

# 31

## A TALE OF TWO MOUNTAINS

*Hebrews 12:18-29*

**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
  - o The old covenant consisted of "what may be touched" (v.18)—an earthly mountain
  - o The Israelites could visually see this mountain, Moses climbed it to meet with God
  - o OT worship was also focused on earthly, visible realities
- B. The old covenant was terrifying
  - o 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)
  - o 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
  - o 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 Headed Toward the Heavenly Jerusalem of Joy (v.22-24)**

- A. The new covenant focuses on the invisible/heavenly



- o 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
- o 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

- o 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!
- o 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

- o 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!
- o 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



- o “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
- o “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?

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

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

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