

“Yes, No, and Then What?”

Special Presentation

Hebrews 12:18-39

Don Maurer

May 5, 2023

Don Maurer: Our Father and our God, we do thank You and praise You. Lord, when we hear about things like what happened to Your servant Kevin, and what’s happening currently with Tab, we realize, Lord, that we dare not take another day for granted—that Lord, every day is a gift from You. And so Father, we thank You that most of us were able to experience a good night’s sleep, that hopefully we’re refreshed today, Father, that we were able to come here in a free country to hear Your word expounded. Father, thank You that we have these privileges and that we have these gifts.

Father in heaven, thank You for one another. Thank You for the body of Christ. Thank You for sending Your only-begotten Son to do what we could not possibly do for ourselves.

And Father, our hearts are heavy today. Lord, we pray for the Kohn family. Father, Kevin ministered to us in many ways whether through phone calls, or being here in person. And now he’s with You, never, ever again to be separated from You, to experience the joy that we all long for. So Father, we pray that You would comfort his family in that knowledge, that You would comfort Sandy, that You would provide for her needs, Lord, as she is now a widow. Father, we ask during this time that they would be good witnesses for the people that will be coming this weekend, and Lord, that You would allow them to grieve, but not as those who have no hope.

Father, we also lift up to You Jeff and Tab. Father, we thank You for the faithful service that Jeff has rendered to us these seven years. Dear Father in heaven, we pray that You would just fill him with Your Holy Spirit, that he would be able, Father, to minister to his wife, as well, heavenly Father, to keep on doing everything that he needs to do as a pastor at his church and at the seminary and everything else. Father, we pray for healing for Tab. We pray, Father, that You would give everyone who is taking care of her wisdom. We pray for good results from the pet scan and the cat scan which she is going to be having this morning. Heavenly Father, heal her by Your own supernatural power. We know that You are able to do immeasurably more than we ask or think. And so we give Jeff and Tab and the family to You this morning.

We also continue to pray for our brother Bruce, that he would be ministered to, Lord, while his wife is out of town. And now, Father, we pray that You would instruct us in Your word. I pray, Father, that You would forgive me of my many sins, and Father, that everything that I would say would be in accordance with Your word of truth, for we pray it in Christ’s name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Ted Wood: Don, I was at the viewing last night.

Don Maurer: Okay.

Ted: And I talked to his son Brandon.

Don: Yes.

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Ted: I was reminiscing about his dad because Kevin was maturing in his faith. His growth in the faith was quite extraordinary because he came with no knowledge and lots of misconceptions, and he really progressed since he first came to Brave Men.

Don: Mm-hmm.

Ted: And I said this to Brandon. I said, “Gosh, your dad had so many questions; he was always calling me up.” And Brandon said, “Well, he doesn’t have any more questions now.”

Don: That’s right.

Ted: That just struck me.

Don: Yes.

Ted: It’s a profound truth.

Don: Amen. I’ll always remember that he used to love it when Jeff and I would spar. *(Laughter)* He said, “You guys ought to be on television.” *(Laughter)* Yes, he will be sorely missed. But he wouldn’t come back here for anything. He’s experiencing the joy that we all long for.

But anyway, I was called to do this on Wednesday. And I immediately thought, what do I come up with? Now the title on your handout is odd, I know: “No, Yes, and Then What?” *(Laughter)* But that really is the thrust of the passage that I will read to you from the book of Hebrews. So why don’t we read it right now: Hebrews 12:18-29? I will be reading from the New King James Version.

“For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: ‘And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.’ And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.’

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, ‘Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.’ Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Don Maurer: Okay. If I were in seminary and I was called to preach a sermon, or perhaps preaching from the pulpit, I might be criticized for preaching a section at the end of a book, and a section which starts with the word “for,” or “therefore,” because the

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word “therefore” indicates something that has gone before. It indicates a conclusion—not to be confused with an inclusio. (*Laughter*)

Some of you may remember Jeff’s study in Hebrews six years ago.

Brave Man: Wow!

Don: Does anyone remember the main theme of Hebrews?

Ted: Don’t desert the faith.

David Wessel: Don’t drift.

Don Maurer: Yes, don’t drift; don’t desert the faith, yes. That’s exactly right. Also, the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant to the Old. A central theme of course is don’t drift, the audience being Jews who were in danger of apostasy, of returning to the shadows as it were—to Judaism—because of the pressure of persecution both from Jews and Gentiles. The book has multiple warnings and multiple encouragements. R. C. Sproul said that if he were on a desert island and could only have one book of the Bible, Hebrews would be it.

So we’re going to consider this passage in chapter 12, which follows chapter 11, oddly enough. And what is chapter 11? Does anybody know? What do many people call chapter 11 of Hebrews?

Mike Davis: The faith chapter.

Don Maurer: Yes, the faith hall of fame; the faith chapter. Okay. In chapter 12 of course we have an exhortation to keep our eyes on Christ and to endure the discipline of God as a Father, followed by an exhortation to *“holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”* And the reason for this, as with so much of the word of God, is not in order to be saved, but because we are saved.

And there’s a contrast here: the no versus the yes; what we have not come to and what we have come to as New Testament saints. So first of all I’d like us to consider what we have not come to—verses 18-21; I’ll read 18 and 19. *“For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.”* Of course later on it says that even Moses was terrified at this sight.

All right. Of course the author of this epistle is referring to the giving of the law at Mount Sinai in Exodus chapter 19. And we can only imagine what this must have been like for the children of Israel. It’s interesting to me that God required the people to consecrate themselves for three days in order to prepare for this monumental event: the appearance of the Lord in their midst.

Now I wonder, I just wonder. I don’t want to be legalistic or anything like that. But I wonder if we truly realize what is actually taking place on Sunday mornings when we worship the Lord—what is actually happening, that the Lord is among us in a special way when we worship Him, when we gather for worship on the Lord’s Day in the morning or in the evening. Of course the Lord is with us always; I know that. But He has promised to be among us when we worship Him in spirit and in truth on the Lord’s Day. And though He certainly doesn’t require us to do what the people of Israel did—remember that it said that they were even to abstain from marital relations during that time. Nevertheless, I wonder how prepared we are to worship our God.

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Ted, I think that you had said a number of years ago in one of your talks that in Scotland the night before that everything was done on the farms and in the homes to prepare so that at nine or ten at night or whatever, the lights went out and people prepared for the next day to meet the Lord. Even the Westminster Confession and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms talk about that: making sure that all of our affairs are taken care of, with due diligence and attention paid to the preaching of the word of God. I wonder how much preparation we do. I know that a lot of times I'm not as prepared on Sunday mornings as I should be for sure. Saturday nights I turn the oldies off and I put the Christian music on to prepare for the next day.

You know, it's very instructive to us in Isaiah and Amos that the Lord tells the people that He hated their feasts and despised them. He says, “They're a wearisome thing to Me; they're a stench in My nostrils.” How would you like it if the Lord said that about our worship services?

But we have not come to a physical mountain that may be touched that burned with fire, “*and to blackness and darkness*” and smoke, and the sound of a trumpet. I can relate to some of this existentially and maybe you can, too, because of the news reports over the last few weeks of all these tornadoes that have been reported and the hurricanes that we hear about at this time of year.

As far as the trumpet is concerned, I definitely can relate to that. I wonder what key it was in. *(Laughter)* Maybe I'm going to ask about that when I get to heaven.

Don Bishop: Maybe you'll hear it, Don.

Don Maurer: That's true! Very good, Don! Thank you, thank you! All right.

Don Bishop: And you'll see it.

Don Maurer: Very much so, yes; presumably for the first time. Okay, Exodus 19 verse 19 says that the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder. I can remember in the '50s and '60s when we were in the Cold War era; maybe some of you remember this too. But the air raid sirens were tested every Monday morning in Allegheny County at 11:00 and 11:10 or 11:15. They were developed by Chrysler Corporation. Well I didn't know what an air raid was when I was growing up. But at the age of three or four that was like a TV show to me. *(Laughter)* Every Monday morning, “Mum, Mum, open the window!” Poor Mom; the louder, the better. *(Laughter)* You know, when I get to heaven, if anybody is there who blew those, I'm going to thank them because it provided me with great joy. I guess Hitler and Putin are the only other people who enjoyed air raid sirens besides me. *(Laughter)* But it got louder and louder when the take cover alert blew. It must have sounded something like that.

Now what would your reaction have been in this situation? Casual? Ho-hum? “Oh well, that's interesting?”

Don Bishop: No.

Don Maurer: No, hardly. The people, even Moses, were terrified. The people begged that no further word would be spoken directly by God to them anymore. As New Testament saints—and Ted, you've touched on this—I fear that we've lost, or at least have a tendency to de-emphasize, the holiness and majesty of God, and our proper response of fear. For example, Ted, you've touched on this with some Good Friday services. You said that there were some people who said, “Let's jump right to Easter

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Sunday,” and not dwell on what Christ had to suffer. Well I wonder if sometimes we have a tendency to do that with the holiness of God.

You know, this was a bit theme of the late R. C. Sproul as many of you know. It was he universal initial reaction to people who encountered God in the Bible. Job: *“I repent in dust and ashes.”* Isaiah: *“Woe is me, for I am undone!”* Peter: *“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”* Paul in abject terror on the road to Damascus, struck down immediately from his horse. John on the island of Patmos, who fell down as one dead; godly fear.

Now of course the Lord doesn’t leave them or us there. But I only want to point this out so that we will never forget that God is holy. Sorry, but the word “awesome” doesn’t do it for me. There’s a song that we sometimes sing at church—very seldom—and I don’t really like it—it’s called “Our God is an Awesome God.” Now I’m sure that Rich Mullens, or whoever it was, had very good intentions writing that song. But the word “awesome” is overused. Oh, this ice cream is awesome! My girlfriend is awesome! That car you have is awesome!

No, the Puritans referred to God as awful—full of awe. And I realize that word has a negative connotation; it means bad. But He is frightening, literally full of awe. Is the God that you worship the holy God of Scripture who inspired terror to those who encountered Him initially, even in the lives of long-time saints?

Now of course in His mercy the Lord said to Moses that it was good that the people wanted a Mediator. And in Deuteronomy 18 God promises and predicts the coming of Christ. And of course this whole episode in Exodus 19 on Mount Sinai points to the horror of the law, as Jeff has been teaching us in Romans, right? In some way we must be aware of the weight of our sin and the requirements of the law before we will ever appreciate what Christ has done for us, and the good news of the gospel.

I can talk about numerous times whenever I did “Evangelism Explosion,” and when I would ask people the diagnostic question, “Why should God let you into heaven?” And so many times the answer I would get was, “Well, I haven’t killed anybody.” (*Laughter*) Or “I tried to live the best life I can.” They had no idea, and neither did we until we were enlightened by the Lord as to the requirements of the law and the desperate situation that we’re in.

Jeff had talked about this. In seminary he was required to go to a synagogue. And the rabbi said, “Well, the problem with you Christians is that you need Jesus. We have the law; we don’t need Jesus.” Frightening.

Okay, so we have not come to this; that’s the “no” of it. What have we come to? Let me point out that all of these things the author of Hebrews mentions here are pointing to something that Jeff has been faithfully teaching us for years: our union with Christ—the fact that as it says in Ephesians 2:6, that we are right now seated with Christ in the heavenlies, in the heavenly realms. It’s a present reality, though of course not experienced completely and physically and unceasingly by us because of our sin, because of our flesh, because of our frail bodies. The best is yet to come, obviously. But in God’s way of thinking we are there right now in Christ Jesus. And the author is going to point that out to us here.

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“You have come to Mount Zion.” Not the physical mountain, but heaven. *“To the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem.”* Ted, we were talking about hymns last week. A hymn that you might want to talk about in the future is:

*“Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God.”*

A great tune by Isaac Watts. You have come to *“the heavenly Jerusalem”* in all its splendor. If you have ever read Revelation 21 you know the city of gold, the golden gates and everything that awaits us there. You’ve come to that. It’s what we are to set our hearts and minds and affections on, right? So turn that TV off, turn the news off. Take your Bible or take a good book, listen to some good hymns and glory and revel in that, because that’s what we are looking forward to.

You have come to *“an innumerable company of angels.”* Some translations like the ESV add *“In festal gathering.”* As a rule we don’t talk a whole lot about angels. We might hear about them at Christmastime or a few other times. And yet the Bible does quite a bit. In fact R. C. Sproul points out that the word “angel” is mentioned in the word of God more than sin or love, believe it or not. And their task, of course, is to praise God unceasingly and to do His bidding as His messengers. They must be very dazzling creatures. Otherwise the shepherds wouldn’t have been as terrified as they were on that night, or the guards when they saw the angels at the tomb of Christ. And they must be so awesome to look at that someone as sanctified as the apostle John was tempted to worship one of them. And we’re going to see them someday.

And in this festive atmosphere they are celebrating with the saints, rejoicing when a sinner repents and comes to faith in Christ. There is a celebration going on right now that the angels and the saints are a part of.

“To the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven.” Now the term *“general assembly”* is the way the Old and New King James translates it. And that’s where the Presbyterian term “general assembly” comes from. They meet every year as the Presbyterian denominations. What do other translations say for that? I think it’s in verse 22 or 23.

Don Bishop: 23. The ESV says, *“the assembly.”*

Don Maurer: *“The assembly”*; okay.

Mike: The NIV says, *“to the church of the firstborn.”*

Don Maurer: Yes. What does it say before that, Mike?

Mike: *“You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly.”*

Don Maurer: *“In joyful assembly.”* Okay. So they kind of put “the festal gathering” and the “assembly” into one phrase. Okay, a joyful assembly. Boy, can you imagine the joy that Kevin stepped into? One minute going to the bathroom and falling down, wondering when his chemo would be, or whatever. The next minute in great glory. Wow!

“The church of the firstborn.” We know that Christ was *“the firstborn from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.”* He is risen; we will rise. He has gone before us.

And they are *“registered in heaven.”* That is true for everyone who comes to Christ. His or her name is written in the Lamb’s book of life and will never, never be erased. Registered in heaven; how about that! Consisting of everyone from Adam to the last New Testament saint when Christ returns.

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I think this is very much related; I can't stress this enough. Ted, you've talked several times about the importance of the church—not just the local church, but the universal or catholic church. Don't be afraid of the word “catholic”; it means universal. It's incredible to me, the number of people who say that they love Christ but have no use for the church. You know, that would be like saying if you're invited to someone's house for dinner, “Well I really like you, but I'm not too crazy about your wife.” (*Laughter*) I doubt if they would have you back.

A few days ago the Surgeon General published an article saying that Americans are in an emergency health crisis because of loneliness. Ironically we have social media, but that is a misnomer. Social media has produced antisocial behavior.

Don Bishop: Mm-hmm.

Don Maurer: A couple weeks ago on Rick Dayton's program on the radio he talked about a recent survey. And the results of the survey are that more people are unhappy now than the last time the survey was taken in 1972.

Ted: Wow.

Don Maurer: Surprise, surprise. 2/3 of the people responding to the survey who said they were happy said that a big factor in their happiness was belief in God. Now I know that's generic; it didn't say specifically being Christians. But I called the show and I said, “Well Rick, does that surprise you?” And I gave a little mini-testimony on KDKA of all places! They let me give a—

Ted: It was a slow day. (*Laughter*)

Don Maurer: Yeah, right. They did have a few other calls in that regard too, and one of them was from an atheist. But anyway there is the sense of community that being part of the church brings, right? Christ knew that we couldn't go it alone. And one of the reasons that He established the church is that the church is His body; it's His bride. Obviously He did it for His glory and for worship. But the benefits that we experience from it are manifold, and one of the reasons is that we are all together. We come together to worship. We care for one another; we care for one another's needs. Another hymn: *“Blessed be the tie that binds. We share our mutual woes, Our mutual burdens bear; And often for each other flows The sympathizing tear.”*

We rejoice with those who rejoice as well. We take care of one another. Yes, that is the church, the glorious thing that it is. And sorry, live streaming is not a substitute. Live streaming has some benefits, particularly when I had COVID last summer and I was sick. I was able to listen to the services online. But it's not a substitute for being together as the body.

“You have come to God, the Judge of all.” In our increasingly secular society that concept is rapidly vanishing from the thinking of many people. I can't help but think that if more people took it seriously we wouldn't have all of the shootings that we have today. Of course we have to be careful lest we become self-righteous, because every time we sin I think that we forget that.

Ted: Yeah.

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Don Maurer: For sure. That same epistle in chapter 4 says that we will all have to give account to this heavenly Judge. We will all have to give account to Him *“with whom we have to do.”* Praise God that our Judge is also our Savior.

You have come *“to the spirits of just”* or righteous *“men made perfect.”* Now this is referring primarily in this context to the Old Testament saints. But it certainly can apply to all who are now with Christ in glory: Kevin Cohn, Dick Clouser, Bishop Rodgers, Frank Melnyk.

Ted: Mm-hmm. Wow!

Don Maurer: The church militant and the church triumphant, the communion of saints. They are now experiencing what we long for: no pain, no sorrow, no death, no sin, perfect worship, perfect union and communion with Christ, awaiting the resurrection.

And most of all you have come *“to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant,”* who is the theme of this whole epistle, who is the theme of Scripture, who makes heaven heaven.

Ted, I keep referring to things you have said over the years. But you talked about this. I believe it was Augustine who said that if you could go to a place after you die with all of the earthly things that are there that you love—all the food you ever wanted, all the possessions and conveniences and health and everything that we value, and the wealth on this earth—but if Jesus weren’t there, it would be hell to you.

Ted: Mm-hmm.

Don Maurer: You’ve come to Jesus. And you’ve come to *“the blood of sprinkling.”* Of course that refers to the Old Testament sacrifices. It *“speaks better things than that of Abel.”* Of course Abel’s sacrifice was accepted by God because of faith and obedience. But neither it nor the blood of bulls and goats could atone for sin. But the blood of Jesus can, and the blood of Jesus does.

And it’s not that there’s something magical in the blood itself. It’s His death; it’s the shedding of His blood. I remember hearing a sermon. R. C. Sproul actually preached the message. But John Guest said that if Christ cut His finger would that have done anything for you? Well, of course not. He had to die; His blood had to be shed. But the blood of Christ does atone for our sin. All right. Any questions or comments before we go on to the final section here?

Ted: Don, I was just talking about being with the Lord in eternity. I was thinking about and reminded of Michael Card’s song “Joy in the Journey.”

Don Maurer: Mm-hmm.

Ted (singing):

*“There’s a joy in the journey;
There’s a light we can love on the way.”*

Do you know that?

Don Maurer: I’ve heard it; it’s been a long time.

Ted: The second verse refers to this. You talked about being with the Lord—no pain and even referencing other things.

*“To all who have been born of the Spirit,
And who share incarnation with Him,
Who belong to eternity, stranded in time,
And weary of struggle with sin.”*

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I think for me—and I haven’t suffered physically a lot in my life—but the greatest thing I look forward to is that I’m weary of struggling with sin.

Don Maurer: Mm-hmm.

Ted: I’m stranded in time. And I’m weary of struggling with sin.

Don Maurer: Yes. Notice that Michael Card didn’t say, “Stranded in the body.” He said, “Stranded in time.” Great observation, Ted.

Matt Reichart: Don, I’m assuming that you just jumped into this passage. You didn’t go through this last week, right?

Don Maurer: No.

Matt: I’m struggling in this sense. I want to go through all the prior verses, to the meat prior to this section and after. What is the point of this? It’s kind of added on, but it’s not speaking to me so far. I’m not quite sure; it’s kind of weird, how it’s just stuck in there. But it is an encouraging passage.

Don Maurer: Oh, yes. And that’s the problem, Matt, as I said before, with coming to such a big book. We’re coming to the end of the book without dealing with the whole book.

Matt: Yes.

Don Maurer: So please forgive me for that, brother.

Matt: No, it’s nothing with you; it’s just the particular part of this book and this chapter. It’s kind of like they just put that in there.

Don Maurer: It’s an exhortation from the author. I mean, put yourself in their situation: constant persecution; constant, constant pressure. Living in a free country and in a free society we don’t have it. Imagine if you lived in China or Iran or somewhere like that, where you are constantly hearing the loudspeaker go off all the time to come to prayer three times a day, or being constantly persecuted without possessions, being starved or whatever, being beaten, tortured, or being tempted, as the people of that time were, to go back to Judaism. Then you wouldn’t suffer all this. And so that is why he constantly does in this book—Paul, or whoever the author may have been—gives another one of these exhortations to the people. And Matt, maybe these next few verses might bring it all to fruition as we go through here.

Matt: Oka.

Don Maurer: Okay. And like you said, Matt—

Matt: In verse 12 of this chapter: *Strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble.*”

Don Maurer: Yes.

Matt: Chapter 13: *Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality.*”

Don Maurer: Right. And he’s going to talk about—

Matt: All the exhortations.

Don Maurer: Exactly, yes.

Matt: The idea of persevering. Maybe it’s a reminder of what they came from.

Don Maurer: Yeah. And so here we go, Matt: the “then what” part which you’re talking about. Okay, so what? This is the indicative; now what’s the imperative? What do we do as a result of that? How are we to conduct our lives? What is our response to be, knowing these things?

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First of all there's a warning, which is the characteristic of this epistle, along with the encouragements. There's a warning to those on the fence to those wavering at that time because of persecution or doubt. It's a warning to those who say, "Well I'd like to come to Christ. But there's this particular sin that I really want to cling to." Or "Oh yeah, but what about this? What about that? I don't understand all these things," or whatever. You know, we can think of a lot of excuses.

"If they did not escape from Him who spoke on earth, how much more will we not escape if we refuse Him who speaks from heaven?" The Egyptians didn't escape. Those in the Flood and Sodom and Gomorrah didn't escape. The sinners in Israel didn't escape God's temporal judgments. How much worse will the final judgment be for those refusing Christ? It's an allusion to Haggai 2 verse 6. *"I shake the earth. But once more I will shake not only the earth, but heaven."*

Matt: What's that referring to, once more?

Don Maurer: The Second Coming; I believe it's going to be the Second Coming.

Ted: So the first shaking might be Mount Sinai, and the second shaking might be when He comes again.

Don Maurer: Yes. Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."*

Matt: It's the great earthquake at the tribulation at the end, when that last seal is opened.

Don Maurer: Mm-hmm.

Matt: The mountains move when Christ is coming back.

Don Maurer: Yes. 2 Peter 3:10-13.

Transcriber's Note: 2 Peter 2:10-13, NKJV. *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."*

Don Maurer: The earth and everything in it will be burned up and destroyed by fire; the elements will melt. Sorry, John Philip Sousa. Sorry, patriotic Americans, but the stars and stripes are not forever. Ted, sorry; there will not always be an England.

Ted: Now you've caught me. *(Laughter)* I'm going to be up early Saturday morning.

Don Maurer: What does that have to do with it?

Ted: It's the coronation.

Don Maurer: Oh, right, yes. *(Laughter)* You can tell what kind of Anglophile I am. *(Laughter)* Prince Charles, right?

Ted: Charles III.

Don Maurer: Okay. See, I knew that. Okay, and the sun did set on the Roman Empire. Folks, to bring it home, as I said before, one minute Kevin Cohn steps into the bathroom; the next minute with the Lord. It will happen to all of us at some point in time, unless we're alive when Jesus returns. And even in this life change happens suddenly. All the things we know will be shaken and removed, *"so that the things that cannot be*

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shaken,”—the new heavens and the new earth—may remain forever. 2 Peter says these things will be destroyed. But we await the home of righteousness.

It’s amazing to me; it’s still very amusing. I turn on these sports channels, these sports stations on the radio. They’re constantly talking about the Steeler game, anticipating it—every little nook and cranny and detail. And then at the end, particularly when they lose, what went wrong? What can we do?, on and on and on. Folks, so what? (*Laughter*) And you’re talking about a guy who has a Steeler bash every year, you know? In the eternal scheme of things it doesn’t matter. I don’t think we’re going to be talking about Big Ben, or Pickett’s throw a million years from now.

Don Bishop: Five years from now.

Don Maurer: Right; yeah.

Matt: One of the lies of the misinformation of our world is that the world is going to last forever.

Ted: Yeah.

Matt: Last year in Colorado I brought two carrying bags of stuff on the plane that said, “Save the earth.”

Don Maurer: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Matt: You know, the message is that we can save this earth. If you believe the Bible, this present heaven and earth will pass away.

Ted: Yeah.

Matt: So this is a ship that is going to sink.

Ted: That’s right.

Don Maurer: Very much so.

Matt: We need to be preaching Acts 17: that God has called on all men everywhere to repent.

Don Maurer: Definitely.

Matt: As Christians, it’s kind of like, hey! The reason that we have this world’s philosophy is that we think we can save this earth, and that this earth is going to remain forever. And it’s not.

Don Maurer: Right.

Matt: So that’s all the more reason that we need to be sharing with others.

Don Maurer: Right. It’s not that we’re not to be good stewards; of course we are. But you’re right, Matt. And it deteriorates in some respects to worship. They worship the earth; that’s all they have.

Matt: Right.

Don Maurer: All they have is this life. Okay. So “*therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken,*” let us just be complacent, right? No. “*Let us have grace.*” It’s only by grace that we can serve the Lord, right? It’s only by grace, Matt, that you can do what you do at Pine Valley. It’s only by grace that we can worship our God acceptably, “*by which we may serve*”—and some translations say “*worship*”—“*God acceptably.*”

Now what does this imply? This implies that there is also an unacceptable way to worship or serve God. We can think of some Scriptural examples: the golden calf worship service, which was very enthusiastic, by the way—very joyful, right? But it was unacceptable. Or in Malachi, when they offered lame or sick animals to be sacrificed. Or

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the ritualism that the Pharisees were engaged in, or the abuse of the Lord’s Supper in Corinth. They were unacceptable ways of worship. I think that we need to examine ourselves. Are we worshiping God acceptably when our minds are elsewhere? What am I going to have for lunch? What’s that ball game going to be like on TV today? What am I going to do?, rather than focusing on the word of God, on God Himself.

We’re to worship *“with reverence and godly fear;”* all right? Not entertainment,--

Matt: Mine says *“awe.”*

Don Maurer: Yes.

Matt: *Acceptable service, with reverence and awe.”*

Don Maurer: Yes.

Matt: And I looked up the word. It says that it originally meant “terror, and carries the weaker sense of wonder.” It involves terror.

Don Maurer: Yes.

Matt: I’ve always heard that “awesome” was specifically ascribed to God because of the terror.

Don Maurer: Yes, like the Puritans used to say “awful.”

Matt: Yeah. He mentions back here too that “awful” has also been used.

Don Maurer: Yes. “Awesome” has been kind of de-fanged, as it were.

Matt: Let me read this to you. *“Many object to the use of ‘awesome’ to describe something such as a sandwich.” (Laughter) “It does not literally give us awe.”*

Don Maurer: Right.

Matt: *“There are many people who insist that ‘awesome’ should be used only in weighty subjects. They happily use the word ‘awful’ in reference to something such as a mess, which falls distinctly short of being ‘full of awe,’”* as you said.

Don Maurer: Yeah.

Matt: *“This weakened sense was once considered improper.” (Unclear)*

Don Maurer: Yes. Thank you, Matt; that was great!

Matt: *“The change in meaning that ‘awesome’ is undergoing may be more recent than that of ‘awful.’ But both words are treading the same path.”*

Don Maurer: Very good; thank you so much.

Matt: Yeah.

Don Maurer: So we’re to worship *“with reverence and godly fear.”* And I know that there are different styles of worship. But let’s remember that we’re not dealing with a buddy. A buddy is an equal. And even though in the Person of Jesus Christ God condescended to become the God-Man, nevertheless He is God. We worship the triune God, and He is to be worshiped with reverence and awe; godly fear. Not with terror that He’s going to beat us or swallow us up, but of a Father, as Someone we revere and respect and worship.

For our God is a different God than the God we have in the Old Testament, right? No. *“For our God is a consuming fire.”* For those who will not come to Christ yes, He is. And even for us He does purify us. But He is also our refuge, and will be forever and ever. And all God’s people said,--

Brave Men: Amen.

Don Maurer: Let us pray. Our Father and our God, we thank You for this portion of Your word. Father, I pray that You would, by the power of the Holy Spirit, apply it to our

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lives, that we would meditate on it, meditating on the joy that we will have, and the fact that we are now, by virtue of what Christ has done for us, seated with You in the heavenly places, and that we may live our lives accordingly. For we pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Don: Thank you. (*Applause*)