

Jesus and the Kingdom that Can't Be Shaken

Hebrews 12:25 ESV See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. **26** At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." **27** This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. **28** Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, **29** for our God is a consuming fire.

- I. Over the last two weeks, Curtis and Pastor David did a great job getting us to this point in Hebrews chapter 12. Last week, Pastor David tackled Hebrews 12:18-24 and explained for us very well the contrast between the writer's imagery of Mount Sinai and Mount Zion.
 - A. Mount Sinai, represents the path to salvation that we believe is obtainable through the Law. It is a path that requires flawless perfection and unblemished holiness; nothing less will suffice. Mount Sinai is the path of self-attained and self-maintained righteousness.
 1. Every Human being ever born has attempted to journey this path at one time or another, in one form or another, and the result has been the same for all of us: utter and complete failure.
 2. We quickly discover that we are too broken, and way too prone to sin to resist the barrage of temptation that assaults us everyday, and to rid our lives of the sin that we have already embraced.
 3. Still, the "Mount Sinai Plan" is a perfectly legitimate plan of salvation, for the law is not corrupt in any way. If only we weren't corrupt in **every way!**
 - B. Mount Zion, on the other hand, represents the salvation that is obtainable only through the grace of our Lord Jesus. It is a path that also requires flawless perfection and unblemished holiness.
 1. The difference is that the perfection and holiness are provided, not by us, but someone else; someone who is capable of offering fully what the law requires. Mount Zion is the path of righteousness imputed, and holiness granted, to those who could **never** earn it.
 2. The Mount Sinai path might be legitimate, but it is impossible for us. For us to be saved, we must put all our hope and confidence in the Mount Zion plan: that by God's grace, Jesus has fully paid what the law required, and has freely given us his righteousness.
 - C. Having said all this, it should be apparent that for defective humans like us, Mount Zion is far superior to Mount Sinai, amen?
- II. A life lived in freely-given grace is far superior to the futility of a life spent pursuing redemption on the slippery slopes of Mount Sinai through the Law. We should not hesitate to run to the grace of God in Christ!
 - A. Because of this, the writer indicates that it would be unwise to refuse God's offer of pardon, redemption, healing and salvation through Jesus.

1. In Hebrews 12:24 we are told of “the sprinkled blood (of Jesus) that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”
 - a) **Genesis 4:10 ESV** And the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.”
 - b) Abel’s innocent blood cried out for justice against Cain, his murderer.
 2. The “better word” of Christ’s innocent blood was that it cried out for mercy to those who murdered him by their sin.
- B. This is why the writer begins our passage this morning by saying, “See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.” This is the fifth and final “warning passage” that we have spoken of so often in the book of Hebrews.
1. This warning has a reminder of the Old Testament wrath attached to it in order to reinforce it’s severity. “For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. At that time his voice shook the earth...”
 - a) At Mount Sinai when the law was given, God’s voice shook the earth! The mountain was engulfed in holy flame, thunder, lightning, and the people heard a heavenly trumpet blast!
 - b) Though the people saw this, they still turned time and time again to grumbling, rebellion, and idol worship.
 - c) For this they were punished in many ways, from being killed with the sword, to being bitten by serpents, to being swallowed up by the ground. The Old Covenant demanded exacted stiff penalties on those who failed to comply!
 2. This is what makes this warning so serious! Though the New Covenant is one of grace as opposed to law, we are told that the penalty for blowing it off is even more severe: “...much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven”!
- C. There are at least two reasons for this:
1. First, the penalty for rejecting Christ is severe because of the costliness of the sacrifice required to put the new covenant into effect.
 - a) Romans 8:32 ESV ***He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all***, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
 - b) Very few of us could fathom the loss of a child, let alone the voluntary sacrifice of one for a noble cause.
 - c) How much harder is it for us to imagine sacrificing our precious children for the sake of murderers, liars, thieves, and adulterers? Yet that is exactly what the Father did.
 - (1) And His was not just any child, but the perfect prince of Heaven! He was the commander of the Lord’s host, the spotless one, the creator of the cosmos, and the embodiment of God’s wisdom; but He was mercilessly butchered by sinful men because of the generosity of God.
 - (2) **Acts 4:27 ESV** for truly in this city (Jerusalem) there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ***28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.***

- d) Philippians 2 makes plain that because of his obedient sacrifice, God has exalted him to the highest place in the universe and given him a name that is above every name. Psalm 2 says that God has given him the ends of the earth as his possession. In the book of Acts, Stephen the first martyr sees Christ standing at the right hand of the throne of God.
 - e) Therefore I ask, if God has seen fit to glorify and exalt him for his obedience and selflessness, on what grounds do you deny his right to be the Lord of your life, your career, your time and your resources?
 - (1) Forget for a moment that it is to our eternal benefit to surrender to him, because to do so means life abundant and eternal; the fact remains that it is **our obligation** to surrender to him.
 - (2) What about free will? What about choice? Never forget that you have the “free will” to “make a choice” to stick your arm into a wood chipper, but you would be a fool to do so!
2. Secondly, the reason we must not “refuse him who is speaking” through the gospel because there is no option “C”, nor will there be. The gospel is God’s final arrangement with mankind.
- a) Option “A” was the Law - which we could not fulfill because of our sinfulness. Option “B” is the grace of God given in the gospel...and the gospel is the end of the line for God’s revelation of himself. Look at what the scripture says:
 - (1) **Acts 4:12 ESV** And there is salvation ***in no one else***, for there is ***no other name*** under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.
 - (2) **John 3:17 ESV** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but ***whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.***
 - b) If you are waiting for something better to come along, it won’t.
 - (1) If you are trying to make a hybrid of faith in Jesus mixed with Old Covenant law by being a Sabbath keeping, pork-free, pseudo-Jew, you can’t.
 - (2) If you’re wanting Jesus to “play nice” with eastern philosophies and other religions by putting a “co-exist” sticker on your car, He won’t.
 - (3) Or if you prefer a post-modern, secularized, “good teacher” brand of Jesus, He isn’t. Jesus settled the issue when He said...
 - (a) **John 13:13 ESV** You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, ***for so I am.***
 - (b) **John 14:6 ESV** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. ***No one comes to the Father except through me.***”
- III. **Hebrews 12:26 ESV** At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” 27 This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

- A. The writer here is referring to a passage in the Old Testament book of Haggai. The setting of that book is the return of Jewish exiles from captivity in Babylon, where they had been sent by God for 70 years.
- B. When they return, they find the temple (which was central to their national and religious life) in ruins. The work of rebuilding is slow, and part of Haggai's ministry is to encourage the people to prioritize the work because of all that the temple represents (God's covenant and his presence). Here is the text from Haggai's prophecy:
1. **Haggai 2:6 ESV** For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.
7 And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts.
 - a) The Jews understood the concept of shaking! Several decades earlier Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonians had come and destroyed their nation and their temple and carted them off to Babylon. The Jews were shaken, and the glory of the Jewish people was all but forgotten.
 - b) But now God is promising *another* shaking. One that will include "the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land". Can you imagine the nervousness of the Jew hearing these words?
 2. But this time, the shaking will be different! God promises, "I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory"
 - a) This won't be a distinctly Jewish shaking, but the shaking of all nations, even those that had been the captors of God's people!
 - b) Also, the result of this shaking won't be ruin, but rather that "the treasures of all nations will come in" and that "the house" will be "filled with glory!"
 3. How would this be accomplished? By the coming of Jesus! **Haggai 2:9 ESV** The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.
 - a) A few decades before Christ, Herod the Great undertook a massive Temple improvement project, thinking he would be the one to bring a "greater glory" to the temple.
 - b) But the glory of the Temple would be made more brilliant than the one which was destroyed by the Babylonians, because about 500 years after Haggai's prophecy, the Son of God himself would enter the 2nd Temple.
 - (1) He would be circumcised and dedicated in that temple as an 8 day old infant. Simeon and Anna would confirm that, even as a baby, he was the Messiah in that place. As a 12 year old boy, he would astound the doctors of theology with his wisdom.
 - (2) As an adult he would stand on the pinnacle of that temple and resist the tempting shortcuts of the devil. He would teach in it, challenge the arrogance of the religious elite in it, and throw merchandisers and money changers out of it.
 4. And this is reason that God said through Haggai that in this new temple He would "give peace":

- a) 500 years later, the Son of God declared, “It is finished!” and breathed his last after being butchered outside the city in a Roman cross.
 - b) As that happened, God himself tore the curtain that kept people out of his presence in the holiest part of that Temple.
 - c) Through the death of the Son, a way would be opened for all men and women, boys or girls, from every nation under the sun, to be reconciled to God!
5. The writer of Hebrews declares about this passage: **Hebrews 12:27 ESV** This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.
- a) The sacrifice of Jesus shook the Old Covenant to its core so that it could be removed. The Old Covenant represents the “things that have been made” - man made religion, man-made righteousness and holiness, and the things about which we can boast.
 - b) These things have been rendered worthless and removed by the work of Christ “in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain”; things like the Gospel of Jesus, the Kingdom of God, and the eternal life of the believer.
- IV. **Hebrews 12:28 ESV** Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.
- A. So what is our response to all this shaking that has brought about the kingdom? Gratitude! “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken...”
 - B. Are you grateful for the kingdom of God this morning? I ask, because odd as it may seem to you, many in our world today are not!
 - 1. Even many who claim to be believers are trying to rebuild the old way of doing things; the ways that God has shaken to nothingness.
 - a) Some do this by rigorous legal observance, embracing the Old Covenant, and trying to impress God and others.
 - b) Some do it motivated by guilt, never able to muster enough faith to really believe that God loves and accepts them, and is able to make them brand new by the power of His Holy Spirit.
 - 2. But we are told to be “grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken”! What does this look like practically?
 - a) It begins by admitting that we are helpless to earn for ourselves favor with God.
 - b) Next we fight every religious impulse that we have toward self-improvement. On the contrary, we cry out to God to miracle the miracle of “God improvement” in us. We call this sanctification. (And it is always a miracle not a method!)
 - c) Then you demonstrate gratitude by thanking Jesus that he cannot love you more and that he will never love him less. Thank him that the law of his kingdom is love!

- C. **Romans 8:35 ESV *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*** Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **36** As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” **37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38 *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***
- D. Our gratitude is evidenced when we “offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.”
1. Do you want to know whether you stand firm in a kingdom that cannot be shaken, or a just a dusty ruin that is a testament to the obsolete way of doing things?
 2. There is a simple test for that! Are you a convinced and ravenous worshipper of the Lord Jesus?
 - a) Do you approach him with flippancy, thinking that life and faith are all about you? Or are you filled with reverence and struck silent as you enter the “holy of holies” to gaze upon his beauty?
 - b) Are you easily bored trying to find your way into his presence, or are you awe struck by the magnitude of his kindness, his wisdom, and his grace?
 3. A life marked by reverence and awe is a great indicator of which kingdom you occupy: the one that has been shaken and removed, or the one that cannot be shaken and endures for ever.
- V. And let us never forget the most important fact about which kingdom we occupy: “our God is a consuming fire”.
- A. If you place anything in front of God, a day will come when he will burn it to ash like a wildfire devastates a mighty forest.
 - B. If you try to compromise with the old way of doing things, and attach his name to it, God will cause all your kingdoms to melt like wax.
 - C. This is the message of the book of Hebrews. Christ is superior to Moses. His ministry is superior to the Old Covenant priesthood. His sacrifice is more eternal than the blood of bulls and goats.
 - D. There is no going back. Our God is a consuming fire, and he has burned every bridge back to the Old Covenant. Place your trust in Christ alone. Not religious ceremony or good works. It’s the only way to reach your destination.