



A Tale of Two Mountains

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You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.” The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.” But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant.

Hebrews 12:18-24 (selected verses)

Close your eyes for a second and imagine this. You’re standing in front of a HUGE mountain. You feel tiny—like an ant! But you’re not moving any closer, because this mountain is scary.

The ground is shaking under your feet. Flames shoot up the sides. Smoke rises so thick you cough and cover your face. Thunder crashes. Lightning flashes. A super-loud trumpet blasts in your ears. And then you hear God’s booming voice giving the Ten Commandments: “You shall have no other gods before me . . . You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God . . .” (Exodus 19–20).

That mountain was called Mount Sinai. It’s a real place in Egypt where God gave his law (think the Ten Commandments—part of what’s called the “old covenant”) to Moses and the Israelites 3,500 years ago. And the main feeling there was fear—because the people knew God’s law was perfect and they weren’t. It reminded them that sin brings punishment and death.

But now imagine a different mountain. This one isn’t scary, it’s beautiful. The sun is shining. You hear singing and laughter. There’s no smoke, no fire, no fear. Everyone is smiling and full of joy. Here there is life, not death. This is Mount Zion—and the Bible says this is where you belong right now because of Jesus (this is called the “new covenant”).

What’s the difference between the two mountains? On Mount Zion, Jesus has already done everything needed to save you. He kept the law perfectly for you. He took the punishment you deserved and replaced it with forgiveness, joy, and life that will last forever.

Because of Jesus, you don’t have to be afraid. You can live forever on his mountain safe and in his mercy and love!

Questions to Consider

If you were at Mount Sinai, which part would scare you most—fire, smoke, shaking ground, or God's booming voice? Why?

What does the "old covenant" mean? (Hint: it's about the law and the Ten Commandments.)

What's the "new covenant"? (Hint: it's about what Jesus did for you.)

Where do you see fear, condemnation, and death at Mount Sinai?

Where do you see joy, perfection, and life at Mount Zion?

Even though Jesus has already saved us, why do you think God still gives us the Ten Commandments?