

Studies in Hebrews



Lesson XXII

Text: Chapter 12:18—29 (NIV)

¹⁸You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; ¹⁹to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, ²⁰because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned."^[a] ²¹The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."^[b]

²²But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, ²⁴to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

²⁵See 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? ²⁶At 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."^[c] ²⁷The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

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

Footnotes: a. Exodus 19:12,13 b. Deut. 9:19 c. Haggai 2:6 d. Deut. 4:24

Questions for Group Discussions

1. In our text, two mountains are presented as symbols of two great spiritual realities. What are these mountains and what do they represent to believers?
2. When Christians approach Mount Zion, how is it a different experience from the Hebrews approaching Mount Sinai? More importantly, *why* is it a different experience for believers because of the Cross?
3. Do you think verses 22-24 are referring to the experience of the Christian in the *here and now* or the *hereafter* (or both)?
4. At the same time we are encouraged to draw near to God in full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22), we are also exhorted to fear him (vv. 24-28). How do we reconcile these two concepts—fear and familiarity?
5. Practically speaking, how can we as worshippers and worship leaders better incorporate the principles of verses 28-29 into our corporate worship? What three attributes must be woven into our songs, prayers, communion, giving, and meditation on the Word?