

When Jesus walked on the earth, he took on human form. We can read four different Gospel accounts of His life. Each gospel will help us to gain an understanding of what He said and did while on earth. But the writer of Hebrews takes us even beyond the stories and descriptions of Jesus' life on earth. He shows us how God, throughout the Old Testament, has been revealing the truth about Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the one and only savior.

The first great revelation of God's salvation, given through Moses, allowed the Israelites to have a genuine relationship with God. But that relationship was imperfect. Their sins were forgiven but not permanently. God had a better, more perfect, plan of salvation. Every tiny detail of the Old Testament pointed toward the coming of Jesus.

Compared to the Old Testament's way of worshipping the true God, Jesus proclaims something better. The writer of Hebrews tells believers, "You have come to ...

- A heavenly mountain
- A more complete covenant
- A kingdom that cannot be shaken

Let's mine the riches of God's grace by digging into God's Word.

A heavenly mountain

As a young man I used to love hiking in the mountains on the Appalachian Trail in Maine. A few times I hiked alone. One time I spent three days on a mountain and never saw another person. I loved those times in the mountains. Because I believed in Jesus Christ as my savior then, I found those times to be some of my most precious times alone with God.

The writer of Hebrews uses the metaphor of two mountains to compare the Old Covenant given to Moses with the New Covenant given through Jesus Christ.

You have not come to Mount Sinai and heard the voice of God coming from the top of the mountain.

- It is not identified as a mountain at first, but as something that can be touched, unlike the mountain we come to through Jesus Christ.
- "You have not come to what may be touched" (Hebrews 12:18).
 - The writer of Hebrews is telling us that those in Christ have come to what may not be touched.
 - He continues with other physical manifestations of God's power when Moses met with God on Mount Sinai: "blazing fire", "darkness and gloom", "a tempest", "the sound of a trumpet", and "a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no future messages be spoken to them".
 - We can find all these tangible, physical manifestations of God's power revealed when God met with Moses:
 - [Exodus 19:16-19](#) "On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder."
- Then, in the next chapter, just after Moses first hears the Ten Commandments spoken to him by God, we read:

- Exodus 20:18-21 “Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.”
- I’ve heard many people say that they wish that God would speak to them in a clear, audible voice. But here we see that when God did do exactly that for the people of Israel it was so terrifying for them that they pleaded with Moses to ask God to keep quiet because they couldn’t bear it, because it was terrifying.
- Have you ever been out in a boat on a lake when a thunderstorm comes close? It is very frightening because you are vulnerable and could easily get struck by lightning. I believe what the people of Israel faced was much more terrifying. They encountered the source of lightning and thunder.
- You have come to Mount Zion — The writer of Hebrews reminds us, what the Israelites experienced at the foot of Mount Sinai was different from the experience of those who are in Jesus Christ. They have come to a different kind of “mountain.” Remember, we have come to a mountain that cannot be touched. A mountain that cannot be seen.

“You have come to Mount Zion of heaven and heard the voice of Jesus. This mountain is:

- You have come to “the city of the living God” (22), “the heavenly Jerusalem” (22)
- You have come to “innumerable angels” gathered for a festival of worship (22)
- You have come to “the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (23)
- You have come to “to God, the judge of all” (23)
- You have come to “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (23)
- You have come to “Jesus” (24), the “mediator of a new covenant” (24), “the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (24)

Jesus is mentioned last, even though Jesus is the most important person or place mentioned in verses 22 - 24, other than God the Father. Jesus is incredibly the important because He is the mediator of the new covenant. The man who wrote Pilgrim’s Progress, John Bunyan, once asked his wife if she could think of a verse that said, “I must go to Jesus.” She couldn’t think of a verse that said that, in those exact words. Then, John Bunyan thought of Hebrews 12, and especially verse 24 which explains that we must go to Jesus to receive the forgiveness of our sins. Faith in Jesus will save us because God ordained that Jesus will be the mediator between sinful humanity and God. Jesus is the only mediator who can come between sinful human beings and God and bring peace between them. Otherwise, God who will judge us and condemn us for our sin.

- You have come to join the other citizens of heaven who will also live forever.
- By mentioning Jesus’ sprinkled blood, the author of Hebrews draws a comparison between Jesus’ sacrifice of His blood and the blood the high priests sprinkled on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement.
- The blood of Jesus’ blood is also compared to Abel’s blood that cried out for judgement against his brother who had murdered him (Genesis 4:10 “And the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.” - God says to the murderous brother, Cain). But the blood of Jesus cries out to God for the permanent forgiveness of sin.
- Those in Christ have not come to Mount Sinai and the covenant given through Moses, which provided temporary forgiveness of sin. Instead, those in Christ have come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, which offers salvation through a sacrifice offered once and for all. Jesus’ sacrifice has provided an eternal reward for believers that can never be taken away.

- The writer of Hebrews states, “You have come”. This is a reality for believers now. It is not just about the future.
- Jesus – I am with you always (Matthew 28:20)
- Jesus – whenever two or more are gathered in my name (Matthew 18:20)
- Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35)

A more complete covenant

You might think that the warnings for refusing to obey the commandments given to Moses would be more terrible than the warnings against refusing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, those who refuse the gospel of Jesus Christ face a much greater disaster than those who refused the commands given through Moses.

Hebrews 12:25-27 “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. 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.” 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.”

- **“Do not refuse”** Jesus when He speaks offering to save your soul.
 - The voice that came from Mount Sinai was located on earth, and the Israelites during Moses’ time were not able to escape from God’s judgment. Notice verse 26, it is called “his voice.” The voice from Mount Sinai was the voice of Christ, who is also God.
 - Believers receive the message Jesus Christ has issued from heaven. Refusing the message of Jesus Christ carries more severe consequences than refusing the commands given through Moses.
 - Take a close look at verse 26 & 27, clearly the voice from Mount Sinai comes from the same person as the voice that comes 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. Hebrews 12:26-27, ESV
- Notice the first words, “At that time his voice shook the earth”. Clearly “his voice” is the same voice that later speaks from heaven. In both cases the voice comes from the same person, Jesus Christ, who is also God.
 - The greatest, most severe warning is the voice that now speaks from heaven will “shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” Everything will be shaken, or destroyed, so that only “only the things that cannot be shaken may remain.” Only what is heavenly and eternal will remain.
 - Don’t be fooled into thinking that Jesus’ forgiveness means that we don’t need to concern ourselves with God’s judgment.
 - Whoever does not submit to Jesus’ word will be judged and will be destroyed.
 - Those who do receive Jesus’ word, and those forgiven by His blood, will not be shaken, as we see in verses 28 and 29. They will live forever.

A kingdom that cannot be shaken

The earth shook around Mount Sinai when God met with Moses. The day will come when far more than the earth will shake. Everything physical will be shaken until only what is eternal will remain.

- Now we come to our response to Jesus' offer of the gift of eternal life. This is a description of what our worship of God should be.
 - "let us be grateful" - In our worship we should give thanks to Jesus for His great gift to us. Believers must show gratitude to God when they worship Him.
 - We should acknowledge that the gift Jesus gives to believers grants them citizenship in a "kingdom that cannot be shaken." When everything in creation is shaken those who believe in Jesus Christ will not be shaken. They will remain.
 - In order for our worship to be "acceptable" to God it must be a mixture of "reverence and awe", or "fear and amazement."
 - I love to watch lightning storms. They are fascinating but they are also life threatening.
 - I can remember a number of times when I was in a boat on a lake during a lightning storm. It was both amazing and terrifying. Most of the time we got to shore before the lightning started. We moved fast because we didn't want to be in the boat when the lightning was striking.
 - I remember another hiker telling about a time when he was on the very top of a mountain and lightning was striking. Most of the mountains in Maine are covered with large rocks. He said he got down on the ground, so that the rocks were higher than he was. When the lightning struck he could smell sulfur from the lightning burning the rocks.
 - Thunderstorms are both amazing and terrifying – God's voice is far more amazing and terrifying.
 - Notice the words in verse 29 - "for our God is a consuming fire."
 - God sent fire from heaven to earth, to burn up the sacrifice offered by Elijah (1 Kings 18:37-39). By sending fire to consume Elijah's sacrifice God honored Elijah's worship. God received the sacrifice offered by Elijah and God responded by sending fire from heaven.
 - God's fire can be His way of acknowledging that a person's worship has been done in a way that is acceptable to God. This seems to be the likely meaning here.

Are you focused on living for only the present reality which will one day be gone, or are you living for the present and eternal reality that can now be yours in part, but one day will totally be yours?

What is unshakable? The "kingdom" (verse 28). This includes: the city of the living God, the angels in heaven, the firstborn who have been made righteous, God the Father, and Jesus. If you believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior by the power of Jesus' blood you will be as unshakeable as they are.

So, why did you come to the chapel today?

- Did you come to worship God who cannot be seen or touched?
- Did you come to express gratitude to God for sending His Son to die for you on the cross?
- Did you come with a mixture of awe and fear, as you come before the presence of God.
- Do you understand that God accepts only sincere and appropriate worship?

If you came to the chapel for any other reason than to worship God, repent, and seek to honor Him in worship that is appropriate. It is not too late to come to the Savior.

A Kingdom That Cannot Be Shaken (Hebrews 12:18–29)

V O I C E T E T G L O O M
V L V R E D R O O K N H O
P E S U F E R U D N E V E
D N U O S A H C M A N D M
O E S A M R B H V P M A O
O K G L U T S E P M E T C
L O N C E H N D S R S T B
B P I U H R H A O C S L A
H S H A K E N M C A A G U
M P T I T H A I M Z G P D
N E V I G T E R I F E U E
M A K D A R K N E S S O V
A K E M I U G M P R H M R
H S R T D F H C A S S S C

For you have not **come** to what may be **touched**, a **blazing fire** and **darkness** and **gloom** and a **tempest** and the **sound** of a **trumpet** and a **voice** whose words **made** the **hearers** beg that no **further messages** be **spoken** to them. For they could not **endure** the **order** that was **given**, “If **even** a beast **touches** the mountain, it shall be stoned.” Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” But you have **come** to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the **heavenly** Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in **heaven**, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous **made** perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled **blood** that **speaks** a better word than the **blood** of Abel. 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**. 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**.” 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. 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, for our God is a consuming **fire**.

([ESV](#))

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