

## Hebrews Chapter 12F

This book of Hebrews has taken us on a grand tour of Biblical people, places and practices. We have pondered the faith of the Patriarch and evaluated the sacrificial system and these things have helped us to see the glory of Christ more clearly.

We began our tour in the very throne room of heaven gazing at the radiance of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. With myriads of angels in joyful praise we observed the coronation of the King who after having made purification for sins was seated at the right hand of the Father.

Hebrews 1: 3 **He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,**

- Moving on, in our study we traveled back in time with the people of Israel and we visited the wilderness of Sin where that unbelieving generation hardened their hearts against God. We considered their unbelief as we watched them die in the desert.
- We walked with Joshua and the remnant of Israel as they entered the promised Land but failed to obtain the fullness of rest that God provides in Christ alone.
- We smelled the sweet aroma of sacrifice as the Levitical priests labored tirelessly at the ordinances of Moses that could never remove the stain of sin.
- We stood in amazement as Enoch who walked with God was taken up into heaven without experiencing the pains of death.
- We traveled with Abraham the father of the faithful from Ur of the Chaldees in search of that city whose builder and architect was God.

Each and every stop along the way the author kept pointing us to the Lord Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of each and every O.T. shadow.

Hebrews Chapter 12 concludes by taking us to yet another stop in our tour of Biblical people places and practices. In the verses that are before us this morning we stand with Israel at the base of Mount Sinai, and tremble in fear as the ground begins to shake beneath our feet.

Like much of what we have read so far in this book the text that we have before us this morning is full of images, types and shadows, comparisons that once again show the insufficiency of the Old Covenant and the excellency of the New.

That brings us to our outline: This morning we are going to visit two mountains, we will hear two warnings and we will feel two shakings.

1. Two Mountains (Sinai and Zion)
2. Two Warnings (One from earth and one from heaven)
3. Two Shakings (One shakes the earth the other shakes both heaven and earth)

The two mountains that stand before us this morning are Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. One is earthly the other is heavenly; One is fearful, one other is festive; One is restrictive, the other inviting;

- Sinai represents the Old Covenant of Law; Zion represents New Covenant of grace. The law brings conviction and the sentence of death; the covenant of grace brings forgiveness, freedom and everlasting life.
- The First thing that the Author alludes to are the fearful events surrounding the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

Hebrews 12:18 **For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest** 19 **and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.**

20 **For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."** 21 **Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."**

- The Covenant of Moses is associated with Mount Sinai because that's the place where the Covenant was instituted.
- The events surrounding the giving of the Law were absolutely terrifying you might even consider them to be "life-threatening."
- As God was preparing to establish His covenant, the people were forbidden to touch or to set foot on the mountain under the penalty of death. (Let's read)

Exodus 19:9 **And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever." When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD,**

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.**

13 **No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.'**

16 **On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.**

- The images that come from Sinai are awesome and fearful, full of intense storms, earthquakes and the trumpet sound of God's righteous judgment.

It's no wonder the writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 10: 31 **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

The primary purpose of all these signs was to convince the people of Israel of the absolute, unapproachable holiness of God. Sinful man cannot not possibly draw near to God and live.

When God confronts US with his holy Law in our own wilderness of sin he reveals the glory of his holiness and our initial reaction is one of fearful, life preserving repentance.

- Even today the Law serves as God's great mirror. When we look into it we see ourselves as we truly are, dark and undone, our lives falling far short of God's holy and righteous standards.
- The Law of God brings conviction of sin and like the children of Israel standing at the base of Mount Sinai all we can do is fall on our faces in fear and trembling before a holy God to whom we must give an account.

BUT thanks be to God, He does not leave us crushed by the weight of this conviction, He reveals the redeeming love of God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- AND the glory of this covenant of grace far exceeds the passing glory of the Law.
- Paul referred to this in 2 Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 3: 7 **Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end,** 8 **will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?**

Over against the fearful darkness of Mount Sinai the Author of Hebrews provides a brilliant contrast.

- Sinai is an earthly Mountain, Zion is the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.
- Sinai was covered by clouds and darkness / Zion is the city of light.
- Sinai was forbidding and terrifying / Zion is inviting and gracious.

Access to Mount Sinai is off limits to everyone because no one is able to please God on Sinai's terms BUT Zion is OPEN to ALL who believe because Jesus Christ perfectly met God's terms and stands in the place of all those who come to God through Him.

- Sinai stands for judgment and death, Zion stands for forgiveness and life.
- Sinai is dark and foreboding Zion is full of life, full of joy. It is overflowing with the festive worship of those who have been redeemed.

Hebrews 12: 22 **But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,** 23 **and to the 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,** 24 **and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.**

- But YOU, you who believe, you who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, you have come to a different mountain, you have arrived at that City for which Abraham was searching: (Hebrews 11:10) **"the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."**

Through Jesus Christ we who believe the Gospel have been given access to the Abode of God Himself, the place where Myriads of angels gather in festive worship to the one who sits upon the throne.

- This is the ultimate gathering place of the Church. The Body of Believers who are called “**The Firstborn**” because through Jesus Christ they have been made heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. (Romans 8:17)
- They are described as those who are enrolled in heaven.
  - This speaks of the fact that their names were written in the Lambs Book of Life before the foundation of the world.

The contrast between these two mountains is absolutely stunning. It is the clear distinction between the fearful and foreboding decrees of the Law of God and the festive gathering of Saints and Angels who rejoice in glorious worship around the throne.

- With that in mind we move from the comparison of Two Mountains to the contrast of the two warnings that come from those two mountains.

## 2 Two Warnings

Hebrews 12: 25 **See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.**

- The powerful contrast between heaven and earth paves the way for this, the 5<sup>th</sup> and final warning of the book of Hebrews.

When God spoke to those who were gathered around Mount Sinai He warned of significant earthly consequences that would be visited on the people of Israel if they rebelled against God’s Law. (Let’s read about it)

Leviticus 26: 14 **"But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, 15 if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant,**

**16 then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.**

- Both the Biblical and Historic records clearly show that God followed through on the promises and warnings he gave to his Chosen People.
- Multiple times throughout their history they suffered the discipline of God that Moses described for us in the book of Leviticus.

Now in an argument that moves from the lesser to the greater the author warns His readers: **if THEY did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will WE escape if we reject him who warns from heaven**

- Warnings on earth are one thing warnings from heaven are significantly greater.
- Rebellion against Moses is one thing, Rebellion against the incarnate Son of the Living God is clearly greater.
- When the Author warns of one who speaks from Heaven he takes us back to the very first chapter of the book where we read:

Hebrews 1:1 **Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.**

- SINCE it is obviously true that the Israelites were held accountable for heeding the word of God when he warned them on the earth, from Mount Sinai, how much more harshly will they be judged if they refuse Him who speaks from heaven?

It stands to reason that since the BLESSINGS included in the Covenant of Grace are immeasurably GREATER than the blessings contained in the LAW, then the CONSEQUENCES for refusing God's Covenant of Grace would also be immeasurably greater. (*Remember Chapter 10*)

Hebrews 10: 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?**

- When the Israelites rebelled against the Law of God they endured EARTHLY consequences: they were attacked by their enemies, they were afflicted with diseases, eventually were cast out of the land.

Both the Promises and consequences of the Old Covenant were temporary and earthly BUT the New Covenant is heavenly, the promises and consequences are eternal!

Remember as we worked our way through the warning passages in this book of Hebrews I said these warnings serve as road signs as we travel the Narrow Path.

- They are uniquely designed to KEEP our eyes firmly fixed on the road.
- They are like rumble strips that wake you up when you begin to drift out of your lane.
- The dangers are real, but the Lord is faithful to lead us all the way home

Having seen the mountains and heard the warnings we now we prepare for the shaking.

### Two Shakings

Hebrews 12: 26 **At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 This phrase, "Yet**

once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken — that is, things that have been made — in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

The words, "At that time," speak of the time when God gave the Law on Mount Sinai, and his voice shook the earth.

BUT NOW, (at the time of the writing) God has promised "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."

- This final comparison involves "*Then and Now.*" When God gave the Law he shook the earth, (*literally*) NOW he has promised to shake both heaven and earth.
- You might ask, WHERE has God promised a greater shaking than what took place at Sinai?
- The author of Hebrews is pointing us to the book of Haggai to find the answer.

I am sure that there are some of you who have never read the book of Haggai, so let me give you a very brief introduction.

- In an act of divine discipline, the people of Israel were removed from the land that God gave to them in 586 BC. At that time God used the Babylonian Army as His strong arm of discipline.
- The people of Israel were held captive until the empire fell to the Medo-Persians. At that time they were released by King Cyrus the in 538 BC
- When they arrived back in the Land they began to rebuild the city and by the urging of the Prophets Zechariah and Haggai they rebuilt the Temple.
- So the context of Haggai's prophecy deals with the Temple of God at Jerusalem.

Haggai 1:1 In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, 2 "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, 3 'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?

- When the Temple of Zerubbabel was completed those returnees who were old enough to remember the previous temple said this Temple is nothing compared to the old one!
  - You call this a Temple? Where is all the gold and marble? Glory??

There was great disappointment among the people. Not only are they dissatisfied with the Temple, The returnees endured a good deal of hardship.

- Zerubbabel their leader was only a puppet (under the thumb of the Medo-Persian Emperor. (High Taxes) The living conditions back in the land were very poor. So what does the Prophet say?

4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts,

5 according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. 6 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.

- Did you see that? There's our verse from Hebrews 12.
- Do you remember the great shaking that God brought about when he gave the covenant of Moses?
- Now that He has brought the people back into the Land He is going to shake things up once again.
- He brought you back to establish a New Covenant and build a greater Temple.
- And this will happen when the true Son of David, Israel's long awaited Prophet, Priest and King, the Lord Jesus arrives.

7 And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. 9 The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts."

The shaking of which Haggai speaks would not only affect the earth but also the heavens as well. Back to Hebrews 12.

Hebrews 12:27 This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken — that is, things that have been made — in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

- Remember this is a "Then and Now" comparison. When God established the Old Covenant He shook the earth. NOW at the establishing of the New Covenant he will AGAIN shake not only the earth but the heavens and the earth
- WHEN did that happen? When the Lord Jesus died on the cross and the New Covenant was sealed in his blood.

Matthew 27: 50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; 52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. 54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

- The establishing of the New Covenant in Christ's blood shook the heavens and the earth.
- The earthly shaking was obvious; the rocks were split, the ground shook, the temple in Jerusalem shook and the veil that separated the holy of holies was torn in two.
- The heavenly shaking was not so obvious. Satan was defeated, death was destroyed, the graves of the saints were opened and captivity was taken captive.

What happened at Calvary, what took place at the empty tomb were the most radical earth and heaven shaking events in all of Human History.

- As a result of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the powers of darkness were overthrown (John 12:31) the forgiveness of sins has been secured once and for all, (Heb 8:12) The Old Covenant was brought to an end and the New Covenant was established.

The Temple in Jerusalem had become obsolete and was now ready to disappear. IN Matthew 24, Jesus foretold the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. **“Not one stone would be left on another.”**

By establishing a new covenant the Lord Jesus established a new temple, not made with human hands,

- If you have received the gift of eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ YOU are the Temple of the Living God today.

1Co 6:19 **Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,**

1 Peter 2:4 **As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,**

**5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

NOW, You, who believe have become the dwelling place of God, the Temple where the Holy Spirit lives

- You have been established to display God's glory here on the earth.
- Uniquely designed for worship.
- Your life is to be offered up as a Living Sacrifice an offering of praise A sweet aroma of adoration to the Living God.

Everything else on the earth may be shaken but Christ will remain.

- Kings and princes will be pulled down.
- Governments will fall.



- Economies will crash.
- BUT we look for a kingdom that will never pass away.

Daniel 2:44 **BUT** the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,