

The Two Mountains and the Heavenly Jerusalem

A final appeal for the readers not to go back to their old life of Judaism before Christ but to persevere and endure in light of all they have in Christ and the judgment that awaits those who turn away from him.

The Old Covenant Mountain: _____ (12:18-21)

You have not come to a mountain that can be touched....

The Problem with Mount Sinai—a place of fear and judgment (see Exodus 19:16-22; 20:18-21; Deut 4:10-14)

Even Moses himself was fearful of God's presence and judgment (Deut 9:19)

These verses do not mean that everything associated with the old covenant was associated with judgment and wrath. There were incredible demonstrations of God's grace and mercy at Sinai (cf. Exod 19:4-6; 24:9-11; 34:6-7; Deut 4:6-8).

BUT....

In light of Israel's long history of disobedience to the Mosaic Law and the curses/judgments it brought upon God's people and the fuller revelation of God's grace and mercy in the perfect sacrifice/high priesthood of Jesus, why would anyone want to go back to the old covenant?

The end result of the old covenant was that it brought: _____

The New Covenant Mountain: _____ (12:22-24)

Zion was the place that God chose as his dwelling place (hometown) in the OT. It was the place where God lived among his people and where the people could enjoy the blessing of his presence (Pss 46, 48, 76).

The greatest blessing that the people of Israel enjoyed was to be in the presence of God at the Jerusalem temple. Look at the longing for God expressed in Psalm 42/ the realization of that longing in Psalm 84.

This is the heavenly city that Abraham was looking for in Hebrews 11:10, 13-16)

This passage is not talking about going to heaven when we die!! We are on a journey to heaven (and we have to persevere in running the race), but we also in some sense have already arrived at the heavenly city (NOW and NOT YET). Compare Ephesians 2:6-7; Philippians 3:20-21. In the OT, God's people looked forward to those times when they could be in the presence of God at Jerusalem. As God's new covenant people, Jesus has opened the way to God (cf. Heb 6:19-20; 10:19-22), and we have access to God everywhere and at all times. We don't

have to go to Jerusalem to enjoy God's presence. We are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, and God is always accessible to us. Our lives are living fulfillments of what is promised in Isaiah 2:2-4.

Sinai was a place of fear and barriers to God's presence/ Zion is a place of access to God and of joyful celebration ("You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in **joyful celebration**") (12:22).

In light of how great this city is, how can I know that really belong there and have the right to be a part of this joyful place:

- 1) We belong to the church of the **firstborn (plural)**. Jesus is the firstborn (Heb 1:6; Rom 8:29; Col 1:15-18), but we inherit what he inherits.
- 2) Our names are written in heaven (cf. Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27)—God knows us and has secured a place for us (cf. Mal 3:16-18)
- 3) You have come to God the judge.... How does that give us confidence? (cf. Rom 8:32)
- 4) We see God's faithfulness to the saints of old. They lived their lives and are now in his presence. They are "the spirits of righteous men made perfect." If the Lord was able to bring them safely through, then he can and will do the same for us.
- 5) the blood of Jesus secured the blessings of the new covenant for us and "it speaks a better word." How does the blood of Jesus speak?

The Final Word: Do Not Turn Away From That Which Cannot Be Shaken (12:25-29)

A final warning of judgment for those who turn away from Christ: our God is a consuming fire

But an encouragement to us as well:

God is preparing to **shake this world in judgment** (Haggai 2:6), but what we have in Christ belongs to a kingdom that **cannot be shaken**

For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. (Haggai 2:6)