

Hebrews 12:25-29 "An Unshakable Kingdom Not Of This World"

Last week you might remember how our writer contrasted the two covenants; that which was found at Sinai at the giving of the law and the new covenant represented by the heavenly Zion which is found in Christ alone.

The old covenant was associated with a mountain that cannot be touched and was the place God manifested Himself in an awesome display of His holiness and justice, as seen in the blazing fire on the mountain, together with the darkness and the gloom and the whirlwind.

It was a sight that struck fear in the hearts of the Israelites for they knew they could not stand before God and they even begged that no further word be spoken to them. But our writer went on to say that this is not the mountain we've come to which only raises the sin issue, but we've come to Mount Zion where sin is vanquished through the shed blood of Christ.

It is in this setting that we see the celebration in heaven of all the heavenly host around the throne. This is what we have to look forward to, if we are in Christ by faith alone. Judgment and condemnation are the only things we have to look forward to if we've come to Mount Sinai thinking we can somehow approach the mountain of God's throne with our good works to attain salvation.

In our text this morning our writer once again reminds us that to neglect Mount Zion, the New covenant found in Christ, in favor of Mount Sinai, which is the law, is to refuse Him who has spoken clearly between the two covenants and what they produce.

HEB 12:25 "See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?"

"See to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks" is a negative way of stating a positive. In other words listen to Him. Pay heed to what He says. This is reminiscent of what we find in DEU 18:18-19 "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. 19 If anyone does not listen to my

words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account."

And of course we know that the One sent was none other than the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is the Word become flesh to whom we must listen. In fact, this is exactly what the Father said of Him in MAT 17:5 "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

Keep in mind that the Jewish Christians being addressed were tempted on many sides to go back to Mount Sinai and to reject this new religion as it was perceived by unbelievers. Mount Sinai, for all its inability to save from the penalty of sin, was still a comfortable place for the Jew.

They had their laws and their traditions and their priesthood and they were content to be considered the chosen people sitting beneath this mountain which was ablaze with judgment and condemnation. They had become so familiar with Mount Sinai that over time their spiritual senses were dulled and the Mountain lost its sting.

They didn't see it for what it was, they saw it as the only approach to God and turned a good thing, that is, the law being a tutor to lead to the Messiah, into the very means of being reconciled to God.

The law was never meant to save anyone. It was meant to help us see our utter need for a Savior as we look at this mountain of judgment and condemnation and in despair we cry out for mercy and compassion from our God.

This is what Paul clearly teaches in GAL 2:16 "know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified."

On one occasion, in the city of Pisidian Antioch, Paul was visiting a Synagogue and after given an opportunity to speak about the Scripture which had just been read he stood up and expounded on that passage and added this:

ACT 13:38-39 "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. 39

Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses."

And yet, still, many of the Jews of Paul's day preferred Mount Sinai. Though it smoked and quaked, as long as they were in its shadow they felt safe and secure as long as they didn't approach it. What a way to live. Being able to see God's presence at a distance, but never being able to personally fellowship with God who wants to call us children as we call Him Father.

But that can only happen if we call on the Son, Jesus Christ, by faith, to bring us into the presence of the Father through His shed blood and resurrection as He has torn the veil in two and made access through the heavenly tabernacle.

And so, what we have before us is what the Jews of Christ's day had before them. Two choices: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. Shall we refuse to listen to God as He explains these two? That's the question our writer raises.

HEB 12:25 "See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?"

Who is it that warns from earth? The same one who warns from heaven. The warning from earth was when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with God's law. God's warning was, do not turn away from Me, put your faith in Me.

In fact, God continued to warn them on earth through His prophets. God allowed men to take His message of warning as well as hope. But most would not listen and they were held accountable for their rejection of that message.

But if they were held accountable for the message given to them on earth, through the law and the prophets, how much more culpable would they be if God Himself came down from Heaven with such a warning? Can anyone escape that? Of course not! And this is the point of verse 25. But this isn't the first time our writer brings this issue up. In fact, this entire letter begins with this premise.

HEB 1:1-2 "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."

In the past God spoke and yet the people did not listen.

HEB 3:7-11 "So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, 9 where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. 10 That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"

And so again, our writer makes the point to his readers in verse 25 ... "If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?"

If any of these Hebrew Christians were the least bit tempted to turn back to the Old Covenant, our writer warns them that if you disobey Him who came from heaven then you will find yourself in the same position as those who disobeyed in the desert.

As I've said before this is not teaching that true believers can lose their salvation. It is simply trying to get the attention of those saints in a way, where it shakes them out of their complacency. For those who would not be shaken by the voice from heaven, then it would reveal that they could not hear and they would prove themselves not to be true believers in the first place.

Jesus made it clear in JOH 10:27-30 "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

What our writer is doing is helping these Jewish believers begin to appreciate who Christ is and the salvation He's given them. How all of us need this. The way we begin to appreciate this salvation is to see where it's found as well as where it's not found.

It's not found at Sinai. Praise God we don't have to earn His favor by keeping the law. All of us would be in deep trouble. It is found at the heavenly Zion, the city of our Great God, who came into this world to keep the law perfectly on our behalf and then pay our penalty of death which we owe to God.

But people must listen and not neglect so great a salvation.

HEB 2:2-3 "For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him."

When God spoke with Israel on Mount Sinai He shook them to the core as they trembled at His perfect justice and holiness. But when Jesus Christ Himself came He shook the world in a way that changed everything, both in this world and in heaven.

HEB 12:26 "At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." (Haggai 2:6)

The last part of this verse is taken from the prophet Haggai.

HAG 2:6-7 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and *the desired of all nations will come*, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty."

Haggai was speaking of the Messiah who would come and fill the house of God with glory. The question that must be asked is, what is the time frame that Haggai addresses when the desired of all nations will come and fill this house with glory?

Well, there are two senses in which the Messiah would come and fill this house with glory with two different time frames being fulfilled in this one prophecy.

The earthly Temple was a glorious thing in Israel during the ministry of Christ. But it was nothing compared to the glorious "Temple" who would come and dwell among men. Remember when Jesus was going through Jerusalem and taking note of the temple?

JOH 2:18-21 "Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." 20 The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Haggai's prophecy was certainly fulfilled. The "Temple" in all its glory tabernacled among men. This is what John records for us in JOH 1:14 "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the Only Begotten who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

When God gave the law at Mount Sinai He shook the earth. Nothing like this had taken place since Noah. But God was changing everything as His plan for the Messiah was now given unto the Jews to fulfill His promise of bringing the Messiah through the nation of Israel. This Covenant was one which spoke of a better covenant to come.

But when Jesus Christ came into this world He shook not only the earth, but earth and heaven. Why? Because He was taking away the old covenant and bringing in the New. If you don't think this didn't shake things up then I would encourage you to read the gospel accounts where we find the Jews hating Jesus. He shook up their little world.

But He shook up heaven as well because this eternal covenant came from Mount Zion, the heavenly city, and was now about to be fulfilled. On the day our Lord Jesus was born all of heaven rejoiced.

LUK 2:6-10, 12-14 "While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

All of heaven rejoiced. The Old covenant was about to be taken out of the way to make room for a better everlasting covenant found in the Lord of glory who came into this world to give us life eternal.

But notice what our writer says in the next verse of our text. He then expounds on the verse found in Hag.2:6 and makes a special note.

HEB 12:27 "The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken - that is, created things - so that what cannot be shaken may remain."

Here the writer of Hebrews addresses the second aspect to the desired of all nations coming and filling the house of God with His glory.

The first thing addressed in verse 27 has to do with that which can be shaken, that is created things. And again, this is in the context of Mount Sinai and Mount Zion.

Mount Sinai represents the covenant given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that was manifest in the covenant given to Moses who set up the framework of the law of God with all of its sanctions for the nation of Israel.

It was meant to be instituted in this world for that which would be foreshadowed in the next, therefore it can be shaken or removed. And this is what the writer of Hebrews meant in previous passages in this same chapter.

Hebrews 12:15-20 ¹⁵ See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; ¹⁶ that *there be* no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal. ¹⁷ For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears. ¹⁸ For you have not come to a *mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, ¹⁹ and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which *sound was such that* those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED."

Esau sold his birthright, (that is the promise given to his father Isaac), as the one who would carry on the promise that would lead to the hope found in the Messiah, the seed of the woman. That promise was couched in the shadows and imagery found in the Mosaic covenant that enabled a person to have a mechanism to

come before God in repentance as they embraced the sacrifice of an innocent victim found in the slain animal.

That sacrificial system was inaugurated on a mountain that could be touched; Mount Sinai. This was the system that was designed by God to be shaken. In other words, it was meant to be taken out of the way because it was not designed to save anyone, but to lead us to the One who could. And this is what our writer points out in the tenth chapter of this letter.

Hebrews 10:1-9 ^{NAU} For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? ³ But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. ⁴ ***For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*** ⁵ Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; ⁶ IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE. ⁷ "THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'" ⁸ After saying above, "SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE *in them*" (which are offered according to the Law), ⁹ then ***He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL." He takes away the first in order to establish the second.***

And so, when our writer says to the Christians he is addressing in this letter, that you did not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, he is saying that your salvation is not found in the law delivered to Moses and Israel at Sinai.

Therefore, they did not come to that which could be shaken to seek their salvation. Rather, they came to Zion. And here we don't mean the Zion on this present earth, but a heavenly Zion, to where the Lamb of God has risen.

Hebrews 12:22-24 ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn

who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel.

Here, our writer clearly identifies Mount Zion as the heavenly Jerusalem. And it is this heavenly Jerusalem, and all it represents, that cannot be shaken because it is eternal in nature with our King Jesus sitting on the throne.

You and I in Christ are residents of this heavenly Jerusalem.

Ephesians 2:5-7 ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

And again, this leads us to the second aspect of Haggai's prophecy which will be fulfilled in the future, (that which cannot be shaken as the first order is shaken), and here Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, addresses it as that aspect of the heavenly Jerusalem which in ages to come will be revealed as the surpassing riches and grace toward us in Christ.

Well, what is that?

It is the eternal inheritance that cannot be shaken.

Acts 20:32 ³² "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Acts 26:18 ¹⁸ to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

And by the way, it is this same inheritance that Abraham longed for as he looked to that day where he obtained the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God and of which Paul addressed to the Galatians.

Galatians 3:18 ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

Paul is addressing a future inheritance to which he and Abraham have not yet received thus making the inheritance something that must be down the road for both old and new testament saints.

Abraham did not receive that promise while he was in the land of Canaan, and even now, though he is in the present heaven where the present heavenly Jerusalem resides, found in both a people and a city, he is yet looking forward, as all of us are, to that time in which the new Jerusalem will come down to the new earth where Christ will reside with His people forever. And this is the hope of our calling that Paul talks about.

Ephesians 1:18-20 ¹⁸ *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

And this is what our writer of Hebrews speaks to when he identifies what the new covenant in Christ's blood has purchased, namely a people who have been redeemed unto an inheritance found in Christ that is eternal in nature, and by definition will be the final consummation of the promise found in the new heavens and new earth.

Hebrews 9:15 ¹⁵ For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

This is the living hope that we should all long for with the understanding that as the Holy Spirit has sealed us for the day of redemption, that day of redemption will be found to be the eternal heaven on earth.

1 Peter 1:3-5 ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

This salvation ready to be revealed in the last time is an allusion to the last day where heaven and earth are judged and burned as God raises all people, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting damnation, as He refashions the present universe into the paradise He always meant it to be with Christ dwelling among His people on the new earth.

This ultimately is the kingdom of God that cannot be shaken. And when we have a proper understanding and perspective as to this inheritance our hearts should soar in worship and adoration of our great God and Savior which is exactly the point in the next part of our text.

Hebrews 12:28 ²⁸ Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

You and I in Christ have received an inheritance which was delivered to us through our Lord and Savior. Jesus has shaken both heaven and earth with this glorious gift. And what our writer would have us know is that if we abide in Him by faith we cannot be shaken because our new life cannot be shaken or removed.

A.W. Pink kind of sums it up when he says, "The great design of God in the Divine incarnation was the setting up of Christ's Kingdom, but before it could be properly established there had to be a mighty shaking in order that the shadows in Judaism might give place to the Substance."

Jesus is that substance, and you and I are the partakers of that shaking which has issued in life eternal in the Kingdom of Christ. His Kingdom is in this world today to the extent that we possess it by faith, but it is not of this world. Just as true, we are in this world and yet we are not citizens of this world.

If the things of this world will ultimately pass away what should be our priorities? If our citizenship is in heaven will we place roots here that go so deep that we can't let go? This is what our writer wants us to consider.

HEB 12:28 "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our "God is a consuming fire."

We are to be thankful and in our thankfulness we should worship God in spirit and in truth as we revere Him in awe knowing that

God is a consuming fire. Our lives should consider Him who is judge, but also to be thankful that our sin has already been judged in His merciful and compassionate Son. Can we be thankful for that? Yes!

But being thankful with lips only is not what our God has in mind. He has placed us in a Kingdom which cannot be shaken. We are His children to be with Him forever. But for we who are in Christ, forever in His Kingdom starts today. Our gratitude and thankfulness and worship and reverence starts today.

And the way it manifests itself is in a life surrendered totally to Him. He is the King of this Kingdom and we are His servants. He asks us to do one simple thing, which encompasses everything else: Love Him with all our hearts, soul, mind and strength. Easier said than done.

But it can be done as we come to Him and rely on His strength as He gives us the ability to do all things in Christ. Do we really appreciate this unshakable Kingdom He has given us? Do we really have thankful hearts for so great a salvation? Do we really show the world that we belong to our God who has given us life forever?

These are questions we all have to contend with. But if you know the Lord the answer must at least be, 'Lord help me to love You more, help me to appreciate You more, help me to worship You in both word and deed.' And then in faith and obedience we walk in His ways to His glory knowing that the glory that awaits us is sure and unshakable.

HEB 13:15-16 "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

May all that we do be this "sacrifice of praise" which goes out into a sin-filled world and shows them the light of the love of Christ in us. And may that gratitude of knowing what it is to have an eternal relationship with God through faith in Christ take us into this world and give them the same hope we have in Christ.

May we never hide it under a basket, but let it shine bright and may it burn in our hearts to give it away so the world too may know what it is to belong to an unshakable Kingdom whose King and Lord is Jesus Christ.