

How Should We Worship?

[Hebrews 12:18-29](#)

Hebrews, Day 48

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.

- Hebrews 12:18-29, ESV

How would you describe your worship? Lively and joyful? Exciting? Reverent and sober? Grave? Half-hearted? Superficial? It seems that many churches either have worship that is rather formal and stiff or else worship that seems entertainment-driven, like a rock concert. Today's passage in Hebrews 12 is a stirring call to a deeply joyful, obedient, awe-struck, grateful and reverent worship that is as exalted and life-changing as the God we worship.

First, we're given a stirring contrast between the Old Covenant worship at the foot of Mount Sinai and the New Covenant worship at the foot of Mount Zion. The contrast could not be clearer, and yet the God we worship remains the same. Mount Sinai was a literal, physical mountain, one that could be touched. The scene of God's descent upon Sinai was so terrifying that Moses trembled with fear. God is holy, holy, holy, and He showed Himself on Sinai to be awe-ful in His holiness, as the senses of the people were overwhelmed with "*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.*"

Now, in Christ, as the gathered church, when we worship together on the Lord's Day, we do not gather around a physical mountain. Instead, we gather with the saints of God by the Holy Spirit at the foot of Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. We worship God together with the myriads of angels gathered around His throne in the great festal gathering. We worship with the glorified souls of the redeemed. We gather in the very presence of God and Jesus Christ, our mediator and high priest. Our gathering is both more joyful and more awe-ful, and our worship should reflect such transcendence.

Our worship must be obedient, responsive to the voice of the Lord speaking through His word. Our worship must be deeply thankful for the unshakable kingdom we have received by grace, that Christ

has secured for us by His death and resurrection. Our worship must be acceptable, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire!

What is completely inappropriate in such a gathering? Boredom! Half-hearted, distracted, semi-engaged, partial praise has no place in the New Jerusalem, in the throne room of God. How many times do we show up late for church, are distracted by thoughts of a hundred and one other things besides God, lamely limp our way through the singing, only listen half-way to the sermon, and then chat with our friends before going home, wondering what difference it really makes if we go to church or not? If our worship was more like Hebrews 12:18-29 describes, we wouldn't need to wonder. We would know the life-changing reality of a true encounter with the one true holy, awesome, living, consuming God!