INTRO: YOU ARE RUNNING TOWARD A WONDERFUL FINISH LINE!

I. MOUNT SINAI: YOU'RE NOT HEADED TOWARD AN EARTHLY PLACE OF FEAR (v.18-21)

A. The old covenant focused on the visible/earthly
   - The old covenant consisted of “what may be touched” (v.18)—an earthly mountain
   - The Israelites could visually see this mountain, Moses climbed it to meet with God
   - OT worship was also focused on earthly, visible realities

B. The old covenant was terrifying
   - It emphasized God's Holiness
     - “blazing fire and darkness and gloom and tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them” (v.19)
     - It is terrifying to be in the presence of a holy God! Even Moses was trembling with fear (v.21)
   - It emphasized God's distance
     - In the old covenant you can't draw near to God's presence or you will die. “If even a beast touches the mountain it shall be stoned” (v.20, Ex 19:12)
     - People always reminded of barrier to God: they are sinners and He is holy
   - Does this mean OT people were saved by law-keeping? No, people are always saved by grace, even in the OT. But the focus of that covenant was on the unattainable demands of the law and therefore was more terrifying.

**Key Point: You’re not running in vain, towards an inaccessible and distant God

II. MT. ZION: YOU AREヘADED TOWARD THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM OF JOY (v.22-24)

A. The new covenant focuses on the invisible/heavenly
We run not to an earthly location, but to “the heavenly Jerusalem” (v.22)
- This city is not (yet) visible to us, but it waits for us!
- “In my Father’s house are many rooms. . . and I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2)
- Thus, our worship is no longer geographically/physically restricted

This city is filled with heavenly inhabitants
- “innumerable angels” (v.22)
- “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (v.23)
- “God, the judge of all” (v.23)

B. The new covenant is not terrifying but gracious

No reason to fear because Jesus is there!
- “Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant” (v.24)
- “sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (v.24)
- The voice on this mountain does not issue threats, but a gracious invitation!

Therefore, there is joy and feasting there
- Angels are in a “festal gathering” (v.22)
- The saints are “made perfect” (v.23)

III. Applications (v.25-29)

A. Negatively: Don’t Refuse Him

Why? Because God still judges those who reject him (v.25)
- God’s judgment can be even greater in the NT because now he has plainly revealed himself in Christ
- Argument from lesser to greater: if people were judged in the OT for not listening, how much more in the NT!

Why? Because His voice will “shake” the world again (v.26-27)
- Citing Haggai 2:6, our author points forward to the second coming
- At the second coming, Christ will remove all earthly, worldly things, leaving behind only that which cannot be shaken

B. Positively: Gratefully Worship Him
- “Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a Kingdom which cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship” (v.28)
  - You are safe, protected by Christ. You cannot be shaken!
  - Our response to grace is always the same: gratitude and worship
- “Our God is a consuming fire” (v.29)
  - We still have a holy God—that has not changed
  - It’s just that now we can draw near to him in Christ
Discussion Groups

1. Do you sometimes live the Christian life like you are under the old covenant? How does this passage change your outlook?

2. What about the heavenly Jerusalem excites you or encourages you? How does knowing about heaven help you better run the race?

3. How might a passage like this change the way you worship? Do you think worship today reflects God’s holiness?