

TWO MOUNTAINS: MT. SINAI vs MT. ZION

HEBREWS 12:18-24; Galatians 4:21-31

What is the author of Hebrews specifically writing about in the epistle? The recipients were under threat of persecution, and so were tempted to abandon their Christian faith to return to their Jewish faith. So the author contrasts the terrors of Mount Sinai, which represents Jewish life under the Law, with the glorious Mount Zion which represents joy under the New Covenant. The author does not want them to make the same mistake Esau made (He.12:16-17). The contrast is that the Old Covenant (Mt Sinai) brought terror and judgment. The New Covenant (Mt. Zion) brings joyous celebration with the saints and angels in the presence of God. There is still reverence, but the blood of Jesus takes away the dread of judgment.

MOUNT SINAI	CONTRASTS	MOUNT ZION
HEBREWS 12:18-21; Ex.19:10-25		HEBREWS 12:22-24
1 Old Covenant was physical and earthly		1 New Covenant was spiritual and heavenly
2 Old Covenant put a distance between a holy God and sinful people		2 New Covenant invites us to dwell in the city of the living God based on the blood of Jesus.
3 3,000 died at foot of Mt. Sinai (Ex.32:28)		3 3,000 born of the Spirit (Ac.2:41)
4 Standard for judgment: Law		4 Standard for judgment: Gospel
5 Ministration of death (2Co.3:7)		5 Ministration of the Spirit (2Co.3:8)
6 LAW manifests what is in men—sin		6 GRACE manifests what is in God— love
7 LAW demands righteousness from men		7 GRACE brings the righteousness of God to men
8 LAW sentences men to death		8 GRACE gives life to dead men
9 LAW speaks of what men must do		9 GRACE tells what Christ has done
10 LAW gives a knowledge of sin		10 GRACE puts sin away
<p>There are two standards that men are judged by, namely, the Law and the Gospel. Those who love and trust the Lord Jesus will be judged by the Gospel and so will be forgiven. Those who do not accept the Gospel will be judged on the basis of their works and so will be condemned by the Law. God had Israel in the solitariness of a desert and exposed their sin when faced with the demands of the Law. It is at this point that a sinner turns to God. There is a transition from law to grace; fear to faith; solitude to fellowship; and failure to fulfillment.</p>		

- Mount Sinai is a picture of the Old Covenant, which is a covenant of fear.
- This Jewish event was a demonstration of God's holiness.
- Sinai was rocked with thunder, and it cracked with lightening. The mountain was literally on fire with thick smoke above and all around, and a great earthquake below.
- They heard the voice of God, and begged for it to stop (**He.12:19**).
- God is an inflexible God of justice (**Rm.3:19**, "all the world may become guilty before God").
- Sinai paralyzes the sinner by the sight of His divine majesty (**He.12:20**). If you try to approach God with your own works, Sinai will fire right back at you.
- Paul called the Old Covenant the "ministration of death, written and engraved in stones" (**2Co.3:7**). **Deuteronomy 4:24** says, that "the LORD thy God is a consuming fire." Paul said, "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (**2Co.5:11**).

NOTES

- Literal Mount Zion is not much to look at. On the east of Jerusalem there is the Hedron Valley that makes a little turn south toward Bethlehem and become the Valley of Hinnom. From Hinnom you go up a little grade. That is Mt. Zion.
- Mt. Zion was once a Jebusite stronghold, until David conquered it in the seventh year of his reign. God chose to put His name there (**1Ki.14:21; Ps.50:2; 132:13**). Zion and Jerusalem became synonymous.
- You cannot teach (1) grace, (2) love, and (3) forgiveness unless there is (1) judgment, (2) justice, and (3) law and sin. If the judgment-side does not exist, then the grace-side has no meaning.
- When we teach that first you need to "feel" worse, then you can sense "feeling" better.
- Believers do not come to a real physical mountain. We come to the spiritual mountain Zion (**He.12:22**). It is a mountain of grace.