

**Mount Sinai and Mount Zion**

Scripture: Hebrews 12:18-29

Code: 1638

Tonight we come to a most informative and strategic portion, really, the last great contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant that is given to us in the Book of Hebrews. Several questions popped into my mind as I reviewed this portion of Scripture.

What happens to a man who refuses the salvation offered in Christ? Does he have any recourse at all to please God? What about all of the good deeds that the man did? Are they in any sense purposeful, or do they count for anything? And, especially, what is in view for the one who knows the gospel, who attaches himself to it superficially, but then who never really makes a full heart commitment? Is his judgment as severe as the one who didn't know?

Well, this portion of Scripture answers those questions and many others. Now, if you've been coming at all and studying with us the Book of Hebrews, you're well aware of various important things, which I will only just remind you. As Peter said, I want to remind you, so that you'll never forget these things. But throughout the epistle written to Jewish Christians, there are periodic warnings to certain Jews who have identified superficially with Christianity but never really received Christ.

There are five of these warnings, and this is the last, or the fifth, of those five. They have made an outward identification with Christianity, they belong to the community of Christians, but they have not truly been saved. They are considering salvation and hang in kind of the balance of decision. They see what it is. They know it fully. They've seen revelation even of miracles to confirm their faith, were it to exist. They have understood as well as a man can understand, in terms of the revelation of God. And so they're hanging on the edge of a decision.

Under certain pressures, they are threatening to go back to Judaism. And having come all the way to the edge of salvation and threatening to go back to Judaism, they stand in need of warning. For if they go back to Judaism, they would be going back when they have full understanding. That's tantamount to final rejection. And if they were to turn away when they understand fully the gospel, it would be impossible to renew them again to repentance. They could never be brought back to that place and saved, because if they were there once and rejected, they could never go any further.

And so during the Book of Hebrews, the writer stops in His conversation with the Christians to whom He is presenting the superiorities of the new covenant and merely encouraging them to stay with it, but He stops and warns those who are intellectually convinced, who hang in the balance, but who are

not saved and who are threatening to go back to Judaism. Now, they had some very strong pressures pulling them back toward Judaism. They had some very strong things that tended to pull away from their commitment to Christ. Even though they saw the beauties of Christianity, they saw some things that were kind of hard to understand.

And so some things began to pull them away from Christ. We see at least four of those things that we've seen already. The first one is neglect. In chapter 2, He says, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" One of the things that was pulling them away was just a failure to do anything. And the longer they neglected, the easier it became to neglect. The longer they said no to Jesus Christ, and the longer they said, "Well, I'm still thinking about it. I'm still praying in my mind, I don't know to whom, but I'm sort of winding it around in my brain. I'm still considering it," the easier it was to reject. And the more they got into the habit of that kind of attitude, the more the pressure was exerted on them to just do nothing. And so they were under the pressure of neglect.

Secondly, another pressure that we saw hit them, and that was the pressure of unbelief. And in chapter 3, verses 12, verses 13, verses 19, the Holy Spirit says to them, "Do not depart from God in an evil heart of unbelief." "Don't be unbelieving." They were being pressured by unbelief. They were not willing to fully believe that Christ was better than Moses, that the new covenant was better than the old covenant. They resisted believing. And so they were being pressured by their own neglect and by their own unbelief.

Thirdly, we saw that they were being pressured by tradition. In chapter 5, verses 11 through chapter 6, verse 6, He talks about the fact that they were hanging on to the first principles. They were hanging on to the forms of Judaism. In other places in the book, He talks about the fact that they were preoccupied with the old priesthood, the old sacrifices, the Temple and that whole thing. And so they were hung up on tradition. They couldn't seem to break with Judaism. So they were being pressured by neglect, by unbelief and by tradition not to come to Christ.

Fourthly, they were being pressured by impatience. By impatience. They expected, I suppose, some kind of miracles to happen. And when things didn't happen the way they thought they should've happened, maybe, in the church, they grew impatient. And they began to falter in their trust and their confidence in Christianity.

Initially, Christianity looked really good. It looked like a real answer. And they kind of dived in a little bit, and they saw, this is a great thing. And then they began to look at it, and, you know, all this stuff about kingdom and about glory and about reward and about joy and all this. And they didn't see, necessarily, all of that on the very kind of the edge of it. And so they were a little impatient about when are all the good things coming.

In fact, they got so impatient they began to drift from the fellowship. In chapter 10, verse 25, it says that there's a warning not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the matter of some is. They began to drift away. They expected more than they saw superficially. And since they weren't really saved, they couldn't experience any of it inwardly. And they thought it was going to exist outwardly, apparently, at least as they could understand it. And it didn't, and so they were discouraged and impatient.

And so He goes from verse 25, starting in verse 26, clear to the eleventh chapter and says, "Come on. Take it by faith. The promises are real. They're just future, in so many senses." Why, and then He goes through the list of 11, and He says, "Look at all these people who never saw the promises, only by faith, and yet they trusted God. Don't be impatient. Just because you don't see the fulfillment of everything you ever hoped for immediately in Christianity, don't throw it aside, because God will supply. God will bring His promise to pass."

And so there were some pressures: neglect, unbelief, tradition, impatience. And because of these pressures, they were tending to turn their backs on Christianity, even though they saw it fully for what it was.

But there was one other pressure, and that's the pressure that leads us to our text tonight. And I believe that was the pressure of fear. These guys who were standing on the edge of a decision saw Christians being persecuted for their faith. They saw the ones who had come all the way to Jesus Christ getting some flak from their own. They were being persecuted by Jews, by their own families, by their own loved ones, by their own people.

And they were saying to themselves, "You know, these guys have it rough. I mean, being a Christian certainly doesn't put you in a bed of roses. Look at the problems they've got. Look at the troubles they've got." And they saw them being pressured and persecuted, and they saw how difficult it was to live in a world that is godless in a godly way. And so they were pressured from fear to turn away from Christ.

And so, beginning in chapter 12, what does He say? The Holy Spirit says, "Look, you people. What they are suffering is not something to be afraid of. It is the loving discipline of God." We saw that, didn't we, in verses 4 to 11? "Don't run away. Get in the race and run. And run with," what? "With patience. Don't be impatient." That's the former one. That's the fourth...that's the fourth pressure. They were getting ready to chicken out because they weren't seeing the end of the race so soon.

And so from that transition of impatience, He swings right into fear. And He says, "And don't worry about the pressures that come and the trials that come. That's part of the loving discipline of God. It's not to be a thing that you fear. In fact," He says, "if you don't experience the discipline of God, you ought to be afraid, because verse 6 says, "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and every son He

scourges." In verse 8, He says, "But if you be without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons." So He says, "Don't worry about this. Don't fear it. It's the loving discipline of God. If you don't have it, you ought to be afraid." Right? Because if you don't have it, you're not His child.

And so they were under the fear of persecution. And, in fact, it's probably very true that when they identified with Christianity on a superficial basis, they got some persecution. Even back in chapter 10, verse 32, He says, "But call to remembrance the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions. You were made a gazing stock, reproaches, afflictions, etc."

And so it was very evident that this group had been under the gun. Because of their identification with Christ, the Jews that they knew in their family and in their circle of friends had ostracized them. They had been really under persecution. And they were...these people, who had not come all the way to Christ and never had their fear relieved, were afraid of what the implications were of becoming a Christian.

And so He says, "You have nothing to fear. It's the loving discipline of God. God merely does this to His own children to conform them to the standard that He designs for them." And then He sums up this beginning in verse 18. And He says, "You are not come unto the mount that might be touched and that burned with fire, or unto blackness and darkness and tempest." Stop there. He says, "Now, don't be afraid. You are not come to Sinai. You're not come to that. To come to Christianity is not to come to judgment. It's not to come to wrath. You don't need to be afraid."

In verse 22, He says, "But you are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are written in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." He says, "Don't be afraid to come to Christ. You're not coming to Sinai. You're coming to Zion." See? Now, that's the basis for this text.

They had some dangers pulling them away from Christ. They knew they should come to Christ, but they were holding back, out of neglect, just plain doing nothing. And there are a lot of people who sit in churches year after year after year doing nothing, and pretty soon they find they can't do anything. It's hardened into indifference.

And then they were somewhat unbelieving. They just decided they just couldn't believe it. And that was a pressure driving them away. Then they were impatient. They expected more than was obviously possible for God to show them, and more than God had designed to show them. And they had to learn the lesson of chapter 12. They had to learn to take it by faith. And they had to learn the lesson...of chapter 11, I mean...and they had to learn the lesson of chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, to run

the race with patience. But they were impatient. And then they were hung up on tradition, and, lastly, fear.

So He just closes it out, the end of 12, by saying, "You have nothing to be afraid of. You are not coming to Mount Sinai." Which is like saying, "If you go back to Judaism, you're really in trouble, because that would be going back to Mount Sinai. If you want to really be afraid, be afraid of turning back. Right? Because if you turn back, you have turned away from Zion, which is grace, to Sinai, which is law. And that's judgment. So don't let neglect turn you away. Don't let unbelief turn you away. Don't let tradition turn you away. Don't let impatience turn you away. And don't let fear turn you away."

Now, God's going to judge every man only on two bases. This is it. On the basis of the gospel, or on the basis of law. For example, if you have come to Jesus Christ, you will be judged on the basis of the gospel. If you have rejected Jesus Christ, you will be judged on the basis of the law. God has two sets of books. One is called the Lamb's Book of Life. If your name is written there, you have come to Christ. If your name is not written there, all the deeds of your life are written in what the Bible calls the other books.

And were you to come to the Great White Throne, God would not arbitrarily say, "All right, you are sent into hell because of your rejection of Christ." The Bible says in Revelation He will judge you out of those books. In other words, He will examine the books to see whether you kept the law perfectly. If you did not, you're damned.

Can any man keep the law? No. God will judge men only two ways, either by the gospel or by law. Were you to turn your back on Christ and walk away and go back to Judaism, you would be going to Sinai, turning your back on Zion. And no man was ever saved by the law. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." Romans 3:6. So He says, "Don't be afraid to come to Zion. Be afraid to come back to Sinai."

Now, as we approach this text, it's so easily divided for us that we'll just take it in a simple sense. Verses 18 to 21 is Mount Sinai. Verses 22 to 24 is Mount Zion. And verse 25 to 29 is what do you do about it. And it couldn't be simpler.

Let's begin by looking at Mount Sinai. And let's call it the fear of the law. The Holy Spirit has just spoken against apostasy, and He has mentioned the man Esau, who was the Old Testament's classic example of an apostate. Esau had all of the things that were needed to have every gracious benefit of God. He had the birthright. He had all the things that were to be part of being honored specially by God. And he sold it all. He was a classic illustration of an apostate, who turned his back on spiritual blessing, when he knew full well what it was. And the talk about the apostate Esau leads Him into this final warning to the apostates, beginning in verse 18. "For you are not come unto the mount that

might be touched and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempests."

Now, here is a description of Mount Sinai. The old covenant, the Mosaic covenant, was associated with Mount Sinai, because that's where God spoke to Moses. And the mount itself represents the old covenant. And, believe me, people, the old covenant was a covenant of fear. In the old covenant, God said, "You do this, or you will die." Didn't He? "You do this, or you will be under judgment."

Now, this verse describes what went on in the mount when God gave the law. Remember, the children of Israel had come out of Egypt, and God was going to give them a covenant that they were to obey. They arrived in the wilderness, and they came to the mount, Mount Sinai. Moses went up to get the law and God gave him the law. You remember what happened. It says, "For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched." That simply means that it was a physical mountain.

Now, if you read the Exodus account, you will find out that they couldn't touch it. They were forbidden to touch it. But when it says here, the mount that could be touched, it doesn't mean they were supposed to touch it. It means it was a tangible mountain. Stelafao. It simply means it was a physical mountain. It was a mountain that could be touched. A physical, tangible mountain.

And in contrast with Zion, verse 22. "But ye are come unto a Mount Zion and the city of the living God," not a physical mountain, but the heavenly Jerusalem. And so He says, "The old covenant was strictly physical. It was strictly earthy. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not bring us to a physical, material mountain. It brings us to a celestial city of glory. It brings us to Mount Zion, the spiritual place where God dwells.

It's as if Judaism, as we've said many times in the Book of Hebrews, was the kindergarten, in which the infantile people were instructed through physical senses. And when you instruct a little child, you use the physical. You don't talk to him in too philosophical or too abstract terms. You don't talk to him in too many spiritual terms. You try to reduce it to very concrete, physical terminology. And so Judaism is very physical in its terminology. It is a kindergarten approach. And Christianity introduces a far superior order, spiritual in nature. And so He says, "You don't come to the physical when you come to Christ. You're not going back to the physical. You're coming to a spiritual reality."

If you read, and we shall, in a minute, the account, you find that the day that God gave the law was a terrifying day. It was a day unequalled in Jewish history, and, for that matter, unequalled in history, in terms of what God displayed. God demonstrated the awesome holiness of His nature. And nobody could touch that mountain, so holy was it. No defiled sinner could ever come near God. None of them could ever set their foot on that mountain. Never begin to approach the awesome holiness of God.

Not only did you see His holiness, but you saw His power displayed, in physical things that happened. It says that there was fire and blackness and darkness and tempests and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words. There were physical phenomena going on, as God was displaying His judgment. God had descended upon that mountain in fire and smoke, and it was accompanied by an earthquake. And it terrified the people. It scared them to death. And nobody dared come near the place.

God was absolutely unapproachable in the old covenant. You say, "What about when God came down in the Shekinah Glory and dwelt in the midst of Israel?" He always dwelt behind what? Behind a veil, because He was always absolutely, totally unapproachable. And if anybody ever entered into the veil, what happened to them immediately? They would die on the spot.

And even the high priest, who was allowed to run in and out quickly on the Day of Atonement, had to make sure that he had fully atoned for his own sins, cleansed himself of everything conceivable, before he ever entered into there, or he'd be dead the moment he went in. God was so holy. And when God dispensed the law in Exodus chapter 19 and 20, God displayed His holiness.

Let's look at Exodus 19, just as a background. For a man to think he can approach God on his own merit is absolute idiocy. For a man to think that he can come to God on the basis of his own works is for a man to try to crawl up the side of Sinai when God was giving the law. He would be consumed the first step.

Now, in Exodus, chapter 19, just to begin with, let me give you the picture. Verse 9. "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee and believe thee forever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Go unto the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow and let them wash their clothes and purify them.'"

Verse 15, "And he said unto the people, 'Be ready. On the third day come not near your wives.'" They couldn't even have relationships in marriage because they were to be pure, and there was a certain defilement that was contacted there, and there had to be certain purification and cleansing in response to that. So there was nothing that could be done to defile them. They were coming to the foot of a mount that was holy.

Verse 12, "And thou shalt set bounds unto the people roundabout, saying, 'Take heed to yourself, that you go not up into the mount or touch the border of it. Whosoever toucheth the mountain shall surely be put to death.'" God set borders, and said, "If you touch that thing, you'll die." Sin cannot contact God and live. It would be that fast, over with.

Verse 14, "And Moses went down from the mount unto the people and sanctified the people. They washed their clothes." Verse 16, "It came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet." You find in the Bible that trumpets are used to summon people. Sometimes to summon saints, sometimes to summon sinners to judgment. There is going to be a trump that's sounded when the Lord summons us to Him in the Rapture. There will be trumpets sounded at the final judgment, when God summons the sinners to be judged. And so here's there a trumpet summoning the people together. And the mountain has thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, and the voice of a trumpet.

"And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God. And they stood at the lower part of the mountain. And Mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire. And the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount, and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up.

And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Go down. Charge the people lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them die.'" "Don't let any of them move toward me, or they'll die on the spot. And you'd better warn them." "'Let the priests also who come near to the Lord sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth on them.'" And Moses said unto the Lord, 'The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for thou chargest us saying, "Set bounds upon the mount and sanctify it.'" And the Lord said unto him, 'Away, get thee down. And thou shalt come up, thou and Aaron with thee.'

Moses argues with God and says, "God, I already told them there were boundaries." And God says, "Shut up and get down there and do what I told you." "'And let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest He break forth upon them.'" Moses is silly enough to say, "Well, we put boundaries." And God knows that in their hearts they're liable to push those boundaries by thinking they can do it, and He says, "You go warn them." "So Moses went down to the people and spoke unto them. And then he gave them the law."

Now, you see, here is a picture of terrifying, terrifying presence, in God appearing in judgmental character. No man, no time, no way could approach a holy God if there's such a thing as one defiling sin. In Exodus 20, verse 18, "And all the people saw the thunderings and lightnings and the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking. And when the people saw it, they moved and stood afar off." Instead of coming near, they went backwards.

"And they said unto Moses, 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear,'" and listen to this, "'but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'" They were afraid of God. They were smart people. "And Moses said unto the people, 'Fear not, for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.'" And the people stood afar off. And Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where



God was. And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Thou shalt thus say unto the children of Israel, 'You've seen that I have talked with you from heaven. Ye shall not make with me gods of silver. Neither shall you make unto you gods of gold. And an altar of earth thou shalt make unto me.'" And He goes on and on there.

Now, what is this all saying? This is simply saying that there is a whole representation of God as a God to be feared, as a God to be fled from, as a God of judgment and a God of wrath and a God of terror and a God of punishment. That is Sinai. And the writer of Hebrews says to these people, "If you go back to Judaism, you are going back to Sinai, and you are in effect going back and touching the mountain." And to touch it means what? Death.

Boy, when He gave the law at Sinai, there wasn't any condescension. There wasn't any relief. There wasn't any pardon in promise. There wasn't any grace. There was nothing but law, law, law. The whole thing was a glorious display of condemnation and death. That was Mount Sinai. And Paul makes the statement in II Corinthians 3:7, "But if the ministration of death," that's what he calls the law given in Sinai, a ministration of death. "If the ministration of death written and engraved in stones was glorious, so that the children of Israel couldn't steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away, how much more shall the ministration of the Spirit be glorious?" So he calls it a ministration of death.

My friend, for a man to stand at the foot of Sinai is doom. It is death. And that is all. And you see at Sinai God in outward demonstration of infinite holiness, infinite justice, severity, terrifying majesty. And you see at the foot of that mountain man trembling in his sin, in his misery, and in his guilt, and in his fear of death. That is Sinai, guilty, vile sinner trembling at the foot of a mighty, awesome, terrifying God.

Notice it says in verse 18, "the mountain that burned with fire." If you study Scripture at all, you know that fire is a symbol of divine wrath. Fire is a symbol of God's judgment. In Deuteronomy 4:24, Moses recorded for us these words. "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire." And He says them again here, the Holy Spirit does, in verse 29 of Hebrews 12. "God is a consuming fire." In Deuteronomy 33:2, the Bible says that from his right hand went a fiery law. So fire speaks of the awful majesty of God, as an inflexible judge. It speaks of the terror with which His law strikes.

The beautiful thing about it is that if you come to Christ, you are not coming to such a mount. That's what He's saying. When you come to Jesus Christ, the Bible says, you enter into the presence of God, and you cry, "Abba, Father." What a difference. That's coming to Zion. When you come to Jesus Christ, you then, according to the Book of Hebrews, are able to come boldly unto the throne of what? Grace, to find help in time of trouble.

Notice in the continuing picture of Sinai that there is blackness and darkness and tempest. And you can add to that the terrible earthquake, the whole mountain just shrouded in this horrible kind of blackness, murkiness. And then the sound of a trumpet blasts forth and gets louder and louder, as indicated in verse 19.

God uses trumpets for judgment. You read Revelation, chapter 11, and you start hearing the trumpets blow, don't you? And when you get to that seventh trumpet, and it begins to blow, the seventh trumpet incorporates all of the horrible judgments that finish out the Tribulation. The seven trumpets is nothing...the seventh trumpet is nothing but a composite of the seven bowls of wrath. All seven bowls of wrath are just that seventh trumpet. And from Revelation 11 clear through chapter 19, you just have the gushing of wrath that is pouring out of that trumpet, as God comes in fiery judgment.

Well, when the people heard this, they didn't want to hear any more. Verse 19, "The sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, which voice," listen, "they that heard entreated that the words should not be spoken to them," what? "Anymore." They said, "Moses, you talk. Don't let God talk anymore. We can't take it." They were absolutely petrified at the voice of God, and that's what He wanted.

As they looked up on that mount that day, they saw a mountain full of fire and smoke. They stood on ground that was shaking and quaking beneath their feet. The air was ripped by a loud blast continuously from a trumpet, and the voice of God thundered down the side of Sinai, and they were scared to death. And it's no wonder. They should've been scared.

In Hebrews 10:31, it says this. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God." You know, I used to wonder sometimes when I studied the life of the apostle Paul what motivated him. I used to wonder why he was so zealous, why Paul did what he did, why he was so brash in his presentation of the gospel, why he had such a care less attitude about his own health and his own welfare. And then I came across II Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 11, and this is what he himself says. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." See?

"I'm in this thing because I've seen God at Sinai. I know what a God of judgment is like." And that's the same Paul who later on in the same chapter says, "We beg you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God." Why? Because he has seen Sinai. He has seen wrath and judgment displayed. When God deals with a man on the basis of law, that man is doomed.

You know, it's interesting, I think, to point out that God gave the law to Israel not in Egypt, and not in Canaan, but He gave the law in the desert, in a place of absolute solitude. And I think there are reasons for that. There was nothing going on that they could turn their attention to. There was no hiding place. There was nowhere they could run. There was nothing else to look at. It was just stark

desert and God on display. And there was nowhere to turn. And you want to know something? They got very aware of their sinfulness.

And, you know, that's exactly what the law is for, isn't it? It is to make a man face his terrible sinfulness in the face of the holiness of God. And God illustrated that by giving them the law in a stark situation, where they couldn't focus on anything but their own vile character in contrast to the holiness of a vengeful God.

And I think it's the same today. When God has designs of mercy toward a sinner, when He begins to take that man in His hand, the first thing He does to a man is really just tear him out of all of his hiding places, doesn't He? And He compels that man to face the just demands of the law and the terror of judgment, and to recognize that he is a sinner, and that he has sinned against a holy God. I think the first thing that happens, really, leading directly to the repentance of a man, has to be that that man faces a holy God with an awesome sense of his sinfulness. Right? And so God is in the business of just yanking people out of their hiding places. And that's exactly what He did in full-scale demonstration in Sinai.

Listen to the words of Isaiah, in Isaiah 28, verse 17. This confirms what I just said. "Judgment also will I lay to the line." Did you hear that? God says, "I'll judge right up to the line." Nobody gets away. "And righteousness to the plummets." Fair judgment, fair in all of His deliberations. Listen, "and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the water shall overflow the hiding place." Did you get that? God says, "When I come in judgment, when I lay to the line my judgment, the hail will sweep away the hiding place and the refuge." God strips a man of all of his refuge.

And two verses later, He makes a most interesting statement. He says, "For the sinner, the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on it, the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it." You say, "What does that mean?" That means that God wants to bring the sinner to the place of short beds and narrow covers. Have you ever been in a short...Ralph can illustrate that. Have you ever been in a short bed, and your feet are out the bottom? You can't get them in. Have you ever had narrow covers on a cold night?

That, in a spiritual sense, is exactly what God wants to do with a sinner. He takes away the capacity of the sinner to hide himself. He steals his comfort. He can't get comfort. He can't get his feet in hidden, and he can't get his body covered. He, in other words, exposes him. When God gets ready to judge, He unbares the sinfulness of the sinner. And that's exactly what God did at Sinai. He made those people so blatantly focus on their sin that they had nothing else in view as they saw a holy God.

And so man, by the law, is forced out in the open, you see? And I heard one person say, "Well, the law is bad, because it does that to you." No, the law is not bad. The law is good. You need that

done. If you look in a mirror and you're ugly, it's not the mirror's fault. You need to fix yourself up. Comb your hair. Put on whatever you put on. God has to face man into the mirror of the law, so that he sees himself.

And the poor sinner who really stands at the foot of Sinai is paralyzed with fear. The sight of divine majesty overwhelms him. The law absolutely slays him. No sinner can endure Sinai. It can't be done. Verse 20 tells us. "For they could not endure that which was commanded." They couldn't even do it. They couldn't even hear it. It was so foreign to their capacities. And if so much as a beast, say nothing of a man, if an animal even touched the mountain it should be stoned or thrust through with a spear.

The statement "thrust through with a spear" does appear in the Book of Exodus, but it does not appear in the best manuscripts here. But certainly it's a part of the quote from the Old Testament, although it's missing in some manuscripts. What it means is this. If an animal touched that mountain, it had to be killed. But they couldn't touch the animal to kill the animal. Why? Because that animal had come in contact with the holiness of God, and that was a symbolic thing. No man could touch it. So they had to kill the animal at a distance, by throwing rocks at it or throwing a spear at it. Not only couldn't they touch the mountain, they couldn't touch an animal that touched the mountain. And so they were left in the paralyzing awareness of their sin.

And, you know, there was one man among them who had been around God a lot, and he'd faced some pretty tough things. And that was Moses. All right? And he'd seen some pretty exciting things in the desert. He'd seen God in a bush. And he'd seen the fire that was there. It didn't consume the bush. And he'd gone to Pharaoh, and he'd said, "Pharaoh, I'm going to tell you what you're going to do." And Pharaoh was the number one mucky-muck in the world, and yet Moses stood nose to nose with him and told him what he ought to do. And Pharaoh said, "Forget it, Moses. I'm not doing it." And Moses came back again and again and again and kept telling Pharaoh and telling him and telling him and telling him. He was a powerful man, was Moses. He was a dynamic man. He knew God. He'd seen some exciting things.

You want to see what Moses did when he stood at the foot of Sinai? Read verse 21. "So terrible was the sight that Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.'" Now, Moses had been around. But Moses was scared, just as scared as anybody else. Why? I don't care who you are, when you stand in the face of the terrifying judgment of God, when you stand at the foot of law, you have no recourse but to be afraid.

You know, the apostle Paul learned that about that. For a long time, Paul thought he was alive. And then all of a sudden he saw the law, and what did he say? "The law came, and I died." "I saw, 'Paul, you're not alive. You're dead.'" The law showed Paul what a sinner he was. In Romans 7:9 and 10, I'll just read you those two verses so you can have a point of contact, "For I was alive apart from the

law once." He thought he was really winging it. He just didn't know the commands. Then God grabbed him by the nape of the neck on the Damascus Road and slammed him down in front of Sinai.

And he says, "But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." "I looked at myself and said, 'Whoops. I'm a sinner.' And I died." "And the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death." Why? "I couldn't measure up to it. I couldn't live by the commandment. God originally had given man the capacity, before he fell. And then the good commands of God were no longer able to be kept, and so I saw God's law and I was smashed." That's Sinai. And there's no forgiveness there. In Exodus 34:7, the Bible says, "God, who will by no means clear the guilty."

At Sinai, there's no forgiveness. There's no clearance. He didn't say, "Now, if you'll come up Sinai and make an offering." They couldn't touch Sinai. If anybody tried to walk up to God and say, "God, I've got my slain lamb," whammo, see. That was not the place for that. There was only law there. And so God gave the law, and God's going to punish the people who don't keep it. Galatians 3:10 says, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Some people say, "Well, I can get to heaven by being good." "Cursed is every one that continues not in all the things written in the law." If you have ever in your life violated one of the laws of God, you are cursed. The only people who could march up the side of Sinai are holy people, as holy as God is, and God's special provision for Moses, as He secured Moses in a special way to receive His law.

And so you cannot approach God by works. You cannot approach God on the basis of your human merit. You can't say, "Well, I'm a goody-good, and I've done these deals and these deals over here, and I've tried to do the best I can and give to the Community Chest and all this kind of stuff, and I go to church, and I don't think evil thoughts all the time, and I have some good attitudes and, you know, this and that," and expect God to be all happy and say, "Come on up here to the top of Sinai. Just run right on up, folks." Can't do it. Never approach God on the basis of law.

But listen, friends, the Holy Spirit in the Book of Hebrews says if you come to Christ, you are not coming what? To Sinai. No. But if you turn your back on Christ and go back to Judaism, you are going back, trying to crawl up Sinai. You say, "Well, if I'm not going to Sinai when I come to Christ, where am I going?" Point two, Mount Zion. Verse 22. "You are come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, not a mountain that can be touched, not a physical one, but the heavenly Jerusalem."

Christians come to no physical, earthly mountain in fear. But we in joy come to the Mount Zion. And what does it speak of? Grace. "And I come boldly to the throne of grace." As Mount Sinai symbolized God's dealing with men under the old covenant of law, so Mount Zion symbolizes God's dealing with men under the new covenant of grace. What a glorious, glorious comparison it is.

Mount Zion represents grace, atonement, forgiveness. And it represents the spiritual place where God dwells. And by coming to Jesus Christ, says the Holy Spirit, you're coming to Zion.

Now, every Jew knew that. No Jew in his right mind would want to go to Sinai. And so He's saying to these would-be believers, "Don't go to Sinai, come to Zion." Every Jew knew what He was talking about. Zion was grace. Zion was for forgiveness. You say, "Well, how did it get to be so?" Well, Mount Zion was a stronghold of the Jebusites. The Jebusites were the ones who occupied Jebus, which later became Jerusalem. And the city was taken over by David. Apparently in about the seventh year of his reign he took the stronghold of the Jebusites over, Zion.

And one of the wonderful things that David did when he took over Zion was he put the Ark of God there in Zion. II Samuel 6 tells us. And so that became known as the dwelling place of God. And by that time, the whole sacrificial system had been instituted. And a man could go to Zion with his sacrifice, couldn't he? And he could go to Zion and he could bring his lamb, and the lamb was slain and the blood was sprinkled and his sin was forgiven.

And so He said, "If you come to Zion, you come to grace. If you turn from Christ, you go into Sinai, and there's no grace in Sinai." Grace is symbolized by Mount Zion. And so Zion was a hill in Jerusalem that became known as the dwelling place of God. In I Kings 14:21, it says Zion was the place "which Jehovah had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there." Zion was where God dwelt. Over in Psalm 132, I want to read you a couple of verses, verse 13 and 14. It says this. "For the Lord hath chosen Zion." Now, listen. "He hath desired it for His habitation," for his dwelling place. "This is my rest forever. Here will I dwell."

Now, you can't crawl up Sinai to get to God, but believe me, you can crawl up Zion. Because Zion symbolizes grace. And, incidentally, Psalm 2, when the Messiah comes, verse 6, "yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." And so Zion symbolizes the approachable God. Sinai symbolizes the unapproachable. He is unapproachable by works. He is approachable by grace, if you make atonement for sin.

Later on, Jerusalem was really built on two mountains. Zion to the south and west and Moriah. But Zion became an overall name for the whole city of Jerusalem. And Jerusalem and Zion in the Scripture are synonymous. In Psalm 48:2, it says, "The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, the city of the great king." And it says then, "God is known in her palaces," watch, "beautiful for a refuge." Isn't that terrific? Did you just hear what I told you about Sinai? God didn't give men a refuge at Sinai. God becomes their refuge at Zion. At Zion, God's approachable. In Psalm 50, verse 2, out of Zion, God hath shined. It's not dark anymore at Zion, is it? God turns the light on. It's not dark.

Later, David said, when he spoke of Zion in Psalm 133, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even eternal life. Life came out of Zion, death came out of Sinai.

And so, you see, the earthly Zion was a picture of God's grace. Men could bring their sacrifices to Zion, offer them to God, and God would forgive on the basis of their faith, as exemplified in their offering. He says in verse 22, "Ye are come to Mount Zion."

You want to hear something wonderful? It's a present perfect. "You are come to Zion." You say, "Well, are we waiting to get there?" No, you're already there. The day that you came to Jesus Christ you came into the presence of God. Right? Not to a physical Zion, what kind of Zion? A spiritual, heavenly Zion. Are you a citizen of this earth anymore if you're saved? No. Philippians 3:20, "For our citizenship is," where? "In heaven." You're not a citizen of the earth. You have come to a spiritual Zion.

Believe me, by works God is unapproachable. By grace God is approachable. And you and I can enter boldly into His throne. Zion was the provision of earthly...the earthly provision for grace, and we come to a heavenly Zion, made open by Jesus Christ Himself. You know, I can come to God because Christ is the sacrifice. If I accept His sacrifice, I can come to God. If I try to run up the side of Sinai on my own works, I'm doomed.

Now, when you come to Zion, you come to seven other things, and, boy, are they exciting things. You don't come to blackness and smoke and tempest and trumpets and loud voices and all of the things that are consisting there of Sinai. You come to seven other things.

First of all, you come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. What is that? That's heaven. When you come to the mount of Zion, when you come by grace to the presence of God, you're coming to the city that Abraham looked for. Right? Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God. A heavenly city. And from the moment that you believe, you are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies.

You know that I really live in heaven? I dangle around the earth here for a little while until I go home, but basically that's my home. All my possessions are there. My Father's there. My Savior's there. The believers are there. The saints with whom I am one are there. My inheritance is there. My life is there. My home is there, in the Father's house. Everything I have is there. I don't want anything in this world. It's all there. I am a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem. And grace ushers me into it.

Now, I am not fully enjoying my citizenship because of this one fact. I am an ambassador to the world. Do you know that an ambassador from America in a foreign country enjoys all the rights of a citizen, but he is an ambassador to carry out the wishes of the government of this country in a foreign country? That's what you are. You're a citizen of heaven. You're just on leave to the earth, as an ambassador, an emissary from God.

And so grace ushers you into God's presence, into the Jerusalem where God is. And you and I live and move and have our being in Him, don't we? And God is real to us. And we talk with Him, and we pray to Him, and we say, "Abba, Father." Because we live in His presence. We have come to the spiritual Zion by grace.

In Galatians, chapter 4, Paul uses basically the same metaphor about the two mountains, only he switches them around a little bit and kind of brings them in in regard to Sarah and Hagar. Without going into it in detail, I'll just read you 4:24. "Which things are an allegory. For these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai bearing children for bondage, who is Hagar." The old covenant's like Hagar. She bore children for bondage. "For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is and is bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

In other words, when you're saved, you step out of the bondage of an earthly Jerusalem, an earthly kind of covenant, and when you're saved by grace you enter into a heavenly kind of covenant, and you become, in a very real sense, a citizen of heaven, and the Jerusalem above is the mother of us all. We are not in bondage. We're free. And so we are citizens of heaven.

The next thing that we come to when we come to Zion, not only to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, but to "an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly." Stop there. Now, the general assembly, that term is interesting. And I just want to mention that the original Greek in that really should translate this way. "You are come to an innumerable company of angels in festal gathering." The general assembly refers to the angels, ponegeras, and it basically is a festal gathering to celebrate. You are coming to an innumerable number of celebrating angels.

You know, it's amazing. When you became a Christian you joined in the praises of the angels. You know, we're one with the angels praising God. They're busy doing that, aren't they? Isn't that what they're doing before His presence night and day, praising Him and serving Him? That's what we're doing. So we come to an innumerable number of angels in festal gathering, having a celebration. Tremendous promise.

Innumerable. You can read Daniel 7:10, and it'll tell you how innumerable they are. They're so innumerable you can't numerate them. Revelation 5:11, you know, it talks about the innumerable angels. The Bible says the thousands and thousands and thousands of, tens of thousands of angels, and on it goes.

You want to know something? There were innumerable angels at Sinai. And they were the mediators of the law in a very real sense, weren't they? But we come to an innumerable number of angels now that the people in the law system couldn't get to. They couldn't join the angels on Sinai,



but we can join them on Zion, can't we?

You say, "Does this mean we are coming to the angels to worship them? It says there, 'To an innumerable number of angels.'" No. Does it say we're supposed to worship them? Absolutely not. The Bible forbids the worship of angels. Colossians 2:18, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." Don't let anybody fool you into thinking you ought to worship angels. That is wrong. John tried to worship an angel in Revelation 19, and the angel said, "Get up and cut that out. I am just another creature." That's an amazing thing in view of the fact that in the Roman Catholic theology book that I was reading again this week, it says this. "The worship of angels is justified." And he even takes it a step further, that we can pray to them. The Bible forbids that.

So in coming to Christ in the new covenant, we come to the grace of Zion, the peace and safety of the heavenly Jerusalem and the fellowship of angels. Isn't it a glorious thing to realize that the angels are joined with us and we're joined with them in a celebration in the praise of God?

The third thing we come to is to the church of the firstborn enrolled in heaven. The church of the firstborn who are written in heaven. Who is the church of the firstborn? Well, that's the body of Christ. Aren't we all the firstborn? What does firstborn mean? Firstborn means those who get what? The inheritance. Does every believer get the inheritance? Romans 8 says, "You are heirs and joint heirs with Christ." The firstborn is the right of inheritance. Every member of the body gets the inheritance. When I came to Christ, when I came to Mount Zion, I came to be a part of the church of the firstborn, and I was one with every other believer. I'm not only celebrating with the angels, I'm in fellowship with the church. What a glorious thing it is to come to Zion. Who wants to go to Sinai?

You know, I like what it says in Luke 10:20. You'll like it, too. Listen to it. It says this. "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not," watch, "that the spirits are subject unto you. But rather rejoice," why? "Because your names are written," where? "In heaven." And Revelation tells us they're written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world. My name is written there in heaven. I am a part of the church of the firstborn, all of those who are going to inherit what God has promised.

So, to come to Christ is to come to Zion, which is to come to grace. It's to come to the living city of Jerusalem, which is to come to peace and safety. It's to come and join with angels in celebration, which is to come to worship. It is to come to join the church of the firstborn, which is fellowship. So in coming to Him, there's grace, peace, safety, worship and fellowship.

And most of all, look at this, number four, it is to come to God, the judge of all. Can you believe that, that you can actually enter into the presence of God? For a Jew, that was absolutely unbelievable, because they'd always known the veil, hadn't they? Always the veil. And He says, "If you'll come to

Zion, you can come to God."

You know, in a courtroom situation, usually it's the lawyer that approaches the bench, not the criminal. But in the case of God, the lawyer takes your hand. Who is our advocate? Jesus Christ. And leads us into the presence of the Judge, not at the bench, but into His chambers. And what is impossible by law is possible by grace. The presence of God is ours. The veil is ripped, and we enter into God's presence. Oh, how wonderful. Come to Sinai and you can't enter His presence. You'll die. Come to Zion, you'll enter His presence and live.

In addition to that, you come to the spirits of just men made perfect, fifthly. Who's that? Old Testament saints. When I got saved, I was made one with the Old Testament saints. Boy, that excites me. Just to think that I'm a part of the same throng that Abraham and David and Moses and Elijah and Elisha and Daniel and Isaiah and Jeremiah. We're pals in the same thing. I know them a lot better than they know me, but I'm glad to be in their company. Aren't you glad that God has one household? "The spirits of just men made perfect."

They had to wait, you know, a long time for that perfection. In fact, they had to wait for us, for the time that Christ came, in this age. Verse 40 of 11 says, "God provided some better thing for us that they, without us, shouldn't be made perfect." They had to wait until Christ died for that ultimate glorification. But now we're one with them. What a fabulous thought. I read those guys in the Old Testament and I think, "Oh, man, what terrific people." And then I read in the New Testament I'm one with them. Terrific.

You know, I used to play baseball, and one time when I was in high school, just graduated from high school, I had an offer to play professional baseball. It was a very...from my standpoint, I thought they were giving me the world. A thousand dollar bonus. Can you believe that? I was a hot item. A thousand dollar bonus and assignment to the Nebraska State Rookie League. Terrific. Right? Ride old buses across Nebraska. And, you know, I could just see myself ten years later, still in the Nebraska State Rookie League, because I knew there was no way in the world I would ever make it to the Major Leagues and be able to rub elbows with those kind of people.

And, you know, so much of the time as a Christian I have felt myself so inferior, and yet by the grace of God I will spend eternity rubbing elbows with Moses and David and Abraham and Daniel and Abel and Enoch and the whole pile of them, and I won't even be inferior. And when I came to Jesus Christ, I joined that throng, that throng that in the Book of Revelation sits around the throne and praises Him together. I don't want to go to Sinai. I want to go to Zion.

And, most of all, verse 24 gives us the sixth thing that you come to. "And to," whom? "Jesus." Boy, I can't wait to come to Him in the fullness. But I've already come to Him. But to come to Zion is to come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. What is He saying? He's saying, "Hey, people.

Come on. You're coming to all of this, and, in addition, you're coming to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. Personal relationship."

And He calls Him by His name, Jesus. Why? Because that's His redemptive name. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall do," what? "Save His people from their sins." That's His redemptive name. And so He says, "You're coming to your mediator. You're coming to your Savior." And there's no other mediator. There's only one, I Timothy 2:15, "the man Christ Jesus." What's He's saying? He's saying to come to Christianity is to come to grace, to peace and safety, to worship, to fellowship, to come to God and to come to Jesus.

And to come to Christianity, lastly, is to come to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel. What was blood for? For the what? For the atonement of sin. And to come to Jesus Christ is to come to the blood of Jesus Christ sprinkled perfectly for your sin. Full, final forgiveness. And He uses Abel as a contrast, because Abel gave a good sacrifice, and Abel was accepted of God. But He says, "You're coming to a sacrifice that way outstrips Abel, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ."

So He says to them, "Man, what do you want to do? Do you want to come to God on your own works and try to crawl up Sinai? You are dead. Or would you rather come to Zion, a broken sinner, turning from Sinai and saying, 'I can't come that way, God. I'm going to have to trust grace.' And coming, offering as your only sacrifice the death of Jesus Christ, and coming to God's Zion, and saying, 'On the merits of Jesus Christ, Father, I plead your forgiveness and enter your presence.'" And God'll accept you, won't He?

So He gives the contrast, and then quickly He says, "Now, what are you going to do about it?" Let me tell you what to do. Verse 25, "See that you refuse not Him that speaketh." Don't say no. Who's "Him that speaketh?" Who was it that was talking off of Sinai? God. Who speaks in Christ? Hebrews 1, "God who at sundry times in divers manners in time past spake unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Who spoke in Christ? God did. You better hear him. And what did God say? At the transfiguration of Jesus, He says, "This is my beloved Son. Hear ye Him." Hear Him.

You'd better listen to the God who speaks in His Son. "Refuse not Him that speaks." Now watch. "For if they escape not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven." He says, "Listen, if they didn't get away when they didn't obey at Sinai, you're not going to get away when God speaks from His Zion in the sky."

And you know the Israelites in the wilderness didn't escape, did they? They died in the wilderness. They never made the Promised Land. God came down in judgment on that whole generation of people, and they died. And if God was speaking seriously from an earthly mountain, you'd better

believe that He's talking straight stuff when He speaks out of heaven.

And so He says, "I plead with you, look at Sinai. If they didn't hear then and God did what He did, imagine what He'll do if you don't hear now." You say, "You think it'll be worse, John?" I don't think it'll be worse. The Bible says it will. Hebrews 10:29. Backing up, verse 28. "He that despised Moses' law died." That was God speaking from Sinai. They didn't escape. "He that despised Moses' law died without," what's the next word? "Mercy." Oh, that's powerful. "He died without mercy under two or three witnesses." You think that's bad. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who's trodden underfoot the Son of God?" My friend, if you think it was bad to disobey at Sinai, you haven't seen anything yet, for that one who treads underfoot the blood of Jesus Christ.

And then the Holy Spirit adds another wait, verse 26. "God, whose voice then shook the earth." But listen. "But now He's promising, 'Yet once more I shake not the earth only but also,' what? "Heaven." Listen, if it was serious when God shook the earth, just imagine what it's going to be like when He shakes the universe. If people didn't escape the judgment when God shook the earth, do you think they're going to escape the judgment when He shakes the universe?

You say, "What do you mean, John?" I mean that there's coming a day when God's going to shake the whole universe. You know, this is even indicated in the Old Testament. And I read you just a verse from Psalm 68. "Oh, God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness, the earth shook. The heavens also dropped at the presence of God. Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." He says, "Boy it was something." God rattled those things, and it was fearful.

The whole mount shook. The whole earth around it shook. But the world hasn't seen anything. They haven't seen anything. Listen to what it says. "He is yet going to shake not only the earth, but heaven." And that's a direct quote out of Haggai 2:6. That's an Old Testament prediction. In Isaiah 13:13, Isaiah said it's going to happen.

In Revelation 6, you have a description. God's going to take the sky as if it was a fig tree with untimely figs, and He's going to shake the trunk and the figs are coming down, which means the whole universe collapses. All the stars fall out of the heaven like figs dropping off a tree. And then he says, "The heavens are going to roll up like a scroll." Just like you pulled a Venetian blind down and let it go, the heavens are just going to go "whoosh," like that. God's going to close out the universe. And if you think it was serious to reject at Sinai in judgment, you can imagine what it's going to be when God comes down in the fury of the end of the age.

And He's not done. Verse 27, "And this word." Can you get that? "Now I just have one more thing to say." Typical preacher. "Yet once more." What do those words mean? What do you mean? Now is

your little commentary on Haggai. Haggai said, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only but heaven." "Yet once more," what does that mean? What do you mean, "yet once more"? That signifies the removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. You know what it means? It means God's going to wipe out the entire universe, leaving only that which is eternal.

Haggai said, "Yet once more." What does that mean? That means God's going to remove everything that is made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. What cannot be shaken? Boy, there's a great Bible study for you. The eternal verities that are yours in Christ cannot be shaken. Everything else is going to fall apart in this world when the horrible judgment of God comes screaming out of heaven. And only eternal things are going to remain.

You know, Peter knew about it. II Peter 3:10, listen to these words. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also. And the works that are in it shall be burned up." Verse 12 says, "The heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." That's the end of the physical universe. That's the wrath of God.

In Revelation, chapter 20, John says in his vision that God wiped out the universe. In Revelation 20 and verse 11, just a word there. "And I saw a great white throne and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." And only what is eternal remains. And then 21:1, I love it. God says, "And I looked again, and what did I see? I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were," what? "Passed away."

Listen, friends. God is going to come in terrifying judgment. There is the decision. Would you rather be a part of an eternal kingdom? Verse 28, "Wherefore receiving a kingdom which can't be moved. Let us," not have grace, but in the original, "Let us be grateful by which we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire." You know what? This is the sternest warning, maybe, in the Bible. It's the sternest warning in the Book of Hebrews.

And He is saying, "People, you've come all the way to the edge. Don't go back to Judaism. Don't go back to Sinai. If you think it was bad then, if you're still stuck there when He comes again, it's damnation in a way that the world has never dreamed feasible. In fact, it's so horrible that the Bible even says if the days were not shortened, all flesh would be wiped out. Even the godly just couldn't stand in a situation like that."

And so you have your choice. You come to Sinai or you come to Zion. The choice is yours. You stand warned, beloved. You either are going to face God in the blackness and terror at Sinai, with only your works, and they'll be consumed with you, or you come by grace to God at Zion, pleading the blood of Jesus Christ, and you find grace and you find peace and safety and you find worship and

you find fellowship and you find the presence of a loving God, and you find Jesus Christ, and you find full forgiveness, and it's all there.

And the Holy Spirit calls to you tonight and says, "Don't let anything take you back. Come all the way to Jesus Christ. Don't let neglect, unbelief, tradition, impatience or fear. You have only to fear if you go back and turn away from Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we pray tonight, after the sternness of this warning, that no one would fail to hear you, that no one would refuse Him that speaks, but, oh, God, that we would, with a full heart, come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, committing our lives to Him. Father, we know there are people who perhaps have come here for a long time. Maybe some others for a short time. They've heard the claims of Jesus Christ. And they've looked and looked at it. And they've maybe considered it.

And maybe now by this time they are somewhat indifferent. And maybe it's one of these same things that they're...that it's hanging them up. Fear or impatience or tradition, unbelief or neglect. Father, they're in a horrible danger. Father, help them to realize that they stand at the foot of a Sinai that is going to be greater than the one in Exodus, of a judgment inconceivable. Father, help them to know there's nothing to fear in coming to Christ. There's only terrible things to fear in turning their back on you.

Father, we thank you for speaking to our hearts, and especially to those who prayed, who invited Christ to be their Savior, who have come to you in His name and by His blood. And now, Father, we pray that they might confirm that decision and even share it with us, that we may help them in their new life. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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