He spoke of His willingness to share His appointment of the kingdom with His disciples, revealing His desire to enlarge His glory through redeemed, regenerated, and glorified humanity (22:29).

The establishment of this unshakable kingdom continued in His resurrection when He was set over all things to carry out the process of perfecting redeemed humanity for our righteous participation in the kingdom that was established in righteousness through His ministry of righteousness (Heb. 1:8; 2:7-8; 7:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:9). Ultimately, when He comes again to the inhabited earth in His glorified human body, visible to all the nations, He will set up His established kingdom as a reward to be inherited by those who seized the opportunity to be perfected through His heavenly ministry of grace in this age (Matt. 11:12; Luke 16:16). The sons of God who have passed through the process of God's discipline in this age by receiving the divine provisions that relate to the person and work of their enthroned and empowered King will inherit the visible manifestation of the kingdom in the millennium.

The Disciplined Sons Inheriting the Kingdom

The sons of God who inherit the manifestation of the kingdom will be sons who are full-grown in the divine life, not infants in need of maturity (Heb. 5:13; 6:1). This maturity can come only from a living that responds to our Father's loving discipline by receiving the Lord's gracious supply through the hearing of faith. Through faith and long-suffering, some will inherit the promise (v. 12). We need to imitate such ones so that every vestige of sluggishness in our sin-corrupted human life and nature will not encumber us and cause us to come short of the promised rest of God's kingdom in the millennium (4:1). As heirs of the promise, we need to patiently endure like Abraham (6:15). As heirs of the promise, we need to live as foreigners in the reality of the land of God's promised kingdom (11:9), apart from the debilitating effects of the old creation that has been stained with sin and death. With an endurance in our living that comes from the God of endurance through the word of His endurance (10:36; Rom. 15:5; Rev. 3:10), we will inherit the promise of the manifestation of God's unshakable kingdom. For those who live in the reality of God's unshakable kingdom, this inheritance will be bestowed according to His unchangeable counsel when the Coming One comes (Heb. 6:17; 10:37).

Living to Inherit

The promise of the inheritance of the kingdom, which was made possible through the person and work of Christ in His incarnation and in His ministry in resurrection, is not to angels but to man, to redeemed and regenerated humanity. Being ever mindful of humanity and of our role as His sons in life and nature to express His image and to exercise His dominion, God has made sufficient provisions for us to obtain His promised inheritance. These provisions have been made available to us in and through Christ, who is ministering to us as our High Priest and who

is caring for us as our great Shepherd. In order to live in the reality of God's unshakable kingdom, we need to receive these provisions in faith by not hardening our heart to the voice of the Lord when He speaks to us from His living and operative word in our wilderness journey through this age of testing and trial. By receiving these provisions with the loving discipline of our Father for our perfection in order to partake of His holiness, we will be constituted righteous in order to reign in life in this age. And when we obtain the promise of inheriting the manifestation of the kingdom in the next age, we will enjoy the full taste of the powers of the age to come in the kingdom established on and in the eternally unshakable being of the One who is the Heir of all things. May our desire to live in the reality of God's unshakable kingdom match our Father's desire to reward us with the manifestation of His unshakable kingdom. **AFC**

Notes

¹The five warning sections in the Epistle to the Hebrews can be regarded as righteous pronouncements related to the believers' living in and inheritance of God's unshakable kingdom. If we do not give heed to the things that have been spoken concerning Christ and His great salvation, there will be a just recompense in this age for not living in the reality of the kingdom and also a just recompense in the next age of not inheriting the kingdom. In each of the warning sections, the just recompense associated with that section is presented first as a recompense in this age and then as a recompense in the next. In each section, however, the primary emphasis is on the recompense in this age.

In the first warning section (2:1-4), those who do not give heed to what is spoken concerning the Son will drift away in this age and have no access to the benefits of Christ's great salvation, particularly the covering of His blood based on the efficacy of His sacrifice. As a consequence of this neglect, there will be a reckoning for every unforgiven transgression and disobedience at the judgment seat of Christ in the next age. In the second warning section (3:7—4:13), those who have an evil heart of unbelief and who come short of the promised rest in this age will fall away from the living God and be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (3:12-13). For those in this condition, there will be no enjoyment of His rest in this age with those who have believed and who have already entered into the promised rest (4:3). The just recompense in the next age for coming short of the promised rest in this age is the same—not enjoying the coming Sabbath rest (v. 9). There is rest in the reality of God's unshakable kingdom in this age, and there is rest in the manifestation of God's unshakable kingdom in the next age. This distinction of rests is evident in the progression of the verses in this section. Hebrews 3:7 through 4:5 focus on the rest in this age, and 4:6 through 4:11 focus on the rest in the next. The final two verses in this section, verses 12 and 13, speak of the divine provision of God's living and operative word, which equips us to

enter into God's rest in this age so that we can enter into it in the next. In the third warning section (5:11—6:20), those who are not brought on to maturity will fall away in this age from the benefits of God's great salvation, which include the Lord's inner enlightenment, being sustained with the divine life by tasting of the heavenly gift, partaking of the Holy Spirit, and enjoying the good word of God and the powers of the age to come (6:4-6). As a just recompense in the next age, the promised inheritance will be withheld in the millennial kingdom from these believers due to their lack of qualification in this age, and there will be a need for burning away their "thorns and thistles" (v. 8)—the same wood, grass, and stubble that are consumed with fire in 1 Corinthians 3:12-13 and 15. In the fourth warning section (10:19-39), for those who do not come forward to the Holy of Holies and shrink back to old covenant practices, there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and consuming fire in this age that cannot be mitigated because the corporate mutuality and exhortation that is available through assembling together has been abandoned and the Spirit of grace has been insulted (v. 25, 27, 29). As a just recompense in the coming age, the promise of the Sabbath rest in 4:9 will be withheld, and the soul of the untransformed will be a source of displeasure to the Lord and of dispensational ruin to that believer (10:38-39). In the fifth warning section (12:1-29), those who do not run the race and who fall away from grace will fall prey to the embittering, defiling, and profane temptations of this age, the impact of which cannot be reversed even with repentance and which will result in the forfeiture of the promised birthright in the coming age (v. 15-17).

²It should come as no surprise that "bad things" happen to "good people" in a creation that is enslaved to the corruption of sin. These "bad things" should not be viewed as being ordered by a vindictive or callous God; instead, they should be understood as the consequences of the ravages of sin and death. Rather than castigating God as a callous enabler of "bad things," as many unbelievers do, Christians should marvel and appreciate the love that God shows in His ability to turn our unavoidable sufferings in this present age into something far more eternal and weighty in our being (Rom. 8:18, 29; 2 Cor. 4:17). Unbelievers can only know the pain of suffering; Christians can know the glory that follows such sufferings. This is the glory that the Lord associates with the power of the kingdom (Matt. 6:13).

³Although it is God's desire that redeemed humanity would live in the reality of His kingdom, there is no intrinsic capacity within fallen humanity or even within humanity in a state of

innocence to live according to the standard of God's kingdom, which is God Himself. Those who have been given authority to become children of God in the kingdom of God are not those who have been born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but those who have been born of God (John 1:13). It is impossible for blood, the will of the flesh, or even the will of the God-created sinless human nature to meet the requirement for seeing and entering into the kingdom of God. Entrance into the kingdom is a matter of being born again of the divine life, that is, of being begotten of God. In verse 13 "*blood* (lit., bloods)...signifies the physical life; *will of the flesh* denotes the will of fallen man after man became flesh; and *will of man* refers to the will of the man created by God" (Recovery Version, note 2).

Everything related to living in God's kingdom begins with God's indestructible life and with the eternal attainments and obtainments of Christ in His person and work, which have been incorporated into the uncreated divine life of God in Christ.

God's kingdom is a matter of life, and living in the reality of God's kingdom involves the expression of the divine-human life of Christ. Through the incarnation of the eternal Word, divinity was mingled with humanity in the sinless flesh of a genuine human being, Jesus. The issue of this mingling was a God-man, a man who genuinely manifested God in the flesh because He was God in the flesh

(1 Tim. 3:16). In the incarnation the divine life, although still distinctly divine, became inseparable from the human life. Thus, the divine life now includes the element of humanity. Prior to the incarnation, at least from the perspective of time, the divine life was separate and distinct from the created human life. After the incarnation, the divine life is still distinct from the created human life, but it is no longer separate from it—divinity has been mingled with humanity. In the resurrection the humanity in the God-man, Jesus, was glorified and deified, so that even in His humanity, He was declared to be divine. When we speak of the divine life, we should have a deep realization that the divine life is now a life that has been profoundly affected by the processes of incarnation and resurrection. The divine life was mingled with the humanity of Jesus in the incarnation, and the humanity of Jesus was divinized in the resurrection. The divine life that we received in our human spirit when we were born again through faith is a mingled life. When we speak of the divine life, we should have this understanding and appreciation.

Based on the Lord's incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, ascension, and His coming as the Spirit of reality (14:17;

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15:26; 16:13), the mingled divine and deified human life of Christ was imparted into us through the hearing of faith when Christ came as the Spirit to preach peace as the gospel to us (Rom. 10:17; Gal. 3:2; Eph. 2:17). Faith brings us into God's kingdom through the regeneration of our human spirit with the divine Spirit. The indwelling Spirit thus becomes our access to the divine provisions (v. 18), stabilizing our shaken and fallen condition by inscribing Himself into our heart as the law of the Spirit of life (Heb. 8:10; 10:16; Rom. 8:2), which we experience through His many detailed divine directives. The divine life, which is received by faith and unshakably associated with the righteousness of God (1:17), provides us with the unique means of meeting every challenging condition of weakness through the same faith that operated in righteousness to initially bring us into the kingdom (14:17; 2 Thes. 1:3; Heb. 1:8).

⁴The responses to the hearing of faith, as described in this paragraph, are restatements of the description included in Message 14, "Hearing of Faith Versus Works of Law," in the *Life-study of Galatians* by Witness Lee, published by Living Stream Ministry.

⁵The indispensability of receiving can be seen in its relation to our initial and ongoing salvation in life. Those who are born of God are those who receive Him (John 1:12). Those who believe into Him are those who receive the Spirit (7:39). Those who reign in life in the kingdom are those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17).

⁶It is sobering to realize that God's living and operative word can be rendered useless in our experience when our heart is hardened and veiled (2 Cor. 3:14-16).

⁷In further service to this appeal, there are other Old Testament verses that are quoted more than once in Hebrews, including Psalm 2:7; 40:6-8; and Jeremiah 31:33. While the writer's repetition of these verses may be viewed merely as a matter of stylistic emphasis, this repetition in fact reinforces the centrality of the content of these passages in relation to the fulfillment of God's eternal economy to express His image and exercise His dominion through His unshakable kingdom. In addition to the three passages concerning not hardening our hearts, the two references to Psalm 2:7 speak of God's declaration of the deification of the humanity of Jesus on the day of His resurrection (Heb. 1:5; 5:5). The two references to Psalm 40:6-8 speak of the coming of Christ to do the will of God (Heb. 10:7, 9). And the two references to Jeremiah 31:33 speak of the impartation of God's laws upon our hearts and into our mind (Heb. 8:10; 10:16). While the passages concerning Christ may seem considerably more lofty than the passages concerning the believers' heart and mind, there is an important and deep connection between these four sets of multiple passages: The provisions of Christ's great salvation are the issue of His coming in incarnation to do the will of God and of His deification in resurrection, both of which in combination accomplished the will of God for humanity to be crowned with glory and honor and to be set over the works of His hands. These accomplishments, however, must be applied and inscribed on our hearts in order

to be effectual in the sanctification of our souls. However, they cannot be imparted into or inscribed upon a hardened heart. In the fulfillment of His economy, both God and humanity play central roles—God accomplishes His economy through the person and work of the incarnated and resurrected Christ, but these accomplishments must also be applied to humanity, and this application requires a softened heart. The repetition of the references to Psalms 40:6-8 and 2:7 speaks of the importance of Christ's role in the accomplishment of God's economy. The repetition of the references to Psalm 95:8 and Jeremiah 31:33 speaks of the importance of our heart in the application of the accomplishments of God's economy.

⁸Mount Zion is a type of the overcomers who are living in the reality of the kingdom in this age. According to Psalm 2:6, which says, "I have installed My King / Upon Zion, My holy mountain," Mount Zion is a display of the kingship of Christ and the holy priesthood of Christ. Psalm 125:1 says, "Those who trust in Jehovah are like Mount Zion, / Which cannot be moved but abides forever," indicating the unshakable nature of the overcomers who constitute the reality of the kingdom in this age.

⁹The imparting of God's laws in our hearts and upon our mind in Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16 is subsequent to the imparting of the divine life in our spirit. Strictly speaking, this imparting is directed toward our soul, not our spirit, and it is an ongoing process that occurs in the stage of our sanctification and transformation. We received the Spirit as the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit when we were regenerated (Rom. 8:2; John 3:6), but we need a continual imparting of His detailed divine directives in order for our mind to be renewed.

¹⁰Not all persecution is humanly warranted, coming as it often does from unrighteous sources based on unrighteous motives, but all persecution is divinely ordained and allowed by God in order to touch and deal with the unrighteous elements that still exist in our being. An excellent example of this is David's experience of the cursing of Shimei in 2 Samuel 16:5-13. When David was cursed and reviled by Shimei, he accepted it as a governmental dealing from Jehovah, charging his men to "leave him alone and let him curse, for Jehovah has told him to do so" (v. 11). Neither did David revile Shimei in return or seek retribution upon Shimei; rather, he, like Christ, committed all to Him who judges righteously, saying, "It may be that Jehovah will look on the wrong done to me and that Jehovah will repay me with good for his cursing on this day" (v. 12; 1 Pet. 2:23).

¹¹Although the items in the old covenant, including the law, the earthly tabernacle and temple, and the offerings of the blood of bulls and goats, were done away with in Christ, they were effectual before God prior to the coming of Christ. In order to meet with His people under the old covenant, God dealt with His people according to the law but through the tabernacle and the offerings. Thus, in type, the law served, as a child-conductor, to bring the children of Israel to Christ, that is, to the tabernacle as a type of the person of Christ and to the offerings as a type of His work.

¹²Note 1 on Hebrews 12:28 in the Recovery Version provides a clear and concise explanation of the distinction between the reality of the kingdom in this age and the manifestation of the kingdom in the next age in relation to the possibility of either reward or punishment but not the loss of our eternal salvation.

The gospel that the New Testament has preached to us is the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17, 23; 10:7; 24:14). We were regenerated into the kingdom (John 3:5) and were transferred into the kingdom (Col. 1:13). Now we are in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9), which today is the proper church life (Rom. 14:17). However, what we are in now and what is in the church today is the kingdom in its reality, whereas what will come with Christ's return in the future will be the kingdom in its manifestation.

The kingdom in its reality, or the reality of the kingdom, is an exercise and a discipline to us (Matt. 5:3, 10, 20; 7:21) in the church today, whereas the kingdom in its manifestation, or the manifestation of the kingdom, will be a reward and an enjoyment to us (Matt. 16:27; 25:21, 23) in the millennial kingdom in the coming age. If we take the Spirit's exercise and God's discipline in the reality of the kingdom today, we will receive the Lord's reward and enter into the enjoyment of the coming Sabbath rest (4:9) in the manifestation of the kingdom in the coming age; otherwise, we will miss the coming kingdom, we will not be rewarded with the manifestation of the kingdom at the Lord's coming back, we will have no right to enter into the glory of the kingdom to participate in Christ's reign in the millennial kingdom, and we will lose our birthright and therefore will be unable to inherit the earth in the coming age, to be the royal priests serving God and Christ in His manifested glory, and to be Christ's co-kings ruling all the nations with His divine authority (Rev. 20:4, 6). To miss the coming kingdom and to forfeit our birthright does not mean that we will perish. It means that we will lose the reward but not our salvation... We will suffer loss but still will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor. 3:14-15). This is the basic concept on which all five warnings in this book are given and with which they are all pervaded. All the negative points of these warnings are related to the suffering of the loss of the reward in the coming kingdom, whereas all the positive points are related to the reward and enjoyment of the kingdom. All seven epistles in Rev. 2 and 3 conclude with this same concept—the reward of the kingdom or

the loss of it. Only in light of this concept can we rightly understand and properly apply the word in Matt. 5:20; 7:21-23; 16:24-27; 19:23-30; 24:46-51; 25:11-13, 21, 23, 26-30; Luke 12:42-48; 19:17, 19, 22-27; Rom. 14:10, 12; 1 Cor. 3:8, 13-15; 4:5; 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Heb. 2:3; 4:1, 9, 11; 6:4-8; 10:26-31, 35-39; 12:16-17, 28-29; and Rev. 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-27; 3:4-5, 11-12, 20; 22:12. If we do not have this concept, the interpretation of these verses falls into either the extreme objectiveness of the Calvinist school or the extreme subjectiveness of the Arminian school. Neither of these schools recognizes the reward of the kingdom; even more, they do not see the suffering of the loss of the kingdom reward. Hence, both consider all the negative points in these verses as referring to perdition. The Calvinist school, believing in eternal salvation (i.e., that once a person is saved, he will never perish), regards all these negative points as applying to the perdition of false believers;

while the Arminian school, believing that a saved person will perish if he falls, regards these points as applying to the perdition of believers who have fallen. But the complete revelation of the Bible shows that these negative points refer to the suffering of the loss of the kingdom reward. God's salvation is eternal; once we obtain it, we will never lose it (John

10:28-29). But we may suffer the loss of the kingdom reward, even though we still will be saved (1 Cor. 3:8, 14-15). The warnings in Hebrews do not refer to the loss of eternal salvation but to the loss of the kingdom reward. The Hebrew believers had received the kingdom, but they risked losing the reward in the manifestation of the kingdom if they shrank back from the grace of God, from God's new covenant way. This was the writer's main concern in warning the staggering Hebrew believers.

¹³It is interesting to note that the numerous references to the things which have been made are clustered at the beginning and end of Hebrews, showing that the visible display of God's kingdom is related to the initiation of His creative acts at the beginning of time and to the consummation of His purpose among creation at the fullness of the times. It also speaks of God's determined and constant mindfulness of the centerpiece of His creation—humanity as a vessel to contain Him.

Works Cited

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**GOD ACCOMPLISHES HIS ECONOMY
THROUGH THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE
INCARNATED AND RESURRECTED CHRIST,
BUT THESE ACCOMPLISHMENTS MUST
ALSO BE APPLIED TO HUMANITY, AND THIS
APPLICATION REQUIRES A SOFTENED HEART.**