

Heb. 12:25-29; Dt. 18:15-22; The Messenger of the Covenant I. Listen to Him II. Respond with Gratitude III. Worship with Reverence

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how are we called to worship? What sort of attitude should we have when we approach God? Last week we considered the benefits and blessings we have as members of the New Covenant- we have direct access to God through Jesus Christ- and we stand in His presence as we bring Him our praise. This week we move on to consider the Messenger of the Covenant- the same Mediator who opened the way for us to approach God directly is also the one that speaks to us from the Father. A few weeks back when we considered Malachi we noted that after the 400 year famine from God's Word- the Messenger of the Covenant would be sent to the people. Or as Heb. 1 says- in these last days God has spoken to us by way of His Son. Even as the Father said in Luke 9- this is My Son, listen to Him! So today we consider the Messenger of the New Covenant as we consider this theme: Jesus Christ instructs His people concerning acceptable worship.

I. Listen to Him

In our first point we are instructed to listen to messenger- to submit to and obey His Word. As v. 25 begins- see to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking- pay careful attention to the Word that He utters. Now who then is this one who is speaking? If you back up one verse you will find that Jesus is the mediator of this new covenant- and it is His blood that speaks a better word. So it is this Jesus who is speaking. Added to this fact, v. 26 says that in the OT His voice shook the earth- but now this voice is heard from heaven. Now we know that Jesus is right now in glory- sitting beside His Father on the throne. From there, Jesus continues to speak and instruct- even warn from heaven as v. 25 concludes. John 1 reveals that Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. Or as we read from Dt. 18- the LORD your God will send you a prophet- one that is greater than Moses- you must listen to Him! So who is this one that is greater than Moses- who voice once shook the earth- and who now speaks from heaven? Yes- the same one who speaks to us by His Word today- Jesus Christ our Lord! And since Jesus is the one who speaks for God the Father- as the Messenger of the New Covenant- His Word must be listen to and obeyed! His message submitted to! As Heb. 2:1 puts it- you must pay much closer attention to what you have heard, lest you drift away. The warning given in Ex. 19- the message given was clear- do not come up or else you will forfeit your life! God gave His

people the Law- the Commandments- and He told them to live by them and obey! Did they obey? No- and that whole generation died in the wilderness. We must learn from their disobedience! Now the writer of Hebrews is arguing from the lesser to the greater- if the Word spoken at Sinai was to be believed- and it was a word spoken on earth at a physical, trembling mountain! How much more must the Word now spoken from heaven- proceeding from the heavenly Mt. Zion!? If the Israelites should have submitted to that lesser, earthly word- should not we submit to the greater, heavenly word? The word is clear- if you want to flee from the coming wrath- if you want to escape from judgement and have life- then you must listen to Jesus- you must repent and believe His Word! The OT Israelites grumbled, rebelled and they died! We- the NT Saints must not! So do not refuse Him who speaks! When Jesus speaks on an issue- that matter is settled and binding! Why? Because He is the messenger of the New Covenant who speaks from heaven! Do not harden your hearts- do not stop your ears- to reject His word is to choose death and destruction! For Jesus' voice is the Voice of God! So the application should be clear- over the next weeks as we consider Heb. 13 we will hear Jesus instructs us concerning marriage, family, finances and leadership. These are not options to be taken or left- see that you do not refuse Him who speaks! The same voice that shook Mt. Sinai is still heard from heaven today! Let us all listen to Him- for we will not escape if we refuse!

II. Respond with Gratitude

So the first thing we are all called to do when we come together to worship is to listen to the voice of God- to submit to and obey the messenger of the Covenant! We come to be taught by Jesus Word today! The second thing that we are called to do is to respond with thanksgiving and gratitude as v. 28 continues. Those who receive the New Covenant in Christ's blood- who hear the voice of the Divine Messenger- are called to respond with praise! Now why are we called to be thankful- what moves us to gratitude? Well- as v. 28 continues- we are thankful because we have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken! We rejoice in that we have an inheritance that cannot be taken away- a citizenship in a kingdom that can never fall. This concept of an unshakable kingdom is built upon v. 26- where the writer of Hebrews compares the OT to NT worship- the giving of the Law at Sinai and the permanence of MT. Zion. When the LORD came down upon Mt. Sinai as we read in Ex. 19 last week- do you remember how the mountain responded? It was shaken- it quaked right! Well, whenever God's feet rest upon this

earth- the earth shakes! His voice thunders and the ground quakes! But a time is coming when the earth and the heavens will be shaken once more. This “once more” shaking was referred to back in Haggai as you might remember. When Jesus Christ returns on the last day, His coming will usher in the final shaking. The whole created order that was made in Gen. 1:1- the created heavens and the earth- will be shaken- they will tremble- and anything that is temporary and passing will be removed as v. 27 concludes. The earth and the heavens will pass away- and a new heavens and new earth will come as Rev. 21 says. Now how does this work? What exactly will take place? Well- consider what happens to gold in a furnace. The dross- the impurities are burned up leaving only what is permanent- gold- to remain. When Jesus comes back- everything that is fallen, temporary and finite will be burned up with fire. Shaken- to pass away! And disease, sickness, pain, sin and death will be no more! This whole created order will be changed- literally transferred- translated into permanence- made into something that lasts- a substance that cannot be shaken and will never be removed. It is kind of like what happened to the body of Jesus after His death and resurrection- what was temporary and finite was shaken off- what remained was permanent and lasting. Or as Psalm 102:26 puts it, the foundations of the earth and the heavens will perish- but you will remain. They will all wear out- you will change them like a robe and they will pass away. As the hymn says- the clouds will be rolled back as a scroll. So what can be shaken- Mt. Sinai can be shaken. Our personal bank accounts, physical houses, cars, and almost everything else we see with the eyes of the flesh- these all will be shaken and one day will be no more! What cannot be shaken? Mt. Zion- the heavenly Jerusalem- the throne of God! The glory that Christ has reserved for His people- the crown of righteousness and pure, white robes- that is what will remain- that is what lasts! The reality and truth- that is what endures. Why is this important- because you have- as v. 28 says- received a kingdom that cannot be shaken! Therefore, be glad- rejoice and give thanks- your home is solid and your inheritance sure! This solid and lasting kingdom is the one we enter into by faith- the one in which we now stand by faith- the one that our Mediator Jesus has brought us into by His grace! So give thanks! Rejoice in what is yours! We are a part of this festal throng of v. 22!

III. Worship with Reverence

And finally- not only do we worship with joy and thanksgiving- we offer God acceptable worship by coming with reverence and awe. Acceptable worship- as we saw last week- has been made possible because Jesus the Mediator of the Covenant has opened the way and satisfied the requirements of the Law for us and in our place. As ransomed and redeemed people, we are called to offer our lives as a living sacrifice of praise as 12 puts it- and offer our praise with reverence and awe. It is important to note- there are some kinds of worship that are not pleasing to God! Any worship that is proud- where a man boasts in themselves- presumptive and loud- as they swagger forward. Anything that does not come from faith! These are not pleasing- and this kind of worship is not acceptable to God! But the true worship- that of a child- that which proceeds from faith- will be offered with fear, reverence and awe- this is pleasing to Him. Reverence here is the word- adios- meaning respect, honor and with a regard for someone in a high position. We could say deference. And awe- that is a godly fear, discretion and a humble piety. This godly fear and awe are reinforced in v. 29- when we are reminded that our God is a consuming fire. The same God who appeared on Sinai in a flame that tore the mountain apart is the same God we worship today- in whose presence we stand! But He is also our Loving Father who calls us to come- who provided His Son who would open the way so that we might come with boldness as children- approaching His throne of grace with confidence.

To conclude, as our theme states- Jesus Christ instructs His people concerning acceptable worship. So when we put all these concepts together we find that acceptable worshippers listen to the Messenger, come to give thanks, and approach with reverence and awe. We come to listen and submit, rejoice and revere! That is God pleasing worship- that is the kind of worshippers God is seeking! As we come to the Lord's Table now, we keep these aspects in mind. We should come with joy- giving thanks for this means of grace- rejoicing in the foretaste of the Wedding Supper to Come! But also come with reverence- not forcing and trampling our way as they did in Corinth- not without thought or consideration of others- but rather taking with the hand as we look to our Savior with the eyes of faith- worshipping Him who speaks and feeds us from heaven again this day!