

~Hebrews~

Lesson 38 – The Comparison of Two Covenants (part 2)

We are continuing our discussion in Hebrews chapter 12 focusing on verses 18-29

- As we saw last week, in the first 7 verses, Paul makes a comparison between the Old and the New Covenant by using Mount Sinai and Mount Zion respectively as types.
 - On Mount Sinai was the giving of the Law, Ex 19:16-20
 - The Law was given in terror with God striking fear on all who witnessed it
 - And anyone who approached the mountain to touch it was killed, Ex 19:12-13, Heb 12:20
 - God was showing His absolute holiness to a sin filled world
 - We learned that the purpose of the Law was to make sin evident, Rom 3:20, 7:7
 - To show the need of a Savior, Gal 3:24-25
 - And to usher in the Messiah to be the final sacrifice for sin
 - Everything in the Law pointed toward the bringing in of the Messiah for the purpose that Jesus would fulfill the Law, Matt 5:17; Rom 3:31
 - Mount Zion represents the Covenant of Grace that we as believers enjoy.
 - In last week's lesson we saw the drastic difference between the Old and New- that the New Covenant gives us grace by the blood of Jesus
 - That we might boldly approach the throne of grace, Heb 4:16
 - versus the Old Covenant of wrath and judgement on sin which makes God unapproachable
 - It was through the sacrifice of Jesus that we can now come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, Heb 7:27, 9:11-12, 10:10-22
 - Let's read these 12 verses again- Hebrews 12:18-29

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.

- Let's start our lesson today where we left last week at Mount Zion at verse 22

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
 - Paul is reminding the Hebrews of their error and of the necessity of the blood of Jesus to obtaining eternal life

Let's look at this journey one statement at a time...

† *But you have come...*

- “You have come” is proserchomai, προσέρχουμαι, - to approach, come unto, come towards
 - Paul uses this word 7 times in the letter to the Hebrews all of which referring to approaching God, Heb 4:16, 7:25, 10:1, 22, 11:6, 12:18, 22
 - Paul says, “*but you have come to mount Zion*”, Heb 12:22
 - *Have come* is in the perfect tense, not future tense
 - He doesn't say, “you will be coming in the future”
 - We have access to God **now** through Jesus, Heb 4:16

†...*to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...*

- The heavenly Jerusalem is referring to His abode in heaven
 - The Father is in heaven with Jesus at His right hand, Acts 7:56; Heb 1:13; Mk 16:19, and *He has risen us up together with Him and made us to sit with Him in heavenly places*, Eph 2:6
 - As believers, we enjoy a oneness with God, Jn 17:20-23
 - We are citizens of heaven and ambassadors on the earth for His kingdom, Phil 3:20; Jn 17:14-16

†... *to an innumerable company of angels...^{v.23} †to the general assembly...*

- Christians have a special privilege with the angels
 - *Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation*, Heb 1:14
 - Rev 22:9- an angel tells John not to worship him, he says “*For I am your fellow-servant... of those who keep the words of this book*”

†... *to the general assembly ...*

- A sacred assembly or the assembly of all
 - This statement should be included with the previous statement of angels and not associated with the church
 - The verse break makes it confusing
 - This is the assembly of all the heavenly created beings
 - This could be read, “*to the assembly of all, an innumerable company of angels,*”

†... *and the Church of the first born who are registered in heaven...*

- This is us- the redeemed Church of the children of God whose names are registered in the Lamb's book of Life, Lk 10:20, Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5, 13:8
 - The word “firstborn” is plural
 - ecclesia prototokon, ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων, church of the firstborn ones
 - Children with spiritual privilege, children of first place

- Jesus is the firstborn from the dead, Col 1:18, Rev 1:5
- We are the “*many brethren*” of the firstborn, Rom 8:29, the Church, joint heirs with Jesus, Rom 8:17, Eph 1:22, 5:23, 25, 27, 32

†... *To God, the Judge of all ...*

- This is referring to the Father, but Paul is directing his focus on the righteous judgment of the saints, not specifically the Father as the Almighty Judge
 - καὶ κριτῇ Θεῷ πάντων, if Paul was trying to focus on the Almighty Judge, he would have added definite articles in front of judge and God, saying the Judge, the God
 - but instead, Paul is focusing on how the firstborn became the Church and how the spirits became Just (following statement)
 - we are justified by the judgement of God through the blood of Jesus
 - we commit ourselves to the God who judges righteously, 1 Pet 2:23
 - although we are coming to the Father in heaven, the focus is being judged righteously by the Father

†... *to the spirits of just men made perfect...*

- To the spirits who have been judged righteous by God and made complete by the blood of Jesus
- *Made perfect* is a perfect passive participle of the same word in Heb 11:40 speaking of the Old Testament saints being made perfect with us.
 - All believers in Jesus, Old and New Covenant, “*have been made complete*” passively by the captain of our salvation, Heb 2:10
 - However, Paul gives us a clear distinction between these two in heaven
 - The Church of the firstborn- the body of Christ, New Covenant believers
 - Spirits of just men made perfect- Old Testament saints before the cross
- Notice that these are only spirits because they have not received their glorified bodies yet
 - Paul is writing these statements in the dispensation of grace before the rapture
 - No one has their glorified bodies yet except for Jesus

†... *to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant...*

- It is because Jesus is our High Priest that we can have the special privilege of being children of God and heirs with Christ, Heb 8:6, 9:15; 1 Tim 2:5
- Everything is in and through Jesus, Heb 1:2-3; Col 1:15-20; Eph 1:3-20
 - Jesus is our Savior and without Him we can do nothing, Jn 15:5

†... *to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel ...*

- This is the blood of Jesus which he administered in the Holy of Holies not made with hands after His resurrection, Heb 9:11-15
 - *Sprinkling*, refers to purification- the blood of cleansing, Num 19 LXX
 - We are washed by the blood of Jesus, 1 Jn 1:7; Rev 7:14; Heb 7:27, 9:12, 10:12
- Abel’s blood cried out to God from the ground, Gen 4:10, Heb 11:4,
 - How much more will the Son of God’s blood speak in the Holy of Holies
 - Hebrews 9:11-12- “*But Christ came as High Priest...¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*”

Paul now gives the Hebrew Christians an exhortation with the hope of Jesus

Hebrews 12:25

²⁵ †See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. †For if they did not escape who refused ^{v.19} Him who spoke on earth, †much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,

†*See that you do not refuse Him who speaks ...*

- The Greek word “refuse” means - *to decline receiving*, reject, refuse
 - this is a verb in the subjunctive mood and the middle voice

- subjunctive means there is a choice- it is contingent on something- usually our decision
- middle means it is you doing it, not somebody else doing it to you
 - this sentence structure proves free will
- This is the same word as “begged” in verse 19.
 - And it is the opposite of “receiving”, to decline receiving
- This is the error Paul has been admonishing the Hebrew Christians this entire letter
 - Do not fall back under the Law and reject or “decline receiving” Jesus
- † *For if they did not escape, who refused* (declined receiving) *Him who spoke on earth ...*
- This is God at Mount Sinai speaking through Moses at the giving of the Law
 - If you refuse God, there is no escaping judgement
 - Heb 2:2, *every transgression and disobedience receives a just reward*
- † ... *much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven ...*
- The New Covenant is far superior in every way than the Old Covenant, so how much more serious is the rejection of it?
 - Hebrews 2:3-*how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...*
 - Hebrews 10:28–29-²⁸ *Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy ...* ²⁹ *Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot...*
- † ... *Him who speaks from heaven ...*
- The word “speaks” isn’t in the original Greek
 - This isn’t necessarily a bad translation. But I think there is so much more than just a voice speaking from heaven.
 - If you take out the word “speaks” it reads, “*if we turn away from Him who is from heaven*”
 - This is Jesus! This is the point Paul is driving toward
 - That Jesus came to this earth *from heaven* as the sacrifice for sin

Paul continues his exhortation and draws on the prophet Haggai

Hebrews 12:26

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.”

- † ... *whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised ...*
- Paul continues to compare Mount Sinai and Mount Zion
 - he first refers to the giving of the Law, *whose voice then shook the earth*
 - and then continues with “*but now*” which compares this to the present time of the bringing in of the New Covenant
- † ... *I shake ...*
- This is a reference to Haggai 2:6
 - The Prophet says this in the future tense saying, “*Yet once more I will shake heaven and earth...*”
 - Haggai does this because the bringing in of the New Covenant was still yet future
 - but I want to point out the change in tense that Paul makes.
 - Paul quotes this prophecy in the present tense saying, “*I shake*” not “*I will shake*”, future tense.
 - Paul is making a point that this prophecy is being fulfilled *now* and not something still in the future.

- Paul confirms this in verse 26 when he says, “**but now** he has promised” meaning this is happening now.
 - We are receiving a kingdom now, not in the future, v.28
- I bring this up because the true Greek text, the Byzantine manuscripts which we know as the Textus Receptus show this correctly as “**I shake**” *σειω*, in the present tense.
 - However, the Alexandrian texts that were corrupted by the gnostics in the first few centuries, of which people say are better just because they are older. (these are what most of the new English translations are translated from),
 - These corrupted texts show this word as *σεισω*, still leaving it in the future tense, saying “**I will shake**”.
 - If you keep this in the future tense, you will immediately start to think of 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21 when God will make a new heaven and new earth.
 - But this does not fit the context that Paul is driving toward.
 - His whole point is the removal of the Law and looking to Jesus and the New Covenant in Him.
 - Paul is not all the sudden switching to an eschatological sermon of end times.
 - Remember, he said in verse 26, “**but now**”
 - He says, now we have the promise of the New Covenant fulfilled in Jesus.
 - do not refuse or reject him by returning to the Law
 - Jesus has removed the Law and made it obsolete and only the eternal covenant remains.

†... *I shake not only the earth, but also heaven ...*

- Paul is showing the intensity here of the new covenant
 - The heaven Paul is referring to in this verse is not the abode of God.
 - It is not the kingdom of God, because we see in v.29 he says we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.
 - The eternal things of God cannot be shaken.
 - This word *shake* is not just an earthquake, although we see this can be a physical effect, but it is a stirring up, a setting into motion.
 - Last week we read the account of the giving of the Law in Ex 19. Today I want to read you the account when the New Covenant was brought in.

Matthew 27:45-53

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was **darkness** over all the land. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “*Εὐὶ, Εὐὶ, ἰαμὰ σαβὰχθανὶ?*” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
 ... ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹ Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

- When Jesus died, it wasn’t just earth that was shaken, but heaven also, and they were stirred into motion
 - The veil was torn, symbolizing open access to God through Jesus
 - Graves were opened and the bodies of saints were raised

- They came out of their graves after His resurrection
- Darkness covered the land for three hours.
 - This wasn't just that the sun wasn't shining. This isn't nighttime darkness, but spiritual darkness.
 - This word “darkness”- skotos, σκότος, is used 32 times in the new testament and every time it refers to spiritual darkness, Eph 5:8, Col 1:13, 1 Pet 2:9
- There was more than the earth being shook at the cross
 - This is the bringing in of the new covenant.
 - Sin was paid for, Heb 2:17, 7:27, 9:12, 26, 10:10-12
 - The reconciliation of man was accomplished, 2 Cor 5:18-20
 - Death was defeated, Heb 2:14
 - Salvation was perfected, Heb 2:9-10, 5:9
 - This set-in motion eternal things in this physical universe.
 - Gods kingdom wasn't shaken, but rather His kingdom coming down shook the entirety of His creation, Col 1:19-22, 2:13-15; Heb 2:14

Hebrews 12:27

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.

†... *removal of those things that are being shaken...*

- Paul is giving us a commentary on Haggai 2:6
 - “*Yet once more*” refers to the second shaking, the bringing in of the New Covenant and the removal of the Old Covenant
 - The word removal means “to change”
 - This same word is used in Heb 7:12 at the changing of the priesthood
 - The removal is *a changing of those things that are being shaken*, “*a changing of the priesthood, a changing of the Law*”

†... *that the things which cannot be shaken may remain...*

- Paul tells us in the next verse that it is the kingdom of God that cannot be shaken, Heb 12:28

Hebrews 12:28

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.

†... *receiving a kingdom...*

- This word is the opposite of the rejecting and refusing in verse 25
 - And it is even a deeper word than just receiving, paralambano, παραλαμβάνω,
 - This is a receiving unto one's self, a receiving with
- The unshakeable, eternal things of God have now been set in motion in His creation.
 - He has annulled, set aside, Heb 7:18, made obsolete, Heb 8:13, and taken away the first covenant so that He might establish the second eternal covenant, Heb 10:9, **in His Son.**

†... *let us have grace...*

- Again, this is in the subjunctive mood telling us having grace is contingent on if we receive Him

†...*by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*

- Again, serving is subjunctive being contingent on having grace which is contingent on if we choose to receive Him
 - By which grace we may acceptably serve God

- *with reverence and godly fear*

- those who receive Him and have a personal relationship with Jesus are able to serve Him with reverence and godly fear and respect
 - Paul also says to fear God lest you turn away from Jesus, Heb 4:1
- Those who turn away from Jesus and do not receive Him can expect to fear Him who comes in fiery indignation and judgement according to the Law, Heb 10:27
 - Because...v.29 below

Hebrews 12:29

For our God is a consuming fire.

- God will devour His adversaries, Heb 10:27, those who choose to decline to receive Him
 - 2 Thessalonians 2:8- *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.*
 - Matthew 10:28-... *fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*
 - Therefore, choose Jesus and don't be an adversary against God

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 ^(declined receiving) 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." ^(because our Holy God is completely unapproachable without Jesus) 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 ^(of all the heavenly beings) and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven ^(New Testament saints), to God the Judge of all ^(who judges the righteous), to the spirits of just men made perfect ^(Old Testament saints), ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant ^(our High Priest who is administering Grace and Truth), and to the blood of sprinkling ^(cleansing) that speaks better things than that of Abel. ^(because His blood obtained eternal redemption)

²⁵ See that you do not refuse ^(declined receiving) Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth ^(God thru Moses at Mount Sinai), much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who ^{speaks} is 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." ^(because I sent my Son as the sacrifice for sin and brought in the New Covenant)

²⁷ Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal ^(changing) of those things that are being shaken ^(the Law and the priesthood), as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken ^(God's kingdom) 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 ^{(for those who decline to receive Him).}

How do you want to face God?

At Mount Sinai **WITHOUT** Jesus in terror, wrath, and death?

Or **WITH** Jesus at Mount Zion in His grace, oneness, fellowship,
and partaking in His holiness?

Therefore, choose Jesus so that you might live and have eternal life in Him