

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to the book of Hebrew 12

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through the book of Hebrews.

A letter that was written to a group of Jewish believers who were seriously contemplating going back to Judaism.

And so – the writer of the letter, has been encouraging them to continue to press forward in the faith – to not quit – but to endure by faith.

Let's pray...

As we have been going through our studies through the book of Hebrews, we have seen the writer of Hebrews use the Old Testament as a way to build his argument as to why Jesus is greater than anything this group of Jewish believers were contemplating going back to.

And so we have to remember, that many of these Jewish believers – grew up as Jews.

They were very familiar with the law, the different festivals, the sacrifices and the history of the Jewish people –

So – the key in understanding the book of Hebrews (for those who were not born Jewish) is to be very familiar with the Old Testament.

And so – one of the things that we have seen the writer of Hebrews do in this letter is make comparisons between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant

So in our text this evening – the writer of Hebrews is going to continue to make comparisons between the two covenants but in doing so, he is going to do it by comparing two mountains -

Mt Sinai in verse 18-21

and Mt Zion in verse 22-24

So – if you are taking notes – one half of your paper right Mt Sinai, on the other half, write, Mt. Zion.

These two mountains are best represented by two people

Mt Sinai – Moses

Mt Zion – Jesus

These two mountains are also represented by two principles

Mt Sinai – the Law of God

Mt Zion – the grace of God

And also, we will see fear at Mt Sinai – and joy at Mt Zion.

Mt Sinai brings death

Mt Zion brings life

Mt Sinai enslaves

Mt Zion makes free

[Heb 12:18-29 NKJV] 18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19 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. 20 (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." 21 And so terrifying was the sight [that] Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.")

Turn your bibles with me to Exodus 19

[Exo 19:1-6 NKJV] 1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came [to] the Wilderness of Sinai. 2 For they had departed from Rephidim, had come [to] the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain. 3 And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 4 'You

have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and [how] I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 5 'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth [is] Mine. 6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These [are] the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

So after the crossing of the Red Sea –

God leads the Children of Israel to the base of Mt Sinai

If we continue to read Exodus 19 – we find that the Lord tells Moses to tell the people consecrate themselves because He was going to reveal Himself to them.

However, God warns Moses to tell the people that no one is allowed to even touch the mountain – not even their animals.

And if anyone or any animal touches the mountain – there were to be shot with an arrow.

After three days – God showed up on Mt Sinai to give the Children of Israel – the law,

So when we get to Ch 20 – God gives the Children of Israel – the 10 Commandments.

They all hear Him

But look at their response -

Look at ch 20:18

[Exo 20:18-21 NKJV] 18 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw [it], they trembled and stood afar off. 19 Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." 20 And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." 21 So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God [was].

So when God spoke – the people were afraid.

They actually have a panic attack.

They were terrified by what they saw and they were terrified by what they heard.

They wanted the entire experience to be over with.

They go to Moses and tell him -

“We don’t need to hear directly from God – you be the mediator, Moses. We will listen to you. Tell God to stop talking to us or we will die.”

Now, there is a reason why the Lord did not allow anyone to touch the mountain.

There is a reason why the manifestation of His appearance was accompanied by clouds and smoke and thunder and earthquakes.

Because it was a picture of God's unapproachable holiness.

God is holy

There is no darkness in Him

What happens if anyone approaches the mountain? They were to be put to death.

Even a dumb animal who simply might be looking for food – if it touched the mountain, it was to be killed.

This would have brought fear to the people – the idea of approaching a holy God in your sinful, broken circumstances.

In fact – even Moses was terrified – the writer of Hebrews quotes Deut 9:19 in verse 21

Now, why is the writer of Hebrews using the illustration of Mt Sinai?

Because the writer of Hebrews is reminding this group of Jewish believers of the harshness and severity of the law.

Remember, they were contemplating returning back to the law?

He is reminding them how the law was given to the Children of Israel

He is reminding them that under the Old Covenant given at Mt Sinai – the people actually had to keep their distance away from God because their sin was so profound and God's holiness was so apparent.

He is reminding them that the wages of sin is death

This is true for the believer – but we don't live under the law, we live under grace.

And under the Old Covenant, God wanted His people to seriously understand that.

You see, the Law was never meant to give us a knowledge of salvation

The Law was given to give us a knowledge of sin.

[Rom 3:20 NKJV] 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin.

To give us a knowledge that we are incapable of keeping the law.

To give us a knowledge that we need a Savior.

[Gal 3:24 NKJV] 24 Therefore the law was our tutor [to bring us] to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

That was the Old Covenant – the Law

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 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, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than [that of] Abel.

Notice the contrast between Mt Sinai and Mt Zion

Mt Sinai – the message was keep away.

You set foot on the mountain – you will be killed

It was one of fear

It was one of tempest and smoke and trumpets blasting

At Mt Zion – the message is come

[Mat 11:28 NKJV] 28 “Come to Me, all [you] who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Come to the throne of grace –

As believers in Jesus Christ, Mt Zion is our home.

And it is in Mt Zion that the believer gathers together to celebrate.

Remember, at Mt Sinai – it was all about fear

Here – it is rejoicing, a celebration

And joining this celebration will be an innumerable company of angels.

Do you realize that almost every time an individual has an encounter with an angel – it is accompanied by fear.

But we will rejoice with angels

Because we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

I had you make a note of the phrase church of the firstborn –

By the way, this speaks of everyone who had put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ – whether or not you are the first born among your siblings.

Why would we be referred to as firstborn?

This goes back to the Old Testament.

Because in the Old Testament, the firstborn – is the one who inherits the Father's inheritance.

We talked about this a few weeks ago when we looked at Esau giving up his birthright for a bowl of lentils.

So a believer, is a firstborn in God's family because we have an inheritance, in Christ Jesus, and we are all in that sense inheriting what the Father is giving to us.

I also had you make a note of the last portion of verse 24 –

Where it speaks of,

blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than [that of] Abel.

As I was looking at this text last night –

I don't believe that the writer of Hebrews is referring to Abel's actual blood that was spilled when his brother killed him.

I believe this is in reference to the sacrifice that Abel gave

[Gen 4:1-5 NKJV] 1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." 2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

God respected Abel's sacrifice – meaning that He found it to be acceptable.

But, He did not find Cain's acceptable.

So the word that Abel got from God was – acceptance

However, we are under the New Covenant

And the New Covenant speaks a better word than Abel's sacrifice.

It is more than just acceptance now –

it is forgiveness.

It is no condemnation

It is free access to God

Those are all better words than Abel's sacrifice.

As good as Abel's sacrifice was, Jesus' sacrifice was better.

We'll grasp the importance of His blood in heaven.

25 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,

Here in verse 25 –

We have another warning from the writer of Hebrews

“Don't refuse the Lord Jesus”

In what way?

The writer has already mentioned that Jesus is the Mediator in the New Covenant

Jesus is the One who is spoken

Jesus is the one who is spoken for God

Jesus is the One whose sacrifice and blood cleanses us from our sin

Jesus is the New Covenant of mercy and grace

So the writer of Hebrews is warning the reader to not cut themselves from the gospel and from Jesus

In fact, the word see at the beginning of the verse – it actually means, to keep a watchful eye. To pay close attention.

So what the writer of Hebrews is doing here is reminding the reader that when God spoke to the Children of Israel on Mt Sinai

The Children of Israel – even though they showed fear – they never walked in obedience.

In fact, as we read from Joshua to the prophets, we find that they actually walked in continuous rebellion.

And because they walked in continuous rebellion – there were consequences.

There were short term consequences for the generation that heard God's voice on the mountain – they did not enter into the Promised Land because of their unbelief.

They were not able to enter into God's rest

And there were long term consequences for future generations, as -

God used the Assyrians and the Babylonians to bring judgment – to take them into exile.

So if the Children of Israel could not escape the consequences of rebelling at Mount Sinai against the Old Covenant

There are and should be even greater consequences for resisting God's greater work at Mount Zion. (New Covenant)

What will happen to the person who rejects the invitation of Jesus

And the love of Jesus

And the mercy of Jesus

And the forgiveness of Jesus

That is what the writer of Hebrews is trying to impress upon these Hebrew Christians

How can you follow Moses and NOT follow Jesus.

Mount Sinai leads to Mount Zion.

Moses points to Jesus.

There's nowhere else to turn but Jesus.

To those who reject Jesus – who reject the gospel – who turn their back on Jesus

Those individuals will have to bear the consequences of their own judgment.

26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." 27 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.**

Once again – the writer of Hebrews is contrasting two events –

The first event is the shaking that happened at Mt Sinai – Exodus 19:18

However, then he speaks of another shaking / another earthquake and he quotes from Haggai.

Haggai is about 900 years after the Exodus

[Hag 2:6-7 NKJV] 6 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it [is] a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 'and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

What the writer of Hebrews is saying –

That God is going to shake the entire universe –

Everything we see, touch, smell, hear – one day, it will all cease to exist.

All those things which are not left standing will be removed

It is all going to burn -

So what is going to be left standing?

What is the thing that will remain?

Everything that is founded on His grace.

Only the things that God has established will remain.

Only the things that are eternal will remain.

Now, for the group of Jewish believers that were contemplating going back to Judaism – that meant that Judaism, the temple, the feasts – were all going to go away.

28 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.

True believers possess a kingdom which cannot be shaken because they possess a Savior who cannot be shaken, and they possess a grace that cannot be destroyed by fire.

This unshakable kingdom is received by grace.

And it is because of the response to the grace that He has bestowed upon us – that we serve Him with reverence and Godly fear.

We cannot preserve what God has destined to burn

We cannot burn what God has destined to preserve

29 For our God [is] a consuming fire.

On Mt Sinai – God came down from the mountain in fire – Ex 19:18

And throughout the OT, we see His judgment come by means of fire.

In Mt Zion – God is still a consuming fire –

God never changes

However,

The truth that God is a consuming fire is a comfort to the believer.

They realize that the Father poured out His consuming fire of judgment on the Son in our place.

When He did, it completely consumed the guilt of sin in all who believe. The penalty of sin was consumed in Jesus at the cross.

Only when we come face to face with God's wrath can we appreciate God's love.

We cannot fully appreciate that we can be justified through the blood of Jesus until we understand what we deserve the wrath of God and no one can stand against him.

Our God is a consuming fire and he will judge his enemies and consume the wicked.

We are wicked and we must access the grace of God so that we can stand before God on the day of judgment and find grace rather than fire.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

