

¹⁸ You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.” ²¹ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.” ²² But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

These Hebrew Christians had found Christ, the Promised Messiah. They had found joy and life in him. But then they found themselves in a dark place. Persecution of the Christian church was simmering. Their property/lives were in danger. The future looked dark. But they knew a path that would be safer.

They were tempted to seek safety by returning to Judaism, a legal religion, to return with the thought that they weren’t really going anywhere or leaving anything behind. They could tell themselves that they weren’t changing paths. They were sticking with the God of the Old Testament.

The writer to the Hebrews knew, however, they were in danger of getting lost. He tells them, “You don’t even know where you are!”

He will tell them about two different mountains. One should never be mistaken for the other. One is a place for dread and terror. The other is a place for joy.

He takes them back in Israel’s history to a mountain that he doesn’t need to call by name. They know it’s Sinai. His message is, “You’re not here! You don’t want to leave Christ and go back there.”

He’s taking them back to the time of the Exodus, when the Israelites were camped at the foot of Mount Sinai. (Chapters 19 and 20). There before them was a mountain that could be touched, but not without dying. The LORD had descended on Mount Sinai and revealed his glory.

Their senses were overwhelmed. They were overwhelmed.

- By what they saw: The mountain topped with fire; threatening darkness, gloom
- By what they felt: the hot wind swirling in a violent storm
- By what they heard: a trumpet blast and a voice so powerful and intimidating that they didn’t want to hear even one more word. Even Moses was trembling with fear.

The writer to the Hebrews tells them, “You’re not there!” We haven’t led you back to Sinai. We’ve pointed you to Christ.

You are here! At Mount Zion. A simple declaration. A spiritual reality, hidden from sight, but no less real. Reliable comfort for those struggling vs. the darkness. Here’s how the Bible speaks about your security. You’ve already arrived. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. You’ve been lifted up and seated with Christ.

- **You have come to Mount Zion,**
- not a physical place, but a gathering of people. **to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.**
- This is a place of celebration. Countless angels celebrating what God has given, not to them, but to us. **You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly.**
- To a gathering of the saints where everyone is an inheritor, a firstborn ²³ **to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.** You are safe, secure. Your name is written in heaven.

- You can stand before the judge of all, unafraid and unashamed. He has covered your guilt. He sees only the perfection of Christ. **You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,**
- You have come **to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.**

Take this scene in! You are here! This is how the Lord speaks to children frightened by the darkness. You have arrived at the foot of the mountain. Here's where we're at. **We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,**²⁹ for our **"God is a consuming fire."**

You have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God. With that citizenship comes responsibility. As we read in the following verses: **See 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?**

Don't turn away from him. Don't set aside his Word, by being selective, by paying attention only to what you want to hear. That is a constant temptation in this age where tolerance means no one can claim to have the truth.

I don't expect you'll be tempted to turn to Judaism. But you might find it less threatening to turn to a church that still calls itself "evangelical" and "Lutheran." When they met in Milwaukee in August, the ELCA approved a resolution saying they have to be careful in talking about other religions and the people who follow them. A brave lone voice reminded them of Jesus' claim, **I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** They would say there are many paths to the top of the mountain.

That is certainly a safe position to take in our time, but not before the God who says, **"You shall have no other gods."** That's clearly talking about other religions and the people who follow them.

No one wants to be labeled judgmental and unloving, but remember where you are. You have come to Mount Zion. Don't turn away.