

~Hebrews~

Lesson 37 – The Comparison of Two Covenants (part 1)

Last week we discussed three exhortations and three warnings from Hebrews 12:12-17

- Paul is exhorting the Hebrew Christians to:
 - 1) to strengthen and lift up their weak soul, v.12
 - 2) to commit their feet unto straight paths of holiness, v.13
 - 3) and to pursue Jesus and His holiness so that we will see and know Him at His appearing, v.14
- We also discussed the warnings that followed, namely
 - 1) to fall way from everything God has in store for us, v.15
 - 2) become defiled by turning aside from God and a root of bitterness rise up, v.15
 - 3) and worst of all, rejecting Jesus and becoming a godless, sexual immoral person like Esau, v.16
 - a. who also rejected the Messiah, became apo-dokimazo, ἀποδοκιμάζω, away from being proven genuine and found no place for repentance.

Paul then continues his discourse to prove why the Hebrew Christians should follow his exhortations and choose Jesus

- Notice he begins verse 18 with “for” meaning he is continuing his thought from the previous verses
 - Let’s read our text for today- Hebrews 12:18-29
 - This section will be divided into two lessons, but I want to read it together because it all ties in with each other

Hebrews 12:18-29

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.”)

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.

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, 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. 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. ²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire.

Paul is making another comparison, proving the supremacy of the New Covenant over the Old.

- Our focus today will be on the first seven verses which make a comparison using Mount Sinai and Mount Zion as types of the two covenants
 - Throughout this entire letter Paul has made this effort to portray the excellency of the New Covenant in Jesus

Hebrews 1:4 (Jesus) having become so much **better than the angels**, as He has by inheritance obtained **a more excellent name than they**.

Hebrews 3:3 For this One has been counted **worthy of more glory than Moses**...

Hebrews 7:15-16 ¹⁵ And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises **another priest** ¹⁶ who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but **according to the power of an endless life**.

Hebrews 7:19 ...the bringing in of a **better hope**, through which we draw near to God.

Hebrews 7:22 ... Jesus has become a surety of a **better covenant**.

Hebrews 8:6,8 ⁶ But now He has obtained a **more excellent ministry**, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a **better covenant**, which was established on **better promises**... ⁸... I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel...

Hebrews 9:11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the **greater and more perfect tabernacle** not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

Hebrews 9:14 **how much more shall the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

- The Hebrew Christians were wavering and in jeopardy of returning to the Old Covenant of which there is no profit
 - And by this decision, they would be rejecting Jesus.
- In our text today, Heb 12:18-24, Paul compares Mount Sinai and the giving of the Law to Mount Zion and the bringing in of the New Covenant

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came (was begotten) through Jesus Christ.

- Paul is proving in every way that the New Covenant is eternal and better than the Old Covenant
 - In this comparison, Paul's main exhortation is to not refuse the New Covenant or turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, v.25
 - He says, "This is what was promised to you", Hag 2:6; Jer 31:31; Ps 40:6-8
 - This is what you have been looking for
 - Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant and the Way to the New Covenant and eternal life

Knowing the history of these events is very helpful in understanding this text

- Paul is using the comparison of these two mounts, Sinai and Zion as types of the two covenants, Old and New
 - Paul also did this in Galatians 4 in which he compares Mount Sinai and Jerusalem to the two wives of Abraham, Hagar and Sarah
 - This is also one of the proofs why I think Paul wrote the book of Hebrews

Mount Sinai

- There is a physical Mount Sinai and a physical Mount Zion, however, just as he did in Galatians, Paul is making a comparison between the two covenants
 - This is the last comparison of the letter
 - Through which we have seen many comparisons all showing the superiority of Christianity over Judaism
- The Law was given at Mount Sinai after the Exodus from Egypt and the children of Israel came through the Red Sea in 1502^{BC}
 - The Law was given in terror of the Lord as he thundered with lightning and fire and trumpets

Exodus 19:16-20 ¹⁶ Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. ¹⁹ And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. ²⁰ Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

20:1 And God spoke all these words saying, (He gave them the Ten Commandments) v.2-17

¹⁸ Now all the people witnessed the thunders, 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.”

- This was a terrifying sight striking the fear of God into everyone who saw the mountain
- In the Old Covenant, God could not be approached, thus the mountain could not be touched, Ex 19:12-13
 - In the New Covenant, we can boldly come to the throne of grace through Jesus, Heb 4:16
- When God deals with man through the Law, there is none righteous and all are condemned, Rom 3:10, 12, 20, 23
 - The Law brings the knowledge of sin, Rom 3:20, 7:7
 - It was our schoolmaster to show us the need of a Savior, Gal 3:24-25
 - The purpose of the Law is to show us that without a Savior, we are sentenced to eternal death, Rom 3:12, 5:12-17
 - Paul names the Law as the “Ministry of Death”, 2 Cor 3:7
 - The Law was not meant as a means of righteousness, but rather to make sin evident, Rom 7:7
 - The Law was made for Jesus to fulfill and no one else, Matt 5:17, Rom 3:31
 - The Law is unapproachable because of its holiness
 - Without a Savior, the Law will always condemn and never justify
 - Even Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling”, Heb 12:21
 - At Sinai, God is presented as the Lawgiver and Judge with no Mediator of Grace
 - God only has one way of judgement and that is through His Law.
 - Therefore, without Jesus, all are judged sinners and condemned to eternal death
 - But those in Christ, covered by the blood of the Lamb, the judgement of sin according to the Law was placed on Jesus instead of us.
 - Jesus was our substitute concerning the wrath of God toward sin

Hebrews 2:2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward...

Hebrews 9:15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Colossians 2:13-14

- Every disobedience and transgression must receive a just reward
 - but because of Jesus we didn't have to pay it
 - The price of our transgressions was paid for by Jesus on the cross
- At Zion, the focus is on the blood of the Lamb through our Mediator, Heb 12:22-24

- God is the Righteous Judge, however our sin was judged and paid for on the cross by the blood of the Lamb, Heb 7:27, 9:11-12, 10:10-22

Mount Zion

- Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, represents the covenant of grace
 - The Prophets established Mount Zion as a type of hope and grace, Is 4:3-5, 28:16, 33:20, 35:10, 46:13, 51:11, 52:1; Psalms 2:6, 48:2, 50:2, 102:16, 125:1, 132:13
 - This is how Paul is referencing it as well
- The first time we see Zion named in the Bible is in 2 Sam 5:6-9.
 - King David, after reigning 7 years as king in Hebron conquers the Jebusites in 1047^{BC} and takes Jerusalem and reigns as king of Israel. He sets up his kingdom in Jerusalem, calling it the stronghold of Zion, the city of David.
 - David sets up a tabernacle and brings the ark of the covenant into Zion as God’s dwelling place, 2 Sam 6:16
- Mount Zion has two peaks, Moriah and Zion.
 - Solomon built the first temple on Mount Moriah in 1003^{BC}, 1 Kings 6:37
 - After which, Mount Moriah, also known as the Temple Mount, became synonymous with Mount Zion, 2 Chron 3:1
 - This is where the holy of holies built by man was located
 - It was the dwelling place of God
 - This temple was destroyed in 586^{BC} by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians,
- After the Babylonian captivity, King Cyrus releases the Jews in 537^{BC}, and the temple is complete in 516^{BC}
 - This temple is known as Zerubbabel’s temple.
 - Zerubbabel was governor of Judah and superintended the building of the temple, Hag 2:2
 - Haggai tells Zerubbabel by the word of God to re-build the temple that was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, Hag 1:8
 - This temple stood during the Maccabean revolt and the Hasmonean Dynasty, 142^{BC} – 37^{BC}
 - The temple was enlarged during this time
 - In 37^{BC}, Herod the Great took control of Judah from the Hasmonean Dynasty and Rome controlled this area until 70^{AD}
 - Herod refurbished and enlarged the temple again in 20^{BC}
 - This was the same temple that stood during the time of Jesus until 70^{AD}
 - The physical building was torn down in 70^{AD} by the Romans
 - But it became spiritually useless in 32^{AD}
 - The veil was torn, symbolizing our access into the Holy of Holies, Matt 27:51; Heb 10:19-20, 4:16
- In our text, Hebrews 12:26-27, Paul references a prophecy from Hag 2:6 concerning this second temple
 - We are going to get into this next week
 - But I want you to see this comparison Paul is making
 - the annulling and removing of this temple and the Old Covenant,
 - For the purpose of moving on to establish the New Covenant

Hebrews 12:27 Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the **removal** of those things that are being shaken...

- The removal of those things that are being shaken is the Law, its Legalism, and the physical temple
 - Some examples of this in the letter to the Hebrews are:

Hebrews 7:12 For the priesthood being changed, **of necessity there is also a change of the law.**

Hebrews 7:18 ¹⁸ For on the one hand **there is an annulling** (setting aside, putting out of its place) **of the former commandment** because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ **for the law made nothing perfect;**

Hebrews 8:13 In that He says, “A new covenant,” **He has made the first obsolete...**

Hebrews 10:9 ... **He takes away the first** that He may establish the second.

- Now, because of Jesus sacrifice on the cross, we can enter the Holy Temple of God- the Jerusalem above in which man can freely enter by grace through faith, Gal 4:26
 - This began on the day of the resurrection, 32^{AD}
 - God is dwelling in heaven, but His Spirit is also dwelling in our hearts, 2 Cor 6:16, 13:5; Col 1:27
 - We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, being built into and on the foundation of the Prophets and the Apostles, and Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:4-7; 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16
 - This temple cannot be shaken and will endure forever
 - The physical temple of old was a type of the body of Jesus, in which we now abide, John 15

John 2:19-21 ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”... ²¹ But He was speaking of **the temple of His body.**

- This is His body, the body of Christ, 1 Pet 2:4-6; Eph 2:19-22; Heb 3:6

Ephesians 2:19-22 ¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

- This privilege now gives us access into the heavenly realm in the spirit
 - We are citizens of heaven and ambassadors on the earth, Phil 3:20; Jn 17:14-16
 - We are in Him and He is in us
 - We are one with Him. We abide in Him and He in us, Jn 17:20-23

John 17:20-23 ²⁰ “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that **they all may be one**, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that **they also may be one in Us**, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that **they may be one just as We are one:**
²³ **I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one**, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

- This is an example of the heavenly access we have with God in the New Covenant
 - God is not contained in a physical temple that we visit to worship Him
 - But rather we worship Him in Spirit and in Truth apart from any physical temple or place, John 4:21-24
 - I love the example we see of this with the Samaritan woman
 - Jesus broke down the barriers that prevented us from coming to Him
 - It is now through Jesus that we can come boldly to the throne of Grace, Heb 4:16

Hebrews 12:22-24

²² But ^{Eph 2:4} †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.

Paul takes us on a journey through the city of God into the Holy of Holies to the blood of Jesus.

- This is the focus of the New Covenant, the precious blood of Jesus
 - The substitutionary, vicarious sacrifice for sinners, Is 53
 - The Jews understood sacrifice for sins
 - John the Baptizer proclaimed Jesus as “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*”, Jn 1:29
 - But the Jews missed Him because they didn’t think they needed a sacrifice for sin
 - They thought they were perfect through the Law
 - Paul is reminding them of their error and the necessity of the blood of Jesus and obtaining eternal life

We too, even as New Covenant believers must not count the blood of Jesus as a common thing.

It is through His blood that we can have access into God’s kingdom and righteousness

It is through Jesus that we are made the children of God

Next week we will wrap up chapter 12