

THE TALE OF TWO MOUNTAINS



WE HAVE COME TO MOUNT ZION
(UNLESS WE HAVEN'T)



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PART ONE: SINAI—LAW MOUNTAIN

ONLY SADNESS AND TRAGEDY AWAIT THOSE WHO FIND THEMSELVES AT LAW MOUNTAIN ...

1. The pastor informed his people—You have not come to Mount Sinai, 12:18-21.

- (Hebrews 12:18–21 LSB) For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, 19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. 20 For they could not bear what was being commanded, “IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED.” 21 And so terrible was what appeared, that Moses said, “I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling.”
- A. Mount Sinai has entered the discussion as part of an analogy to compare and contrast law and grace.
 - (Exodus 19:11b–12 ESV) For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death.
 - (Exodus 19:18a ESV) Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire.
- B. Mount Sinai represents the law—the old covenant.
- C. If you have entered God’s rest, then your mountain is Zion, not Sinai.
- D. Using the analogy of arriving at a mountain the pastor informs his people that the mountain they had come to was not Sinai—the terrifying law mountain of the old covenant.
- E. On Mount Sinai God displayed his holiness and majesty so powerfully that Moses pronounced himself full of fear and trembling.

2. But some in the church had not come to Mount Sinai because in reality they had never left Sinai.

- A. Some of the people then and now in our churches

had not received the good news with faith and entered God’s rest—they had not come to Zion but were still at Sinai.

- (Hebrews 4:1–3a LSB) Therefore, let us fear, lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have fallen short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good news proclaimed to us, just as they also; but the word that was heard did not profit those who were not united with faith among those who heard. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, “AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.”
- B. The pastor uses the contrast between Sinai and Zion to try to lead them out of the wilderness of their confusion regarding law and grace.
- C. This confusion was a problem then and continues to be a problem now in the professing Church.
- D. We need to bring clarity to those in our fellowship who do not truly know the difference between what the two mountains represent—the extreme, dramatic, deadly differences between law and grace.
- E. Stating what should be obvious: The choice is law or grace, Moses or Jesus.
 - (John 1:17 ESV) For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
- F. People who desire to live according to the law do not understand the law because they do not know what the law actually says.
 - (Galatians 4:21 NLT) Tell me, you who want to live under the law, do you know what the law actually says?
- G. Speaking of law in a broader sense than OT covenant law most people prefer law over grace.
- H. Law in this broader sense means any and every self-made system of rules or moral codes that appeal to a person’s goodness and ability to do something to merit favor in God’s eyes.
- I. Absolutely any trace of a reliance on human goodness or the denial of human depravity reveals the person to be a believer in law and not grace.
- J. The gospel of grace is foolishness to people who depend in any measure on good works.
- K. Only a fearful expectation of judgment awaits those who have never left Mount Sinai.

- (Hebrews 10:26–31 ESV) **For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.** 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 **How much worse punishment**, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” 31 **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

PART TWO: ZION—GRACE MOUNTAIN

BLESSING BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION BUT GIVEN IN LOVING, GENEROUS DETAIL IN SCRIPTURE AWAITS THOSE WHO COME TO GRACE MOUNTAIN ...

1. You have come to Mount Zion (*unless you haven't—see Part One*), 12:22-24.

A. Mount Zion represents the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem and the joyful gathering of the angels of God with those who are on the roll in heaven.

- (Hebrews 12:22–23 LSB) **But you have come to Mount Zion** and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, **and to myriads of angels, 23 to the festal gathering and assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven**, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.
- (Luke 10:20 ESV) Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, **but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.**

B. Mount Zion represents the new covenant in which Jesus Christ is the mediator.

- (Hebrews 12:24 LSB) And to Jesus, **the mediator of a new covenant**, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.
- (Hebrews 8:6 LSB) But now He has obtained **a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant**,

which has been enacted on better promises.

- The better covenant is the covenant represented by grace mountain—Zion.
- Jesus is our merciful and faithful high priest.
 - (Hebrews 2:17 LSB) Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers in all things, **so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God**, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
- Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.
 - (Hebrews 3:1 LSB) Therefore, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, **consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession—Jesus.**

iv. Jesus is the builder of the house.

- (Hebrews 3:3 LSB) **For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses**, in so much as **the builder of the house** has more honor than the house.

C. Coming to Mount Zion is coming to the city of the living God and the heavenly Jerusalem.

D. Coming to Mount Zion is coming to a joyful gathering with innumerable angels and the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.

E. Coming to Mount Zion is coming to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

2. Those who come to Zion remain—they cannot be shaken since they are those who did not refuse God when he warned them of judgment, 12:25-27.

- (Hebrews 12:25–27 LSB) **See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.** 26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, **“YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN.”** 27 Now this expression, “Yet once more,” indicates the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, **so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.**

A. See to it that we do not refuse God when he warns us of coming judgment.

B. Refusing *him* (God) is not simply not listening to God when he warns us but defiantly refusing to listen to his warnings of judgment.

C. Refusing God hardens the heart creating further willful stubbornness and rejection of God's words.

- (Psalm 95:7–8a ESV) For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. **Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts.**
- (Hebrews 3:7–8a11 ESV) Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, **“Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.**
- Also quoted in Hebrews 3:15, 4:7.

D. There is no escape for those who refuse God and turn away from him.

E. We are *“of those who have faith”* and will remain steadfast when God shakes heaven and earth.

- Hebrews 10:39 (LSB) But **we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.**
- (Psalm 62:5–7 ESV) For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. 6 **He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.** 7 On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

3. Those who are receiving—from *“our God who is a consuming fire”*—the kingdom which cannot be shaken are grace-filled, thankful worshipers who joyfully offer themselves to God for acceptable service with reverence and awe, 12:28-29.

- (Hebrews 12:28–29 LSB) **Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE.**

A. Those who have come to Zion are **now** receiving the kingdom of God.

B. When we come to know God and the eternal life he offers, we not only understand better but embrace the blessing that *“our God is a consuming fire.”*

C. We **now** see God and seeing God as he is we experience life differently than those at Sinai or anyone else in the world for that matter.

- (Matthew 5:8 LSB) Blessed are the pure in heart, **for they shall see God.**

- (John 17:3 LSB) **And this is eternal life, that they may know You,** the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

D. We rejoice in knowing our God is a consuming fire.

E. We **now** understand what that translates to regarding eternity and glory—that his ultimate purifying, fiery, judgment of sin will create an eternal environment in which sin and its effects will be gone forever.

F. We **now** rightfully respond to the consuming fire of his holiness and majesty with gratitude and worshipful service.

G. We are in process **now** as God's children who are receiving the kingdom that cannot be shaken.

- (1 John 3:1–2a ESV) **See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.** The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 **Beloved, we are God's children now.**

H. We respond to the Consuming Fire with overflowing gratitude from which we offer acceptable worship and service to God with reverence and awe.

I. We proclaim our “amen” to the judging, saving work of our God as a consuming fire.

- (Deuteronomy 4:23–24 ESV) Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. 24 **For the LORD your God is a consuming fire,** a jealous God.
- (Deuteronomy 9:3 ESV) Know therefore today that **he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God.** He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you.
- (2 Thessalonians 1:7–8 LSB) And to give rest to you who are afflicted and to us as well at **the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 executing vengeance on those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.**