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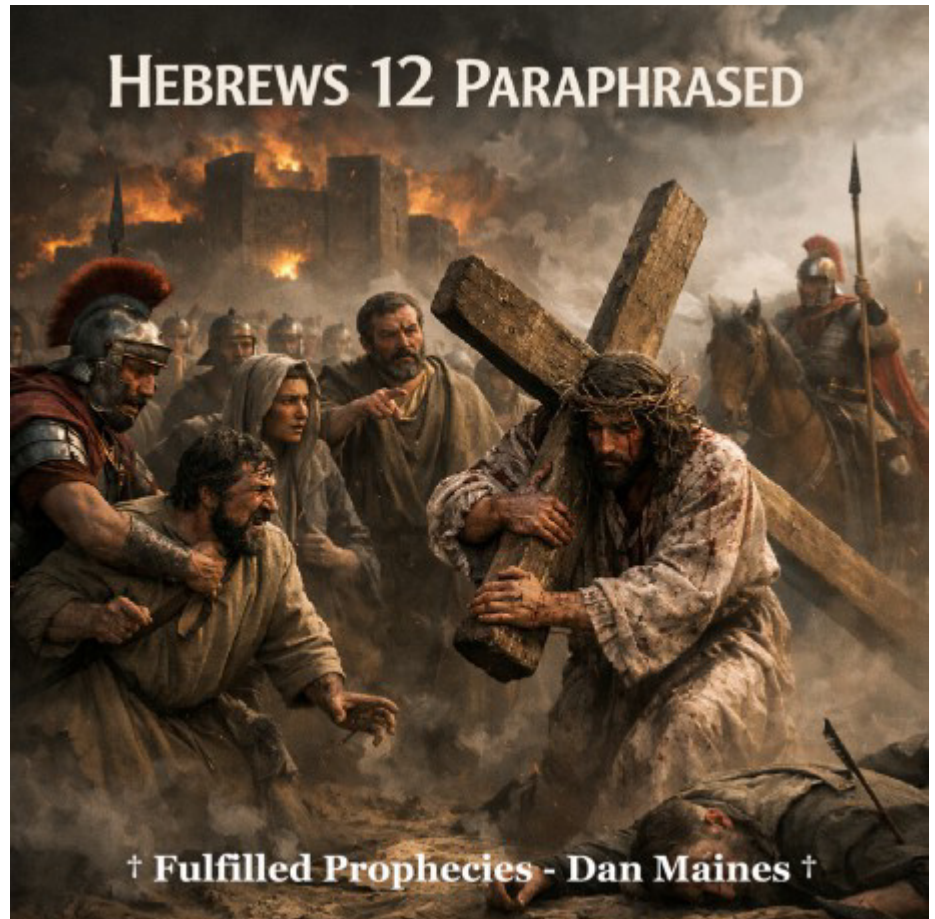
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Hebrews 12 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

Hebrews 12 Paraphrased

Introduction

† The previous chapter showed the long line of faithful people who trusted God before the old covenant age came to its end. Now the writer turns to the believers living in that transition period, encouraging them to endure the pressure and persecution they were facing as the old system was passing away. (Hebrews 11:39-40)

† This chapter focuses on perseverance, discipline, and the shaking of the old covenant world. The writer reminds them that the kingdom they were receiving could never be shaken, unlike the temple system that was about to collapse. (Hebrews 12:26-28)

† The audience was living only a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The warnings and encouragements make sense only within that first century setting when believers were suffering under Jewish opposition and Roman pressure. (Matthew 24:34)

Hebrews 12:1

Hebrews 12:1

Since we're surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses from the past, let's throw off everything that slows us down, especially the sin that keeps trapping us, and let's keep running the race set before us with endurance.

† The witnesses are the faithful people mentioned in the previous chapter who trusted God through suffering and hardship. Their lives testify that endurance is possible even in difficult times. (Hebrews 11:32-40)

† The race language shows that the Christian life required perseverance during the intense persecution of the first century church. (1 Corinthians 9:24)

† Clement of Alexandria also spoke of the faithful of old as examples who strengthen believers through their testimony of endurance.

Hebrews 12:2

Hebrews 12:2

Let's keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the one who started our

faith and brought it to completion. Because of the joy set before him, he endured the cross, ignoring the shame, and now he's seated at the right hand of God's throne.

† Jesus is called the author and finisher because he brought the old covenant promises to their fulfillment through his death and resurrection. (Hebrews 2:10)

† His suffering became the model for believers who were also enduring shame and persecution from their own people. (1 Peter 2:21)

† Early Christian writers like Irenaeus emphasized Christ's endurance as the pattern believers must follow.

Hebrews 12:3

Hebrews 12:3

Think about the hostility he endured from sinners so you won't grow tired and lose heart.

† The hostility refers to the opposition Jesus faced from the religious leaders who rejected him. (Matthew 23:29-36)

† The believers reading this letter were facing similar hostility from the same system that rejected Christ. (Acts 7:51-52)

† Tertullian wrote that the suffering of Christ strengthened the courage of the early church under persecution.

Hebrews 12:4

Hebrews 12:4

You haven't yet resisted sin to the point of shedding your own blood.

† Some believers had suffered persecution, but most had not yet faced martyrdom when this letter was written. (Hebrews 10:32-34)

† The statement reminds them that their struggle was still ongoing and required continued faithfulness. (2 Timothy 3:12)

† Eusebius recorded how persecution intensified later in the first century.

Hebrews 12:5

Hebrews 12:5

Have you forgotten the encouragement spoken to you as sons: My son, don't take the Lord's discipline lightly, and don't lose heart when he corrects you.

† This quote comes from Proverbs and shows that discipline is part of God's care for his people. (Proverbs 3:11-12)

† The hardships believers were experiencing were not abandonment by God but training for righteousness. (James 1:2-4)

† Barnabas wrote that suffering often prepares believers for deeper faith.

Hebrews 12:6

Hebrews 12:6

Because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he corrects every son he receives.

† Discipline is proof of belonging, not rejection. (Revelation 3:19)

† The trials of the early church helped refine and strengthen the believers' faith. (1 Peter 1:6-7)

† Justin Martyr explained that suffering often confirmed the faith of believers.

Hebrews 12:7

Hebrews 12:7

Endure hardship as discipline, God is treating you as sons. What son isn't disciplined by his father?

† The comparison with family life shows that correction is a normal part of growing into maturity. (Proverbs 13:24)

† The first century church needed endurance because the transition from the old covenant to the new kingdom was difficult. (Hebrews 10:36)

† Early Christian teachers often described trials as training from God.

Hebrews 12:8

Hebrews 12:8

But if you're without discipline, which everyone receives, then you're not true sons but illegitimate children.

† Genuine faith involves correction and growth through trials. (James 1:12)

† The believers' hardships showed they truly belonged to God. (Romans 8:17)

† Irenaeus emphasized that suffering often proves genuine faith.

Hebrews 12:9

Hebrews 12:9

Besides that, we had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shouldn't we submit even more to the Father of spirits and live?

† The argument moves from earthly discipline to God's perfect correction. (Matthew 7:11)

† Submission to God leads to life in his kingdom. (John 10:10)

† Clement of Rome wrote that obedience to God produces true life.

Hebrews 12:10

Hebrews 12:10

They disciplined us for a short time as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good so we can share in his holiness.

† God's discipline is purposeful and aimed at producing holiness. (1 Peter 1:15-16)

† The suffering of the early believers helped shape them into faithful witnesses. (Acts 5:41)

† Tertullian described persecution as strengthening the church.

Hebrews 12:11

Hebrews 12:11

No discipline feels pleasant at the time, it feels painful. But later it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those trained by it.

† The result of discipline is spiritual growth and peace. (James 3:18)

† The early church often grew stronger after periods of persecution. (Acts 8:1-4)

† Eusebius recorded how trials often purified the faith of believers.

Hebrews 12:12

Hebrews 12:12

So strengthen your tired hands and your weak knees.

† The language reflects encouragement to continue despite exhaustion. (Isaiah 35:3)

† The believers were being urged to renew their courage during a difficult time. (Galatians 6:9)

† Early Christian writings often used similar encouragement during persecution.

Hebrews 12:13

Hebrews 12:13

Make straight paths for your feet so what is lame won't be disabled but rather healed.

† Faithful living helps others remain strong rather than stumbling. (Romans 14:13)

† The community of believers had responsibility to help one another endure. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

† Clement taught that unity strengthened the church.

Hebrews 12:14

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with everyone and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

† Peace and holiness are marks of God's people. (Romans 12:18)

† Holiness reflects God's character in his people. (1 Peter 1:16)

† Justin Martyr described holiness as essential for believers.

Hebrews 12:15

Hebrews 12:15

Watch carefully so no one falls short of God's grace, and so no bitter root grows up causing trouble and contaminating many.

† The bitter root refers to rebellion that spreads within the community. (Deuteronomy 29:18)

† The church had to guard against influences pulling believers back to the old system. (Galatians 5:4)

† Early writers warned about divisions harming the church.

Hebrews 12:16

Hebrews 12:16

Make sure no one is immoral or godless like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

† Esau represents someone who traded lasting inheritance for temporary satisfaction. (Genesis 25:29-34)

† The warning applies to those tempted to abandon Christ under pressure. (Hebrews 10:38-39)

† Irenaeus used Esau as an example of spiritual carelessness.

Hebrews 12:17

Hebrews 12:17

Later when he wanted to inherit the blessing he was rejected, even though he sought it with tears, because he found no opportunity to change the outcome.

† Some decisions have lasting consequences that can't easily be reversed. (Genesis 27:34-38)

† The warning stresses the seriousness of abandoning faith. (Hebrews 6:4-6)

† Tertullian used this example to warn believers about falling away.

Hebrews 12:18

Hebrews 12:18

You haven't come to a mountain that can be touched, a blazing fire, darkness, gloom, and storm.

† This refers to Mount Sinai where the old covenant was given. (Exodus 19:16-18)

† The writer contrasts the old covenant experience with the new covenant reality. (Hebrews 8:13)

† Early Christian teachers frequently contrasted Sinai and the new covenant.

Hebrews 12:19

Hebrews 12:19

You haven't come to the sound of a trumpet and a voice speaking words that made those who heard beg that no further message be spoken.

† At Sinai the people were terrified by God's voice. (Exodus 20:18-19)

† The contrast shows the difference between fear under the old covenant and access under the new. (Hebrews 4:16)

† Clement of Alexandria noted that Christ brought believers closer to God.

Hebrews 12:20

Hebrews 12:20

They couldn't bear the command: If even an animal touches the mountain it must be stoned.

† God's holiness at Sinai emphasized the distance between God and man under the law. (Exodus 19:12-13)

† The law revealed sin but couldn't remove it. (Romans 7:7)

† Early writers explained the law's purpose as exposing sin.

Hebrews 12:21

Hebrews 12:21

The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, I am trembling with fear.

† Even Moses experienced fear in God's presence at Sinai. (Deuteronomy 9:19)

† This demonstrates the overwhelming nature of the old covenant revelation. (Hebrews 9:8)

† Eusebius described the contrast between Sinai and the gospel.

Hebrews 12:22

Hebrews 12:22

But you've come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless angels gathered in celebration.

† Mount Zion represents the new covenant kingdom established through Christ. (Revelation 21:2)

† The heavenly Jerusalem describes the covenant community of believers. (Galatians 4:26)

† Early Christians often identified the church as the heavenly city.

Hebrews 12:23

Hebrews 12:23

You've come to the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made complete.

† The firstborn refers to the gathered people of God in Christ. (Romans 8:29)

† The righteous made complete points to believers who had finished their earthly race. (Hebrews 11:39-40)

† Irenaeus spoke of the faithful entering God's presence.

Hebrews 12:24

Hebrews 12:24

You've come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks better than the blood of Abel.

† Abel's blood cried out for justice, but Christ's blood brings forgiveness. (Genesis 4:10)

† Jesus' sacrifice established the new covenant relationship with God. (Hebrews 9:15)

† Justin Martyr wrote extensively about Christ's sacrifice replacing the old system.

Hebrews 12:25

Hebrews 12:25

Be careful not to reject the one who is speaking. If those who rejected the warning on earth didn't escape, we certainly won't if we turn away from the one who warns from heaven.

† The warning stresses the seriousness of rejecting Christ. (Hebrews 2:3)

† The generation hearing the gospel was accountable for their response. (Matthew 23:36)

† Tertullian emphasized obedience to Christ's message.

Hebrews 12:26

Hebrews 12:26

His voice shook the earth then, but now he promises: Once

more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.

† The shaking refers to the coming removal of the old covenant system. (Haggai 2:6)

† This shaking reached its climax in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. (Matthew 24:29-34)

† Early Christian historians connected the fall of Jerusalem with God's judgment.

Hebrews 12:27

Hebrews 12:27

The words once more show that created things will be removed so that what cannot be shaken will remain.

† The temple system and old covenant structures were temporary. (Hebrews 8:13)

† God's kingdom established through Christ cannot be destroyed. (Daniel 2:44)

† Eusebius wrote about the passing of the old system after Jerusalem fell.

Hebrews 12:28

Hebrews 12:28

Since we're receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let's be thankful and worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.

† The kingdom believers were receiving was permanent and unshakable. (Luke 17:20-21)

† Worship now centers on Christ rather than the temple system. (John 4:21-24)

† Early Christians worshiped without reliance on the temple after AD 70.

Hebrews 12:29

Hebrews 12:29

Because our God is a consuming fire.

† The phrase reminds believers that God's holiness remains powerful and pure. (Deuteronomy 4:24)

† God's judgment removed the old covenant system while establishing the eternal kingdom. (Matthew 21:43)

† Early writers often used this phrase to emphasize God's holiness and justice.

Historical References

† Josephus recorded the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70, marking the end of the old covenant system.

† Eusebius wrote that Christians fled Jerusalem before the Roman siege, recognizing Jesus' prophecy about the city's destruction.

† Justin Martyr and Irenaeus both described the transition from the old covenant temple system to the kingdom established through Christ.

How it applies to us today

† This chapter reminds us that God's kingdom is permanent while human systems pass away.

† Believers today still look to Jesus as the one who completed our faith and secured our place in God's kingdom.

† We also learn that discipline and hardship can strengthen faith rather than destroy it.

Q & A Appendix

Q Why does Hebrews compare Mount Sinai and Mount Zion?

A It shows the difference between the old covenant based on fear and distance and the new covenant where believers have access to God through Christ. (Hebrews 12:18-24)

Q What does the shaking of heaven and earth refer to?

A It refers to the removal of the old covenant world, especially the temple system that ended in AD 70. (Hebrews 12:26-27)

Q What is the kingdom that cannot be shaken?

A It is the kingdom established through Christ that replaced the old covenant system and continues forever. (Daniel 2:44)

Q What does it mean that believers are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses?

A It means the faithful people mentioned in the previous chapter stand as testimony that trusting God through trials leads to victory. Their lives show that endurance is possible even in suffering. (Hebrews 11:39-40; Hebrews 12:1)

Q Why does Hebrews say believers have come to the heavenly Jerusalem?

A It describes the new covenant community established through Christ, not a physical city but the gathered people of God under the new covenant kingdom. (Hebrews 12:22-23; Galatians 4:26)

Q What does it mean that God is a consuming fire?

A It shows that God's holiness and judgment remove what is corrupt while preserving what is righteous, which is why the old

covenant system was shaken and removed while God's kingdom remains. (Hebrews 12:29; Deuteronomy 4:24)

Q Why were the first century believers warned not to refuse the one who speaks from heaven?

A Because they were living in the generation when the old covenant world was about to be judged. Rejecting Christ meant facing the same judgment that came upon Jerusalem. (Hebrews 12:25; Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34)

Q What is the unshakable kingdom believers were receiving?

A It is the kingdom established through Christ that replaced the old covenant temple system and continues permanently as God's eternal reign among his people. (Hebrews 12:28; Daniel 2:44)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Hebrews 11:32-40; Hebrews 10:32-36; Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 12:18-29

† Josephus, Wars of the Jews Book 6

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History Book 3

† Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

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