Leave Sinai. Come to Zion.

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[0:00] Music. We've made it very clear throughout the study that we are dealing with a Jewish church, hence the title, the epistle to the Hebrews, and that the church is located somewhere outside of Israel. Many theologians believe it was in or near Greece. This congregation had some believers, had some unbelievers who were searching, but had not as yet committed themselves to Christ.

There were all sorts of things that came into play for the as yet unsaved in this congregation.
For one thing, they were under tremendous pressure as they were being urged to make a break with the old covenant and embrace the new covenant.
What kind of pressure was keeping these people from coming to Christ? Well, actually, many of the same pressures was these people preventing them from coming to Christ.
And it's the same pressures that people face today when they're considering becoming a Christian.
They were pressured by their own belief system, pressured by traditions, the traditions they grew up with.
[2:06] And there was always fear of persecution. It was always hanging out there. They also faced criticism, ridicule, economic loss, sometimes in the extreme imprisonment, and in some cases martyrdom.

As these uncommitted considered coming to Christ, they were able to observe the committed believers around them, and many of them were suffering for their faith.
They were trying to function in a godless culture. But of course, there was a much greater danger that they were facing. It is more awesome than any persecution man can dream up.
Many of them risk falling into the hands of God's judgment. And everyone, believer and unbeliever, must one day stand before the judge of the universe and give an account.
And depending on where we stand with Christ, we will either be judged by the law or by grace. We will be judged by our own works or by the work of Christ on the cross.
[3:43] And as the writer to this epistle puts it, we will be judged by the provisions of Mount Sinai or Mount Zion.

The Word of God tells us the Lord keeps two sets of books. One set of books contains the names of the saved for all eternity.
It is called the Book of Life or the Lamb's Book of Life. We can read about that in the book of Revelation a few places. Those whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ.
And specifically by His finished work on the cross. He died for their sins and was raised that they may live forever with Him.
The basis of their salvation is not their righteousness. That gives me a great level of gratitude.
[5:04] It's not my righteousness that's going to get me there. They have none. I have none. It is based solely and completely on the righteousness of Christ.

But there's also another book called the Book of Works. Therein is recorded the deeds of lost humanity. And the best thing I can come up with as to why we would have to have a Book of Works is people that are dependent upon that will be shown that nothing they did came close to earning salvation.
Nothing they did could compare to the work of Christ in redemption.
In fact, all of their accumulative works will be compared to a filthy garment that is repugnant to our holy God.
All unbelievers should have a healthy fear, but not about the possibility of persecution.

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[6:26] When you study persecution, you find out that even in the extreme, it always is temporary. The greatest fear is the awaiting judgment of those who reject God and God's way.

No one need ever fear coming to Mount Zion. The great fear is turning your back on Zion and going back to Sinai.
And it's particularly bad when you want to cling to Sinai after having heard about the grace of God that came down from Mount Zion.
And this statement will make more sense as we move into our verses today. First, we're going to read is Hebrews 12, verses 18 to 21. 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.
These people were down there at the base of Mount Sinai. They didn't want to hear the voice of God. They didn't want to hear it. They were fearful.
[8:05] They told Moses, You do the talking for us. For they could not endure the order that was given. If even a beast, a cattle or lamb or I guess a family pet, breaks loose and touches the mountain, it will die.

It will die. And it was so terrifying that Moses said, I tremble with fear. In the Old Testament, which is another description for the Old Covenant, we read of Mount Sinai.
That is where God came down and spoke to Moses when He instituted the covenant. This was the covenant of law. You remember how Ten Commandments were written by Cecil B. DeMille up on the mountain in the great movie, The Ten Commandments?
Some of you young guys have probably never even seen that. We lived for that movie when I was growing up. Went down to the Arrow Theater. I couldn't remember the name, Mike.
The old Arrow Theater. Not even there. But the people were terrified. The Scriptures tell us they stood at a distance.
[9:37] They trembled with fear at the terror of the Lord who had come down. They feared that a moment's disobedience would bring instant annihilation.

They didn't want to hear the voice of God and instead asked Moses to intercede for them. And it's always interesting, and this is my translation, not King James, but Moses met with God on the mountain.
Moses had this conversation with God and he said, the people wanted me to tell you that if you'd give us a list of rules to live by, we'll keep every one of them.
And God said, you know what you're asking for. And Moses said, well, the people said, if we just had a list, we'll keep them all.
And God said, okay, I'll give you the list. Now get off this mountain. Take your shoes off. This is holy ground.
[10:56] Get off this mountain. This is a holy mountain. Tell the people, if they approach this mountain, I will kill them. And it said there was thunder and lightning and earthquakes and fire and smoke.

What was that? That was God under law. Not under grace. They'd been under grace for a long time.
It's called Abrahamic grace. But they wanted to be under law. And they didn't know what they were asking. They were asking. So we see God under the demands of the law.
The law required perfection. Perfection. And Sinai represents the law of the old covenant.
It was a mountain of fear. It was a mountain of judgment and of punishment. And the writer of Hebrews is warning the unconverted against going back to the system under the covenant of law.
[12:13] They couldn't keep that law for a moment. In fact, Moses went up to get the Ten Commandments and while he was up, they made a golden calf and worshipped it.

The law only ministered death. It ministered death. To come to the foot of Sinai is to come to doom. No man has ever lived up to the righteous demands of the law. It is at Sinai that sinful, fallen men stand unforgiven before a perfect God.
The law does not forgive. There's no provision in the law for forgiveness. It only demands. Do this, do this, do this. So terrifying was this law that the people of Israel heard it and when they looked up on that mountain, all they could see was darkness, fire, trembling, and trumpets of judgment.
Anyone wanting to place him or herself under the law as the standard of judgment has much to fear.

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[13:47] And even Moses trembled. Now, the writer of the book of Hebrews says, We are all free to flee to another mountain.

Flee to Zion. Mount Zion. Reading to you starting in verse 22.
Verse 22. 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 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.
And we need to thank our God and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, that there is another mountain. It is the mountain of the new covenant.
And it represents the heavenly Jerusalem, which one day will come down. Unlike Sinai, this mountain, Mount Zion, is approachable.
[15:40] Sinai symbolized law, but Zion symbolizes grace. Is there any more beautiful word anywhere in the universe than grace? Grace. Let me tell you how emphatically just how beautiful this word is.

Put this down in your mental file. No man or woman can be saved by law. Any man or woman can be saved by grace.
what a statement. The law confronts us with commandments, with judgments, and with condemnation.
Grace usher in forgiveness, atonement, and salvation. Mount Zion has stood for the grace of God since David conquered the Jebusites and placed the Ark of the Covenant on top of that mountain.
It has been considered the earthly dwelling place of God from the physical standpoint, it was the holiest place on earth until the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.
[17:13] When Solomon built the temple and placed the Ark in the side, Mount Zion was extended to include that area of the temple mount.

And eventually, Zion became synonymous with Jerusalem. the city of God. Sinai was fearsome and foreboding.
Zion is inviting and gracious. There's a large sign at Sinai that says no admittance. It's there, that sign is there because no one has met the divine requirements to enter.
But the sign over the entrance to Zion says whosoever may come. Quite a difference. No admittance, whosoever.
It is at Zion that we find forgiveness and eternal life. Now many of the Jews in this Hebrew congregation had come to Zion.
[18:34] They were already living on the mountain of God. They were positionally in the heavenly Jerusalem.

We who are followers of Christ are citizens of heaven now. our citizenship is in heaven. When Christ saves us and places us in Mount Zion we receive seven blessings recorded here.
Those blessings are the heavenly city, the general assembly, the church of the firstborn, God the judge of all, the spirits of righteous men made perfect, Jesus, and the sprinkled blood.
Now what are all these specifically? And the first thing we'll tackle is the heavenly city. The heavenly Jerusalem is the real heaven.
Joining with Christ is to become a citizen of heaven. It is the only way to become a citizen of heaven. There's no other way.
[19:52] From the very moment we are saved, we are spiritual citizens of heavenly places. We live out our life on this earth, but positionally we're with God in the heavenlies.

Our citizenship is there. We're citizens of heaven, but we only know that in part because we're still living on the earth.
We will enjoy full citizenship when the Lord Jesus comes back for us. Until then we serve Him as ambassadors in this place called earth.
As ambassadors we represent the sovereign king. That's what ambassadors do. They represent the head of a country. Be he a president, a king, whatever.
I always found it interesting. I believe in premillennialism when war is coming, by rule, ambassadors are allowed to go home.
[21:02] One day God is going to call His ambassadors home because there is going to be a war unlike any war that ever erupted on earth. And it's coming at us. Sinai is the mountain of bondage.

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And we seek a better place and that place is Zion where we are free in Christ. first. Then there's the general assembly. This phrase apparently refers to the myriads of angels that worship God in the heavenly city of God.
We shall be in the company of innumerable angels and participate with them in a great celebration of the king and what he alone has accomplished.
Now we do not worship angels. Instead we join with them in worshiping the true God who has created both them and us. We will join the angels of heaven in an eternal celebration of praise to our king.
and the Bible says angels are going to look at us in amazement because Christ didn't die for any angel. He died for us.
[22:24] And they're going to come up to any one of you in here and say what's that like? So be working on your answer now. What's that like?

Jesus died for you? Then we have the church of the firstborn. This is the body of Christ enrolled in heaven. It is another way of talking about true believers.
The firstborn are those promised an inheritance. We're all heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.
There is a book in which the sovereign Lord Jesus has recorded our names.
we are enrolled in heaven. And then the God, the judge of all. At Sinai, the Jew knew of God and trembled.
At Zion, we come face to face with God. And that thought, by the way, was incomprehensible to the Jew. This all became alive when at the crucifixion, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, signifying that men had direct access to God through the torn curtain or veil.
[23:50] And by the way, that was the flesh of Christ that was torn. from that moment on, access to God through the torn veil was open to anyone who came by way of the atoning work of the cross.

To come into God's presence at Sinai was death. to come into God's presence at Zion was eternal life.
And then we learn about the spirit of righteous men made perfect. These were the Old Testament saints.
when we get to heaven, we will join fellow believers there, people like Abel, Abraham, Moses, David, so many others.
And we will all be the great household of God. They were made righteous by looking forward to the cross.
[25:05] They didn't have the understanding we have, but they look forward to the cross. We are made righteous by looking back at the cross, but we all have in common the Christ of the cross.

And then when we get there, we see Jesus. We come to Jesus in the fullness of His beauty, in the fullness of His glory, He is the mediator of the new covenant.
He is referred to here by His name of redemption. Jesus means He who saves His people. His name is Jesus in the New Testament.
In the Old Testament, His name was Joshua. When we come to Mount Zion, we come to the only Redeemer of the universe.
There is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. And we see sprinkled blood.
[26:15] This refers to the blood of the atonement. When Christ shed His blood on the cross, He provided a covering for all who would believe.

we who were far off have brought near by the blood of Christ. That's what gives us access. Abel made a blood sacrifice to God.
But the blood of Jesus is vastly superior to that sacrifice. The sacrifice of Abel was acceptable to God because it was offered in faith.
but it had no atoning value. That has been provided by God alone through His Son. And then we see a response to the gospel beginning in verse 25.
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 us from heaven.
[27:33] 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 shaking. That is things that have been made in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

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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.
Now in closing out chapter 12 of Hebrews the writer says do not ignore and do not refuse the one who is speaking.
God used to speak through the prophets. He now speaks to us through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Men ignored God when He spoke to them from the earthly Sinai.
[28:52] How much more will they be held accountable for ignoring His voice through the work of Christ? God speaks warnings to us from heaven.

The time approaches when everything physical will be destroyed. Only eternal things will remain.
I heard MacArthur today talking about the destruction of the earth and creation of the new earth and he said people get all upset about the environment but they see what Jesus does with it.
The world is passing away. That is why we need to be joined to a kingdom that shall never pass away. Never going to pass away.
We should be busy storing up those things that are eternal and will remain after the fiery judgment of God. Remember our God is a consuming fire. I once saw that graphically displayed.
[30:07] Jesus was in heaven and he walked up to some guy and I'll use Bob's name. And he looked at Bob and he said Bob you remember that family that you shared me with them and then they were killed in that car wreck.

They're here because of that. He said do you remember that? And Bob said you know Lord I don't really remember that. And Jesus looked at him and says I remember it.
I'll never forget that. Boy that will speak to you. Physical things will be destroyed.
Eternal Eternal things will remain. For every person the choice is the same.
It doesn't matter if you're a Gentile to try to approach God by our works is to come to Sinai and there to discover that human works fall short and cannot save us.
[31:24] You may be the greatest person on earth. There are several of you in here tonight. But it will avail nothing with God. We must come to Zion and that can only happen through the precious blood of the Lamb.

So let go of Sinai. Come to Zion and be saved. Let's pray.
gracious God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the days grow shorter and the nights grow darker and I know that Jesus is coming back because He promised us.
that's a great thought for those that are in Him and a terrifying thought for family members that are not in Him.
Lord, how can we reach them only by Your grace and mercy? Oh, that we could take our families to Zion and leave Sinai behind.
[32:52] May it be so. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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