

# A Kingdom That Can't Be Destroyed



## SABBATH—MARCH 12

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Hebrews 12:22–24; Daniel 7:9, 10, 13–22; Hebrews 12:26, 27; Psalm 15:5; Hebrews 13:15, 16.



Jesus also is our King.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “So we should be thankful because we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken [destroyed]. And because we are thankful, we should worship God in a way that will please him. We should do this with respect and fear [wonder]” (Hebrews 12:28, ERV).

**THIS WEEK,** we will study Hebrews 12:18–29. These verses are the most exciting and important part of Hebrews. We will learn many important ideas from Hebrews 12:18–29. These verses show us the idea that Paul started his letter with: God communicated to us by His Son. So, we need to pay careful attention to Jesus (Hebrews 1:1, 2; Hebrews 12:25). In Hebrews 12:22–24, Paul gives us a review of his most important ideas about Jesus: (1) Jesus is the One who brings the New Agreement from God to His people. (2) The blood of Jesus saves us. (3) The angels in heaven celebrate because Jesus is our High Priest, or Top Spiritual Leader. Jesus also is our King. Finally, Hebrews 12:25–29 tells us that the time for God to Judge the earth is soon coming. Then God will destroy His enemies. But God will give blessings and a kingdom to His people (Hebrews 12:28, 29).

Paul wants his readers to remember that God gave Jesus a kingdom (Daniel 7:9–14). So, Paul uses word pictures from Daniel 7 to help his readers understand this idea. Jesus will share His kingdom with His followers. The kingdom will “ ‘belong to them for ever and ever’ ” (Daniel 7:18, NIV).

**YOU HAVE COME TO THE HILL NAMED ZION  
(Hebrews 12:22–24)****What does Paul tell us in Hebrews 12:22–24?**

Paul says we come to the Hill of Zion. Thousands and thousands of angels are there. We come to Zion to celebrate with the angels. “But you have come to Mount [the very high hill named] Zion. You have come to the city of the living God. This is the heavenly [in heaven] Jerusalem. You have come to a joyful gathering [group] of angels. There are thousands and thousands of them” (Hebrews 12:22, NIV). We come by faith in Jesus, who goes to God for us. At this celebration in heaven, we join God, Jesus, and the angels. There are so many angels! We can’t count them all. Jesus is the reason for the celebration. Paul says we “have come to the meeting of God’s firstborn children” (Hebrews 12:23, ERV). The first son born in a Jewish family had the most important place in the family and got special blessings. In the eyes of God, all of His children are the same as the first son who is born.

We are the “firstborn” because we share the blessings that God gives Jesus, His Firstborn Son (Hebrews 1:6). So, we do not come to Zion as guests. We come as citizens (compare with Philippians 3:20). As citizens, our names are written in the books of heaven (Exodus 32:32; Psalm 56:8; Daniel 12:1; Malachi 3:16; Luke 10:20; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 17:8). Paul also says that we will be perfect and holy. “The spirits of all those [people who are] right with God are there. They have been made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23, NIV). God is “the Father of spirits” (Hebrews 12:9, NIV). “Spirits” is a word picture for humans.

The reason for the celebration is because God made Jesus our Priest, or Spiritual Leader, and King. We also celebrate the New Agreement that Jesus brings us from God. In Hebrews, Zion, God’s city, is the place where all these things happen. The quotes from three psalms, or songs, in Hebrews 1:5–14 show us that Jesus becomes our King on Zion (read Psalm 2:6, 7; Psalm 110:1, 2; Psalm 102:21–27). Zion also is the place where God makes Jesus our “priest forever” (Hebrews 5:6, ERV). This quote comes from Psalm 110:4. Finally, Paul shows us that when Jesus becomes our High Priest, He starts the New Agreement (Hebrews 7:11–22). So, Hebrews 12:22–24 shows us the celebration that happens after Jesus goes back to heaven.



**We come to the Hill of Zion.  
Thousands and thousands  
of angels are there.**

## GOD, THE JUDGE OF ALL PEOPLE (Hebrews 12:23)



In a dream, Daniel saw the court in heaven (Daniel 7).

Read about the celebration in Hebrews 12:23. If these verses really show us a celebration, why is God the Judge there? How can a judge be part of a celebration or a reason for it? (Read also Daniel 7:9, 10, 13–22 for the answer.)

As we saw yesterday, Hebrews 12:22–24 shows us a celebration. The work God does as Judge in the future is part of this celebration. In His work as Judge, God examines the books in heaven. Then God makes His final decision: God gives His people the kingdom (Hebrews 12:28).

So, Hebrews shows us the work God does as Judge before the Second Coming. Daniel also saw this work. In a dream, Daniel saw the court in heaven (Daniel 7). Then “the One Who has lived forever took His seat” as Judge (Daniel 7:9, NLV). God sits on a throne made from fire. Thousands of angels serve God (Daniel 7:10). Books are opened (Daniel 7:10). Then God decides in favor of His “holy people, and they received [got] the kingdom” (Daniel 7:22, ERV).

In Hebrews 12:22–29, we see “God, the judge of all people” (Hebrews 12:23, ERV). He is on the high hill named Zion. Another name for this place in heaven is New Jerusalem. Around God are “thousands and thousands of” angels (Hebrews 12:22, NIV). God uses books in His work as Judge. The names of His people are written in these books (Hebrews 12:23). This information shows us that God will decide in favor of His people.

Jesus has an important part in this work in the court in heaven (Hebrews 12:24). He is the One who brings the people of God to Zion. The New Agreement allows Jesus to bring His people (Hebrews 12:22–24) to heaven. There, God will give His people the gift He promised them. God will give His people the kingdom (Hebrews 12:27).

So, Hebrews 12:23 shows us that the work that God does as our Judge really is good news. God will decide in favor of His people. God will show that His people are innocent of every wrong thing that Satan accuses them of doing. This decision will show that Satan loses, and God wins. Satan, the dragon, is the evil power that controls the awful kingdoms in Daniel 7. These animals are word pictures for kingdoms that hurt the people of God in the past. Revelation 13 shows us how Satan again will use the leaders on this earth to hurt the people of God in the end times.

## THE DAY GOD SHAKES THE EARTH AND SKY (Hebrews 12:26, 27)

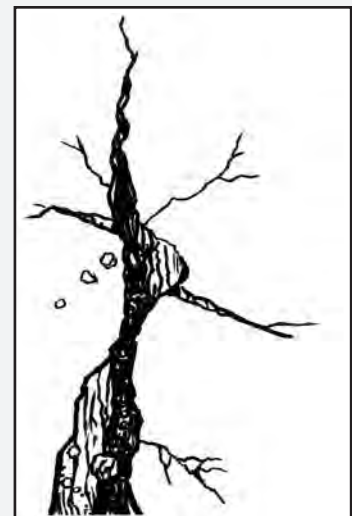
Paul warns his readers to pay attention to what God says. They need to be careful to obey God because He is about to do something big. God warns, “ ‘Only once [one time] more I will shake the earth and the sky also’ ” (Hebrews 12:26, WE). Paul warns us to obey because God has not finished giving us the things that He promised us. Yes, Jesus is our High Priest, or Top Spiritual Leader, and King in heaven. But we can choose to turn away from Him and be lost. So, we need to obey Him. We also need to pay attention because something important is about to happen.

**Compare Haggai 2:6–9, 20–22; Psalm 96:9, 10; Psalm 99:1; and Hebrews 12:26, 27. Why does God shake the earth and sky? What does this word picture show us?**

In the Old Testament, the shaking of the earth was a word picture for God who is coming. God shows up to save His people. When Deborah and Barak fight against Sisera, God fights from heaven for them (Judges 5:20). The power of God is shown by a mighty earthquake. This earthquake shakes the earth and the mountains when God comes to help His people (Judges 5:4, 5). We see this same word picture many times in the Old Testament when God shows up to free His people from their enemies (Psalm 68:7, 8; Psalm 60:2; Psalm 77:17, 18). So, a shaking shows us that the time comes for God to judge and show His control over the people on the earth. The prophets, or holy messengers, also show that God will shake the earth when He comes to punish evil people (Isaiah 13:13; Isaiah 24:18–23).

In Hebrews, the “shaking” of earth and sky also show the time when God will destroy His enemies. God made this promise to Jesus when Jesus sat on His throne. God said to Jesus: “ ‘Sit at my right side until I put your enemies under your power [control]’ ” (Hebrews 1:13, ERV). Yes, Jesus beat Satan, the enemy (Hebrews 2:14–16), when He sat on His throne (Hebrews 1:5–14). But the devil and the ones who hate Jesus must be destroyed in the future (Hebrews 10:11–14; 1 Corinthians 15:23–25).

God will destroy these enemies forever when He shakes the earth and sky. So, the shaking shows us that God will destroy the humans on this earth who hurt the people of God. God also will destroy the ones who control these leaders: Satan and his angels.



**The power of God is shown by a mighty earthquake.**



## A KINGDOM THAT CAN'T BE DESTROYED (Psalm 15:5)

As we saw, God announces that He will “shake” the earth and sky. This word picture shows us that God will destroy His enemies. But some things will not be destroyed.

**Compare Psalm 15:5; Psalm 16:8; Psalm 21:7; Psalm 62:2; Psalm 112:6; and Hebrews 12:27. What things will stand strong and not be destroyed?**

Today, Hebrews 12:27 confuses many readers of modern Bibles. These modern Bibles say that God will “shake” the earth and the sky. So, many people think that the earth and sky will be gone forever. But the Bible shows us that God will make new skies and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1–4). So, the “shaking” really shows us that God will make the earth clean and new again. God will not completely remove or destroy the earth.

What else will not be “shaken” or destroyed? The people of God will not be destroyed (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17; Philippians 3:20). The people of God will not be destroyed because they trust in God. The God who made them keeps them alive when they see Him at the Second Coming.

Do you see how in Hebrews the things that stand forever are connected with Jesus? Paul shows us this connection when he says, “Lord, you made the world in the beginning. The sky was made by your hands. These things will come to an end, but you will live on. They will all wear out like [the same as] clothes. You will fold up the world and the sky as if they were a blanket. They will not stay as they are now. But you will always be as you are now. The years of your life will never end” (Hebrews 1:10–12, WE). Hebrews also says, “Jesus lives forever. He will never stop serving as a priest [spiritual leader]” (Hebrews 7:3, 24). The ones that Jesus saves have better things in heaven that will always “continue forever,” too (Hebrews 10:34, ERV). When God does His work as Judge, His people will not be shaken or destroyed (Psalm 46:5). They will live forever because Jesus lives in them.

Paul also says, “we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (Hebrews 12:28, ERV). Daniel talks about this kingdom (Daniel 7:18). This kingdom “will continue forever” (Daniel 2:44, ERV). This kingdom belongs to the Son. But Jesus, the Son, will share His kingdom with us.



**The people of God will not be destroyed  
(1 Thessalonians 4:13–17;  
Philemon 3:20).**

**LET US GIVE THANKS ALL THE TIME TO GOD**  
**(Hebrews 13:15, 16)**

How should we thank God for all His wonderful gifts? The answer is: we should worship God in a way that pleases Him.

**Compare Hebrews 12:28 and Hebrews 13:15, 16. How do we worship God in a way that pleases Him?**

The Israelites offered animal gifts to God to show Him they were thankful or sorry. These animals were only word pictures. They showed the feelings in the hearts of the givers. God did not really like animal offerings. God wanted His people to be kind, holy, and to give Him thanks. God was pleased by these gifts. These gifts showed worship.

In the same way, Paul invites us to worship God by offering Him praise and thanks. When we are sorry for sin and are kind to other people, God is happy. God loves these gifts! Sure, we can't offer our gifts to God in person. But God in heaven accepts our gifts. That is why Paul encourages us through his whole letter to think about Jesus (Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 10:23). Then we will continue to do good things for other people (Hebrews 6:10–12; Hebrews 13:1, 2, 16).

Now we understand more fully what Paul means when he invites his readers to “worship God in a way that will please him” (Hebrews 12:28, ERV). The invitation also shows Christians that they are now a holy group of priests, or spiritual leaders. God chose Israel in the past to be a kingdom of priests. God wanted Israel to announce the Good News that Jesus saves people from sin (Exodus 19:4–6; 1 Peter 2:9, 10; Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10). But Israel did not obey God. Then Jesus came. Jesus “did the things God wanted Him to do” (Hebrews 10:10, ERV). Because of that, we are made holy by the offering Jesus made for us (Hebrews 10:10, ERV; read also Hebrews 10:11–14, 19–23). God now gives us the plan He gave Israel. As part of this plan, God asks us to share what we have and to do good.

Hebrews 13:1–6 also shows us the good we should do. We must love people as if they were our family. Jesus showed this love to us (Hebrews 2:11, 12). We must be kind and helpful. We must visit prisoners and the suffering (Hebrews 13:3). We must turn from sex sins. We must not be greedy.

**Praise is an important part of worship. Why are good works and sharing an important part of our worship, too?**



**We should worship God in a way that pleases Him.**



“John says: ‘Then I saw some thrones and people sitting on them. These [people] were the ones who had been given the power to judge’ Revelation 20:4, [ERV].”

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “After the Second Coming, God’s people will live in heaven for 1,000 years. During this time, God and His people will judge the evil dead who continue to sleep in their graves. Paul tells us about this time: ‘Do not be quick to say who is right or wrong. Wait until the Lord comes. He will bring into the light the things that are hidden in men’s hearts. He will show why men have done these things. Every man will receive [get] from God the thanks [reward] he should have.’ 1 Corinthians 4:5, [NLV]. Daniel also talks about this time: ‘Judgment [the work of judging] was given to the saints [holy people] of the Most High [God].’ Daniel 7:22, [KJV]. At this time, the holy people of God will serve God as kings and priests [spiritual leaders]. John says: ‘Then I saw some thrones and people sitting on them. These [people] were the ones who had been given the power to judge.’ Revelation 20:4, [ERV]. ‘They will be priests for God and for Christ. They will rule with him for 1000 years.’ Revelation 20:6, [ERV]. At this time, Paul shows us, ‘God’s people will judge the world [the evil dead people].’ 1 Corinthians 6:2, [ERV]. Together with Jesus, God’s people will judge all the evil people who ever lived. The people of God will compare the things the evil ones did with the Bible. Then the people of God will make a final decision. . . .

“Jesus and His people also judge Satan and his evil angels. Paul says: ‘Do you not know that we shall judge angels?’ 1 Corinthians 6:3, [WE]. Jude announces: ‘Remember the angels also. Some of them did not keep the high [important] place [work] they had. But they left their home. God has them tied in chains forever, and He is keeping them in a very dark place. He will keep them there until that big day when they will be judged.’ Jude 1:6, [WE].”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 660, 661, adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① The people of God will judge the evil dead (1 Corinthians 6:3; Jude 1:6). What does this Bible truth tell us about God and how honest He is with us? How will this work show us that God is fair and kind to the ones who refused His mercy?
- ② Read Exodus 32:32; Psalm 56:8; Psalm 69:28; Psalm 139:16; Isaiah 4:3; Daniel 12:1; Malachi 3:16; Luke 10:20; Revelation 13:8; and Revelation 17:8. These verses talk about the books of God in heaven. What is written in these books? Why is it important that God keeps a record of our tears (Psalm 56:8)? God knows everything, right? So, why does He need to keep books or records?

## PERFECT HEALTH

**N**oy is a rich woman. Her family owns a coffee farm in the country of Laos. Laos is a country in Southeast Asia. Noy manages more than 100 workers on her farm. Then Noy becomes sick. No one in her village can figure out what is wrong with her. Noy goes to many medical doctors in southern Laos. But no one can help her.

Noy starts to feel worse. Soon, she cannot walk. She must stay in bed. Noy feels as if she is going crazy. Many times, she cannot remember people in her own family.

Soon, all her workers leave because Noy forgets to pay them. Villagers tell Noy and her husband that she will not live much longer.

At this time, a woman visits the village. The woman is from Vientiane, the capital city of Laos. She is not a Christian. But her son and daughter-in-law are Seventh-day Adventists. The woman tells Noy about Jesus.

“Maybe Jesus can save your life,” she says.

Noy finds the telephone number of an Adventist pastor in the south. She calls him for help.

The pastor travels to the village where Noy lives. Then the pastor prays with Noy.

Noy feels encouraged by the prayer. She decides to move for a little while to the city of Vientiane. Noy wants to meet Adventist church members in the city and get to know them.

When Noy first arrives in Vientiane, she cannot get out of bed. She fights hard to think clearly. Church members meet with Noy and pray with her. Slowly, Noy starts to feel better. She starts to sit, stand, and walk.

Five months later, Noy goes home to her village. She is in perfect health. The villagers are surprised at what they see. They expected Noy to die. But here she is alive and completely healed! It is a miracle. The villagers ask Noy to tell them how the miracle happened.

“Jesus saved me from death,” Noy says.

Now many villagers are interested to know more about Jesus. Jesus is the powerful Doctor who can heal everyone who asks Him.

Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offering. Your offering will help church workers share the Good News about Jesus with the people in Laos and in other countries in the Asia-Pacific Division. Part of the 13th Sabbath Offering for this quarter will help open a school for children in Laos.

This story shows us the “I Will Go” plan of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This plan is about how we can share Jesus with everyone. Learn more about this plan at [IWillGo2020.org](http://IWillGo2020.org).

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**Jesus is the powerful  
Doctor who can heal  
everyone who asks Him.**