

A Tale of Two Mountains

Hebrews 12:18-29

However good or bad we might be at making decisions, the writer says that when it comes to matters of eternity, and how we are to approach God, there is no excuse for wobbling. The choice is clear. He explains it by telling the tale of two mountains.

The Party of Grace

He describes two mountains: Sinai and Zion. They represent the Old and New Covenants: two very different ways of approaching and encountering God. They are the two options the people he's writing to are wobbling between.

Mount Sinai, at the giving of the Law, was a terrible sight. It declared loudly how unapproachable God is and how unworthy we are. But Mount Zion is very different. It embodies all the hopes and dreams of God's people. It is a picture of joyful celebration, a party of God's grace.

If we try and save ourselves by moral effort and law keeping, we get Sinai: darkness, fear and turmoil, where God seems distant. But the gospel, represented by Mount Zion, invites you to a party you don't deserve to be at. It is the place where you will find what you are really searching for, and where you will find true completeness.

The difference between the two is that now Christ is the mediator of the new covenant. Through his death he has made a way for us to come. His blood speaks of forgiveness and grace, not vengeance.

Don't Decline the Invite

Because of who God is, because of the consequences of our sin, we should not decline this offer of grace. To do so is to take all the consequences of alienation and separation from God upon ourselves.

The reason we should not do that is that there is going to come a day when everything is shaken out. We experience times of uncertainty and shaking in our lives now, but that will be as nothing in comparison to the final shaking at the end of time. So we need something stronger and more dependable than our own resources, or our own moral effort, to help us stand. And that is the love and grace and mercy of Jesus. It is the kingdom which cannot be shaken.

The Overflowing Heart

The writer says that as we realize God's gift to us in Jesus, we'll find gratitude welling up in our hearts. If we think we can earn our way before God we will either be characterized by pride or guilt. But when the gospel takes hold of us, we'll be marked by gratitude.

And that gratitude will lead to worship. Not just the worship of lips, but the worship of our lives.