

The Sin (Hebrews 12:1–4)
By Pastor Jeff Alexander (10/15/2017)

Introduction

1. We pause in our study to examine more fully “*the sin*” referred to in verse 1.
 - a. The apostle refers to a specific sin—*the sin of unbelief* already warned about in chapters 3 and 4.
 - b. We need to review references already covered in order to summarize the evidence supporting the claim that “*the sin*” is the sin of unbelief.
2. Simply defined, *unbelief* is not faithfully and continually *looking unto Jesus*. Our proposition: unbelief is not *hearing* (giving full attention to) Jesus’ message. We must look to Jesus because God has spoken to us in these last days through Him.

I. The Reason

1. The *resume* of Jesus supports our need to hear Him.
 - a. He is none other than the *heir* of all things.
 - b. He is the *creator* of all things, simply speaking it into existence.
 - c. He is the exact *image* of God’s person and the full radiance of His *glory*.
 - d. He is the *upholder* of all things through His powerful word.
 - e. He is the *perfect sacrifice* for all things, *purging* the sins of His people and *freeing* them from the divine justice.
 - f. He is the *exalted victor* and ruler of all things and is at the right hand of Majesty, claiming victory over evil and declaring His intention to restore God’s Kingdom on earth.
2. The *role* of Jesus supports God’s purpose to restore fallen humans (1:4–14).
 - a. His *position*: a lower status than angels but exalted to the throne of God
 - b. His *person*: preeminent in the created order but humiliated in order to subdue His enemies
 - c. His *provision* to the heirs of salvation; to be ministered to by angels (1:14).

II. The Need

Our problem (2:1–15):

Unbelief is disobedience that comes to those who pay no attention to Jesus’ word. If we do not pay close attention to Jesus, we neglect the “*so great salvation*” and drift away from the truth. There is no escaping the consequences of neglecting Jesus’ word (so great salvation), its being superior to that spoken by angels (the law at Sinai).

1. The word spoken by Jesus must be *obeyed*.
 - a. Based on who Jesus is (as compared to angels), what He speaks demands greater attention.
 - b. If disobedience to the fixed word spoken by angels received just recompense, how much greater recompense will ignoring Jesus mandate?
 - c. The witnesses that God (2:4) used to support Jesus require us to pay very careful attention to Him.
2. The *work* done by the Last Adam (Jesus) must be respected.
 - a. The world was never placed in subjection to angels.
 - b. The world has been placed in subjection to the last Adam.

- 1) Jesus earned His place by overcoming the fall of Adam, destroying the devil who had the power of death, and subjecting all things under His feet.
- 2) In this He rescued some of the fallen sons of Adam, overcoming the consequences of the fall and delivering them from the fear of death.
- 3) He did this by becoming the promised offspring of Abraham and resisting the temptation of Satan.

III. The Reward

Our problem compounded (3:1–4:13):

Unbelief *prevents* our entering the reward of rest promised to those who act on Jesus' word.

1. God built a house for Moses, who was faithful as a servant over his house—ethnic Israel (3:5).
 - a. Ethnic Israel was promised rest (*katapowsis*, over their enemies, 3:7–11) in the land of promise, if they would trust Him and possess the land (Deut. 12:9; Josh. 21:44).
 - b. The generation of the Exodus failed because of unbelief (3:12–19).
2. God built a house for Jesus, who was a faithful Son over His own house—spiritual Israel (“we,” 3:6).
 - a. We are promised *Sabbath* rest (*sabbatismos*, final Sabbath rest in the presence of God in the eternal kingdom—used only here in the Bible).
 - b. Faith acts (4:11) to enter the earthly rest (*katapowsis*), which leads to the final rest promised (*sabbatismos*, 4:9).

Conclusion:

Some in ethnic Israel (the cloud of witnesses of chapter 11) did enter *rest*; therefore, we are admonished to cast off the sin of unbelief (that defeated the generation of the Exodus) and *run with endurance* (faith acting, 4:11) the race for eternal kingdom rest (12:26, 28).

Application

1. Are you listening to God who is speaking to you through His Son, Jesus?
2. Is your faith, wrought by the Spirit, evidencing itself in your obedience to His will for you?
3. Are you hardening your heart against Him as Israel did in the Exodus, or are you striving for the promised rest?