

Consider Your Ways!

2-The Great Shaking

Rebuilding the Temple and the Glory of God- Part 1

February 20, 2022

Haggai 2:1-9

2 On the twenty-first of the seventh month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet saying,

2 "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people saying,

3 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?

4 'But now take courage, Zerubbabel,' declares the Lord, 'take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,' declares the Lord, 'and work; for I am with you,' declares the Lord of hosts.

5 'As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!'

6 "For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.

7 'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, 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 will be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts, 'and in this place I will give peace,' declares the Lord of hosts."

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit; Amen.*

Now, try as I might, I simply could not fit all that needs to be said about this Passage here in **Haggai** in a single Sermon. So, Lord willing, I will *begin* to look at this section of God's Word today and finish it next week.

Now we are among those who say that we believe the Bible to be the Word of God. So, "*Why are there 66 Books? Why are there 66 Books and not 6600 Books? And how did those 66 Books come to be part of what the Bible is?*" For example, "*Who said that the Gospel of John should be in the Bible?*" These are

very serious and important Questions that have to do with what is called, the "*Canon of Scripture*".

You see, the "*Canon*" is a collection of 66 Books of the Bible that are officially "*accepted*" by the Christian Church as being "*Holy Scripture*". Now the word, "*Canon*" comes from the Greek word, "*Kanon*" that has to do with "*Rule*" or "*Measurement*" or "*Measuring Stick/Rod*". So, the 66 Books of the Bible lay out the "*Rule*" or the "*Measurement*" of biblical Christianity- or the "*Religion of Jesus*."

So, Christianity has already been defined. Christianity is NOT what *I* say it is; nor is it what *you* say it is. Christianity is what the 66 Books say that it is. So, since that is no longer up for grabs- our Effort should be to find out what the 66 Books teach; and then alter our individual lives- to fit in with that Divine Revelation. That is what it means to be "*Orthodox*" or what it means to be a "*Christian*."

So, Christians individually and the Church as a whole should NOT seek to be *creative* and go about to *invent* some Teaching that is foreign to the Bible. We are NOT to be "*spiritual Entrepreneurs*". Our job is also NOT to *receive* some new Revelation from God. Our job is to read and study and understand and believe and teach and defend and obey the *already given* Revelation of God that is found ONLY in the 66 Books of sacred Writ and believe and teach and strive to obey that.

And that means that nobody has the "*Right*" or the "*Authority*" to *alter*; or *add to*; or *take away from*- the definition of what Christianity is. Because when you do that- when you alter; or add to; or take away from ANYTHING that the Scriptures teach- you no longer have Christianity. Because that addition; or that alteration; or that removal has *fundamentally* changed the definition; and has, in effect, created a brand- new Religion.

And so, for example, if you want to know what Salvation is and is not; or if you desire to know what the Qualifications are to lead in the Church; or you want to know Who God is and What God alone has done in all three Persons of God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit- then you will find that Information in the 66 Books of the Bible. And the Concept of "*Sola Scriptura*" teaches that you will find that Information in the Scriptures and in the Scriptures- ALONE.

Now the underlying Issue that is at stake with the "*Canon*" is "*Inspiration*". And the concept of "*Divine Inspiration*" was given to us in **2Timothy 3:16&17** that says,

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

So, ALL Scripture is “Inspired.” And the word that was translated here into English as “**Inspired**” comes from a Greek word (*theopneustos*; Strong’s #2315), that has to do with *breath; or to blow; or to exhale*. So, the concept of Inspiration is that the Scriptures have been “breathed out” or “exhaled” by God. So, Inspiration is that mysterious Process by which God the Holy Spirit “moved” on the 40 biblical writers to the degree that what they wrote is the Word of the living God. And, when we say that Scripture is Inspired, then, by extension, we are also saying that what God breathed out is also:

- Inerrant (*does not* contain Error)
- Infallible (*cannot* contain Error)
- Relevant (reliable for us today)
- Sufficient (all we need for a life of godliness)

... and no other writing on the face of the earth can honestly make the Claim that it is all these things. Therefore, no other writing is “Inspired”.

Now there are approximately 2,210,000 books published every single year around the world.¹ And many of those other writings by other men may be true; and may be very *encouraging* to us; and some many even be very “*inspiring*”. But that is NOT the same thing as them being Inspired- precisely because those other books are NOT Infallible. Now how do I know that? Because every human on earth and everything that all those humans write- ALWAYS has the capacity to be in Error. Being able to be wrong- is part of what it means to be Human. And being Infallible- is part of what it means to be God.

So, only the 66 Books of the Bible; written by about forty different men; over the course of about 1500 years- can *truthfully* make the Claim that it is Inspired, Inerrant; Infallible, Relevant; and Sufficient.

Now Inspiration is an amazing thing. And I have written a “White Paper” on just what the “*Doctrine of Inspiration*” is that you may want to get. But suffice it to say that Inspiration is NOT dictation. And neither did God grab the arm of the writer and *force* him to write certain words. No, the writers of the Bible wrote down words that they chose to write. And they wrote those words down in their own language- using their own phrases and colloquialisms.

But the Doctrine of Inspiration says that *somehow*- and we don’t know how- but *somehow*, God the Holy Spirit *superintended* what these men wrote- so that, by the Power of God- what they wrote is the Infallible and Inerrant Word of the living God.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Books_published_per_country_per_year#

So, when trying to decide if a book is Inspired- all you have to do is to answer the Question, “*Is this the Word of God or not?*” Because either God said it; or He didn’t. And if God said it- it is Inspired. And if something is Inspired- then every bit of it is also Inerrant; Infallible; Relevant; and Sufficient. Because there are NO *degrees* of Inspiration. Either a writing was breathed out by God- or it wasn’t. There is no such thing as something being “partially Inspired”; or “somewhat Inspired”; or “sorta-kind of Inspired”. So, with Inspiration- it is truly, “ALL or NOTHING”.

And if a writing is Inerrant; Infallible; Relevant; and Sufficient - then it is Scripture. Because ONLY Scripture is Inspired. And ONLY 66 Books on the face of the earth qualify as being Scripture.

And that makes the 66 Books of the Bible very unique; and very special; and very valuable to us today. The Bible is the Word of the living God. And this is so true that if you want to hear from God today- you may. All you need to do is to read the Bible. And if you want to hear from God- *audibly*- then just read the Bible out loud.

But Scripture and Scripture alone is able to do what the Apostle wrote to Pastor Timothy at the end of verse 16 and verse 17. He said that Scripture and Scripture ALONE was:

...profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work

So, those four things:

1. Teaching
2. Reproof
3. Correction
4. Training in Righteousness

... MUST come “from the Scriptures and from the Scriptures ALONE”. Why? Because ONLY Scripture is able to cause the believer to be:

... adequate, equipped for every good work

... and this is because of Scripture’s Divine Origin (Inspiration).

Now this does NOT mean that God wrote the Bible- *personally*. He didn’t. And neither did God use Angels or any other supernatural being. The Bible was

written by men. 40 frail and sinful men. Yet, because of the Miracle of Inspiration those Books and those Books alone are Scripture.

Now we know that the Old Testament was finished and published and was in wide circulation around the known world 200 years before Jesus was born. So, normally, there is no debate or argument about the full Inspiration of the 39 Books of the Old Testament. The usual debate centers around the 27 Books of the New Testament.

But we know from History that James wrote his Epistle first- around 14 years after the Resurrection. And the Epistle of James was quickly followed by **Matthew; 1&2 Thessalonians; 1&2 Corinthians; Romans; Galatians; Mark; Philemon; Colossians; Ephesians; Luke; The Acts of the Apostles; Philippians; 1 Timothy; Titus; 1&2 Peter; 2 Timothy; Hebrews; Jude; John; 1,2&3 John;** and then **The Revelation of Jesus**

Now as the Christian Church was formed and began to grow and spread to other countries- some churches had a *few* Books; some had *many* Books; while a few had them all. But as time went on the Leaders saw the need to draw up a list of the Books which reflected the Truth of God's Message about the New Covenant and were inspired by the Holy Spirit. And even though each Book was already "*Canon*" in God's eyes when it was originally written- the Canon HAD to be identified by the Leaders of the Church- precisely because God did not give a list of which Books to include.

Now determining the Canon of Scripture was a process that was conducted first by Jewish rabbis and scholars (Old Testament) and later by the early Christian Leaders. The very first effort at having a "Rule" of the Christian Faith (Canon of the New Testament) was the "*Muratorian Canon*", compiled in AD 170, which included all of the New Testament Books except **Hebrews, James, and 3John**. The *Council of Laodicea* (AD 363) concluded that only the Old Testament (along with the Apocrypha) and the twenty-seven Books that we have now in our New Testament were to be read in the Churches. Finally, the *Councils of Hippo* (AD 393) and *Carthage* (AD 397) *reaffirmed* the same twenty-seven New Testament Books as being "authoritative" (divinely inspired).

Now some people ask, "*Why did it take almost 4 Centuries before the Church finalized which Books to include in the Canon?*" And the Answer as to why the Church didn't begin any *sooner*- was simply because nobody had told them to do this. Neither Jesus nor the Apostles commanded the Church to gather all inspired Books into one location. They did this, partly out of responding to a heretic (Marcion), who had developed his own false Canon; and partly as a convenience.

But it is important to know that the Church did NOT *create* the Canon. God the Holy Spirit determined which Books would be added to the "Rule" by giving

those Books, “Divine Authority” (Inspiration). So, the Church did NOT exist *first*- the authoritative Books existed *first*.

Now I could belabor the point- but I pray that you can see how important it is to have the Bible as we have it today- 66 Books of Divine Origin- that we can trust and depend on.

But now comes another Issue that is equally as important as the Issue of Inspiration- and that is the Issue of *Interpretation*. Because even though we have the correct Books- those Books must now be read and studied and understood and believed on and trusted and then obeyed. But in order to do that- each of the 66 Books MUST be interpreted. And they must be interpreted correctly and fully- because the way in which we interpret the inspired Scriptures- makes all the difference in the world.

And this has to do with the “*Science of Hermeneutics*”. Because “*Hermeneutics*” is the WAY or the Formula or the Process that we use- to *interpret* the inspired Word of God.

And this is an Issue that many people get very nervous about. But the Reality is that every word; of every verse; of every Chapter; of every Book of the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of the living God MUST be interpreted.

But there are challenges to the Bible being interpreted correctly. For example, the Bible was NOT written, originally, in English. It was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine Greek. And so, we have a “*Language Challenge*” that we have to overcome- if we hope to understand what the Bible is saying- so that we may be obedient to it.

But there is also a “*Cultural Challenge*” that has to be overcome. Why? Because the Bible was NOT written in 21st Century America. And so, Issues like Capitalism and Democracy and Voting and Slavery and the Private Ownership of Land and Debt and Shopping and many other cultural Issues are vastly different today than back in “Bible-times”. And much of our Culture is unique to Americans- and that over a relatively short period of time (230+years).

There is also the “Style” or the “*Genre Challenge*” as the Bible contains at least six different types or styles or genres of writing:

1. Literal Narrative
2. Hebraic Apocalyptic Poetry
3. Affirmative Commands
4. Prohibitions
5. Symbolic Writings
6. Prophecy

... which are all interpreted differently.

And then there are some “*Hermeneutic Principles*” that we always need to keep in mind such as:

- The vague Passages are interpreted by the more- clear Passages about the same Subject
- The hard Passages are interpreted by the easy ones- about the same Subject

... and this “*Hermeneutic Principle*” ties in with the Concept of “*Sola Scriptura*” so that we:

Allow Scripture to interpret Scripture

... we refuse to apply our own thoughts; or our own wisdom; or our own ideas and we simply allow the Bible to interpret the Bible.

But then there is a “*Principle of Hermeneutics*” that has to do with the Prophecy we see today in **Haggai**- and that is:

Old Testament Passages that are quoted in the New Testament are interpreted by New Testament

Now this is a very simple and incredibly helpful Technique that will help us to make sense of all the confusing Signs and Symbols and Types and Shadows that fill the pages of the 39 Books of the Old Testament.

And this *Principle of Hermeneutics* is based on a very simple but very profound Truth:

The 27 Books of the New Testament contain an infinitely *superior* Revelation of God than the Old.

You see, Divine Revelation is what is called, “*Progressive*”. And what that means- is that, as time goes on- what God spoke gets *easier* to understand. It becomes more- clear and we understand it better. So, for example, everything that God revealed to Noah and Abraham and Joseph in the Book of **Genesis**- is inspired. God *exhaled* these Words. And that means that the Words of **Genesis** (including the Account of Creation and the Fall in Chapters 1-3) are true. They are Infallible and Inerrant and Divine.

But every Word in **Genesis** is also *incomplete*. Because many of the Truths that we find in **Genesis** are vague; and they are eclipsed in Shadows and Types and Symbols. And that means they need to be further explained. They need additional

Information; additional Revelation if we are to understand them better or completely. And so, in His Mercy, God equipped the Apostles (and the other biblical writers) with the anointing and ability to correctly interpret the Statements of the Old Testament. And however they interpreted those Old Testament Statements is the ONE AND ONLY way we are to understand them.

For example, in **Genesis 14:18-20**, we read about a very mysterious man, who met with Abram after Abram returned from a war with several other kings. And the first Book of Moses says:

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.

19 He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He gave him a tenth of all.

Now that's all that Moses wrote in the Book of **Genesis**. No further Information was given by God to Moses. And so, for about five Centuries, that is all that anyone knew about this mystery man. But even at that- we DO know several very important things:

- Melchizedek was a King of Salem
- He brought out bread and wine
- He was also a Priest of God most High
- Melchizedek blessed Abram
- He knew Abram was chosen by God
- Melchizedek had some knowledge of God's Attributes (Abram belonged to God; God was "*Possessor of Heaven and earth*")
- He had some prophetic ability (verse 20a)
- Abram gave Melchizedek 10% of what Abram collected in the war- showing deference to Melchizedek

So, this tells us that Melchizedek was Prophet, Priest, and King- which has Messianic overtures. But even at this- Melchizedek remained a very mysterious man to most people. But then about 500 years after Moses wrote this and about 1,000 years before Jesus was born- God the Holy Spirit "moved" on King David and he wrote this in **Psalms 110:4**:

The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

Now here is the only other reference to Melchizedek found anywhere in the Old Testament. And we need to realize that **Psalm 110** begins with an inspired Narrative between God the Father and God the Son- that would take place in Heaven- AFTER the Resurrection of Jesus- some ten Centuries in the future in **Psalm 110:1-3:**

1 The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

2 The Lord will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of Your enemies.”

3 Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew.

Now we know that this is talking about Jesus. We see a clear reference to Jesus’ Position with God that allowed Him to sit in the Seat of Authority (God’s “Right Hand)- which is also a vague Reference to the “*Doctrine of the Trinity.*” And this also helps us to understand Jesus’ absolute Victory over the devil and all people, who live in unity with the devil. And in verse 3- we see a reference to Jesus’ Immortality.

But the ONLY reason we know any of that- is because we have already read the New Testament. Because neither David (who wrote **Psalm 110**) nor Moses (who wrote **Genesis**) nor Haggai knew what the New Testament was going to teach. So, to David and Haggai- this **Psalm** was a Mystery.

But please notice the last phrase of verse 4, where David wrote that the Lord said to the Lord:

"You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

Now the word, “**Order**” here references a “*Division*” or a “*Grouping*” among the Levites. And, according to **1Chronicles 24:7-18**- there were 24 of these Divisions or Groupings. And every Levitical priest belonged to one of these Divisions or those Groupings. Dr. Luke referenced this in **Luke 1:5**, when he said,

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

... where “Abijah” was the *eighth* division of Priests according to **1Chronicles 24:10**.

Yet when we read **1Chronicles 24**- there is NO mention of an Order or Division of Priests named after Melchizedek. And so, according to the rabbinical writings that have been discovered- for at least 1,000 years after David wrote this- NOBODY knew what David meant in **Psalms 110** or why he wrote it. And it is safe to say that David himself didn’t know what he meant by saying this, either.

But at some point around 68AD- just about 1-1/2 years before the pagan Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, God the Holy Spirit “moved” on a man- who was probably a Pastor or Elder in a small church in modern-day Turkey that was comprised primarily of Jews. And this man wrote 13 Chapters of inspired Words- Words that are Infallible and Inerrant and Relevant and Sufficient. So, this man wrote Scripture. And at some point in the 4th Century- the Book that this man wrote was entitled, “*Hebrews*” and was placed inside the official “Canon”.

And in one verse, in Chapter 5; another verse in Chapter 6; and the *entire* Chapter 7- this unknown man was “moved on” by God the Holy Spirit to give us *additional* Revelation or Information about the man named, “Melchizedek”. But what I pray you can see is that the Revelation that is given by the writer of **Hebrews** is NOT merely MORE or ADDITIONAL information. No, it is the COMPLETED Revelation of God about this mystery man that met Abram back in **Genesis 14**.

And because that is true- it is from those 30 New Testament verses in **Hebrews** about Melchizedek that we use now to make sense of the mysterious and vague verses in **Genesis** and **Psalms 110**.

Now why do we do that? Why do we trust what the New Testament says about an Old Testament person? Why do we use the New Testament Revelation to clarify or complete the Old Testament Revelation? Well, in “Alabama English” we could say that the New Testament *trumps* the Old Testament. And that is because the 27 Books of the New Testament is NOT simply *another* Revelation of God. No, it is much MORE than that.

What we must understand is that the 27 Books of the New Testament contain the *final, full, and completed* Revelation of God to Man. And that is because the New Covenant is an infinitely *superior* Covenant; that is based on infinitely *superior* Promises; brought about by an infinitely *superior* High Priest; offering an infinitely *superior* Sacrifice.

And this is so true- that when an Old Testament Person; Place; or Event is *repeated* in the New Testament- the New Testament becomes the *final* Interpreter of that Old Testament Revelation. In other words, the Old Testament means what the New Testament says it means. So, the explanation that is found in the New

Testament about various Old Testament Passages- is THE correct meaning of those Passages. And because the New Testament is inspired- the Meaning that the New Testament assigns to the Old- is the FINAL meaning of those Passages. In other words, nothing else can be added because no additional Revelation is coming from God.

Now last time we discovered that this Book of the Prophet Haggai is divided into four parts. And we went over the first part last time. And this *second* Prophecy; or this *second* Sermon; or this *second* area of Haggai's Burden- involves the Promise of God in verses 6&7 that says:

6 "For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.

7 'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord of hosts.

Now **Haggai 2:1** tells us that this second part of Haggai's Burden was given on, **"the twenty-first [day] of the seventh month"** which works out to be October 17, 520 BC- or about a couple of months *after* the first Sermon. And this second Sermon or this second Prophecy involves two things:

1. God's Promise to "shake" both the Heavens and the Earth
2. God's Promise to fill the new Temple (that hadn't even been built yet) with His Glory

Now we need to understand that these are NOT two distinct Prophecies. One Prophecy involves the other. One is *caused* by the other. In other words, God filling the new Temple with His Glory is brought about by or through the great Shaking. Another way of understanding this is to say that the great Shaking of both the Heavens and the Earth that God has promised- will *cause* or will *bring about* the filling of the Temple with God's Glory.

Now if all we had was the **Book of Haggai**- we would be finished about now. And by reading what God the Holy Spirit authored here in the first nine verses of Chapter 2- we could conclude that the Shaking that God has promised along with God pouring out His Glory on the Temple through Haggai- would have to do with the Jews and the Temple of Haggai's day. I mean, after all, God has promised that the Babylonians were coming; and surely that would shake things up. And God is rebuking His own people because they haven't taken an interest in building the Temple. So, it sure looks like Haggai is discussing the people and the events of *his* day.

But the Promise of God to shake the Heavens and the Earth; along with the Promise to fill the Temple with His Glory- is one of those Old Testament Passages that the New Testament *repeats* and then *completes*. And so, we have to withhold our Interpretation until we read and analyze the New Testament Passage. And however the New Testament Passage interprets this Prophecy- that is the correct and full meaning.

So, to see how this Promise to shake both the Heavens and the earth connects to the Glory of God in the Temple; and to understand how both of these things are fulfilled in Jesus Christ- we need to go to the **Book of Hebrews 12:12-29**

12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,

13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

14 Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

16 that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

18 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 sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.

20 For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED."

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling."

22 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 general assembly and church 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, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

25 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 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore, since we receive 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.

Now here, the unknown writer of **Hebrews** gives us another portion of the New Covenant- the final, full, and completed Revelation of God to Man. But as we read this New Testament Passage- we find NOTHING about the pagan Babylonians; nor do we find *anything* about the Jews rebuilding their Temple; or God filling that Temple with His Glory! Yet we can clearly see that this Passage deals with the Prophecy of Haggai! So, what should we make of this?

First, I want to see the contrast that the writer makes between the two Mountains in this Passage. First, in verses 18-21, the writer describes "*Mount Sinai*":

18 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 sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.

20 For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED."

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling."

... but then, in verses 22-24 the writer describes *another* Mountain- "*Mount Zion*".

22 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 general assembly and church 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, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.**

So, from verse 18 to verse 24- the writer illustrates a powerful contrast between two Mountains:

1. Mount Sinai
2. Mount Zion

So, what is he doing? Well, let us agree that this writer is NOT interested in Real Estate. He is not shopping around for a summer home at the top of a Mountain.

No, this writer was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to illustrate the *superiority* of Mount Zion to Mount Sinai. And since Mount Sinai is where Moses received the Law or the First Covenant from God- we can then come to the Conclusion that this *entire* Passage is about the infinite Superiority that the New Covenant has over the Old.

You see, Mount Sinai is a real Mountain. It is located somewhere on the Arabian Peninsula- and it is where Moses received the Law of God. (**Exodus 19; 24; 31; and 34**). So, Mount Sinai represents the First or the Old Covenant.

But Mount Zion is hardly what you might call a “Mountain”, but there is a “Hill” over in Jerusalem that has been *called*, “*Mount Zion*”. And this is where David initially captured a small City that became known as the “*City of David*” (**2Samuel 5:7; 1Chronicles 11:5; 1Kings 8:1; 2Chronicles 5:2**), which is a small area to the southeast of where modern-day Jerusalem sits today. And even though modern Jerusalem has grown exponentially since David conquered that hill- it is that original Hill that became known as the “*Habitation of Peace*”. And it is on that Hill where the “*Tent (Tabernacle) of David*” was- where the Ark of the Covenant was placed- surrounded by a human veil of men, who sang praises to God 24 hours a day; 7 days a week- for over 3 decades!²

² The Tabernacle of David was an open-air tent pitched outside David’s palace after he brought the Ark of the Covenant home from captivity. This Tent had several unique provisions: 1) Instead of returning the Ark to the Priests in Shiloh, David put it in his backyard and appointed singers to sing to it 24 hours a day. 2) Singing had not been a part of the formal Tabernacle activities up to this point looking back over the centuries to the days of Moses but David changed all that. 3) The singing was not for the people but for the Lord. So, the singers didn’t face the people, nor is there any reference to an audience of any kind participating. The singers didn’t face the people they faced the Lord in the Ark. See **2Samuel 6:6-19** and **1Chronicles 16** and **2Chronicles 5**.

And because of God's eternal Love for David and His Promise to David (that a descendant of David would once again rule from the Throne in the City of David)- the term, "*Mount Zion*" also became a "*spiritual Concept*" or a Symbol- that came to *represent* the glorious New Covenant that has to do with the Life, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord Christ- the incarnate God, who was of the seed of David. So, while Mount Sinai represents the Law or the Old Covenant; Mount Zion represents the Church in the New Covenant.

So, the writer of **Hebrews** begins his analysis of the two Mountains: One Mountain (Sinai) is "natural"- representing the Old or the First Covenant that had to do with the performance of the flesh (Obedience) and which results in Death. The other Mountain (Zion) is "spiritual"- representing the superior Covenant that is realized to every believer by Faith alone. And Sinai is fearful- while Zion is glorious. And Sinai pushes us away- while Zion draws us near.

So, it is clear that the writer was being "moved" by God the Holy Spirit in this Passage to draw a distinction between the First or the Old Covenant- which is represented by Mount Sinai; and the New Covenant- which is represented by Mount Zion. And that Distinction shows us the infinite *superiority* of the New Covenant over against the Old. In fact, it is very hard to find any Passage in any other Book of the Bible that does a better job of showing how glorious the New Covenant really is.

Okay, but why is all this important to know? I mean we are supposed to be looking at the Prophecy of Haggai. So, why am I talking about the two Mountains and what they represent? Because it is at this point in **Hebrews 12** (verses 25-29)- that the writer brings in the Prophecy of Haggai:

25 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 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore, since we receive 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.

Now like I said, the primary Issue in **Hebrews 12** was to teach the Jewish believers of this small Church in Asia Minor in or around 68 AD:

The New Covenant- brought about through the Life; Death; and Resurrection of Jesus is a *superior* Covenant; that is based on *superior* Promises; brought about through a *superior* Sacrifice; that was offered by a *superior* Priest.

... and *part* of this infinitely superior Covenant becoming a Reality- involves the great “Shaking” and the Glory of God in the new Temple that Haggai prophesied about 600 years earlier. Remember what Haggai had said:

Haggai 2:5-9

5 'As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!'

6 "For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.

7 'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, 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 will be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts, 'and in this place I will give peace,' declares the Lord of hosts."

And this is why, back in Chapter 6- the writer of **Hebrews** gave the Jewish believers clear instructions, when he wrote **Hebrews 6:1-8**:

1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

2 of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

3 And this we will do, if God permits.

4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

7 For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God;

8 but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

Now this is the Passage that troubled the Leaders of the 4th Century Church enough so that they *almost* left the **Book of Hebrews** out of the Canon. On the surface, verses 4-6 *seems* to teach that not only can genuinely saved people lose their Salvation- but there is a place where people can go- where they won't even be able to be saved again.

Now hear me when I tell you that this is NOT what this Passage teaches. But many people now as well as back then *thought* it did. And because the Leaders knew that Scripture teaches that Salvation is eternal, it appeared to many of them that **Hebrews** was "out of sync" with the whole of the other 65 Books.

It wasn't until they realized just what the writer of **Hebrews** was teaching- that they allowed this Book to be included in the official "Rule" of sacred Writ.

Now many of you were taught the same thing. Many of you were taught the frightening Myth that not only was Salvation fleeting and able to be lost- but you were also taught that some people, who supposedly fit in with verses 4-6, had forfeited their Salvation forever.

I was taught that myself. But, by God's Grace, I had already come to know that this Teaching was false- based on my 9 years and 9 month "*Journey*" through **Romans**. Yet I also realized that the first 8 verses of **Hebrews 6** meant *something*. So, if it didn't mean what I had been taught- what did it mean? So, it was my desire to find out- as to why I began that "*Journey*" through **Hebrews**.

And what I discovered was that after the Resurrection of Jesus- there was some confusion about how Jewish believers in Jesus should behave. For example, "*Do believing Jews still need to sacrifice animals?*" "*Do they still need to travel to Jerusalem once a year in order to worship in the Temple?*" and "*Do Jews still need to be circumcised in the New Covenant?*"

Now you may remember that in **The Acts 15**, some men from Judea invented a Heresy that said that Gentile converts had to *first* become "good Jews" before they could become "good Christians". And so, they were circumcising Gentile converts.

Now we realize that Jesus' Death replaced *forever* the sacrificing of animals and the Requirement to be circumcised. So, under the glorious New Covenant, **NOBODY**- neither Jew nor Gentile- has to be circumcised in the foreskin of his flesh today in order to be in right Standing with God! Why? Because believers today are circumcised in heart! And we also know that our physical location is irrelevant in the New Covenant. Every genuine believer may have access to **ALL** of God- *wherever* he is located!

But the only reason we know that- is because of what the New

Testament Books teach. But before those Books were written- there was great Confusion about how Jews related to the New Covenant and what they were supposed to do with the Old Covenant.

And that is why this man wrote Chapter 6. Because as he begins this Chapter, he tells his Jewish brothers and sisters:

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity...

Now the “**elementary Teachings about the Christ**” is the 39 Books of the Old Covenant, of which all the Signs and Symbols and Types- represent one or more Aspects and Characteristics of Jesus. And the Instruction of this man, who was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to those Jews, who had trusted in Christ by Faith alone- was clear:

“Leave”

... and the Greek word that was translated into English here as, “**Leave**” (*aphicmi*; Strong’s #863) has to do with: *to escape; to abandon; to go free; to let go from obligation*. So, this is not some lame; gentle; or laid- back effort. This is a concentrated, focused, and determined effort to “leave” or “discard”; or “abandon” something and to go free from some Obligation.

So, what is it that the writer of **Hebrews** instructs the believing Jews to leave or abandon or discard?

... the elementary Teachings about the Christ...

... which we have already determined is the First or the Old Covenant that taught about Jesus through Signs and Symbols and Types and Shadows.

So, God the Holy Spirit “moved” on this writer to infallibly teach that believing Jews are to “Leave” or “Abandon” or “Discard” the First or the Old Covenant (the elementary Teachings about the Christ).

But there are actually two Instructions given by this Teacher in this Passage. The first Instruction is for these believing Jews to leave or abandon or discard the Old Covenant. And now the second Instruction is:

... let us press on to maturity...

So, they are NOT told to leave and then do nothing. They are to first leave or abandon or discard the Old Covenant. But then they are

also told to “press on” to something he calls, “Maturity”.

Now the word that was translated here as “**Maturity**” is a Greek word (*teleiotes*; Strong’s # 5047) that has to do with being complete; or to be finished; or even Perfection.

Well, what is this writer talking about? He is telling these believing Jews to *abandon* or *leave* or *discard* the inferior Old Covenant- with its physical circumcision; its animal sacrifices; its natural Temple; and its carnal Priesthood and to “*press on*” to the final, full, and completed (mature/perfected) *New* Covenant- that no longer has Signs, Symbols, and Types- but has the Real; and the True; and the Eternal.

So, in the last part of verse 1 and all of verse 2- the writer illustrated the inferior “**Teachings about the Christ**” with six unique Elements of the Old Covenant that have been “realized” or “brought into spiritual Maturity” or “perfected” in the New Covenant- through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ.

And the writer teaches us that taking a natural and physical and earthly and tangible Element of the Old Covenant and bringing it into the New- by spiritualizing it; or by bringing it into Maturity; or by *perfecting* it- we will be able to see and possess that which is True and Eternal.

And so, when we come to **Hebrews 12:25-29**- which is where the writer quotes or repeats the Prophecy of Haggai (from **Haggai 2:5-9**)- we are to use the very SAME Hermeneutic (Method of Interpretation) that he taught us back in **Hebrews 6**- and we are to spiritualize the Prophecy; or bring it into Maturity; or perfect it.

And when we do that- we see that Haggai was NOT talking about a “Shaking” because of the invading Babylonians- but a Shaking in the world-wide *abandonment* of the Old Covenant. And he also was NOT talking about God glorifying the new Temple they would build- but He was talking about One- Who is *greater* than the Temple- Jesus Christ- Who the writer of Hebrews said was,

Hebrews 1:3b

... the radiance of His [God the Father’s] glory and the exact representation of His [God the Father’s] nature ...

... and we will complete this Sermon next week.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.