



MESSAGE THREE: THE NEW COVENANT AND THE CROSS

SUGGESTED PASSAGE: Hebrews 12:18-27 (NASB)

18 For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, 19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. 20 For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned." 21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. 25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. 26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." 27 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message on **The Hope of the Cross for Today** is to find ultimate stability in the cross of Christ and the New Covenant He established, in the midst of an unstable world.

INTRODUCTION:

Many years ago, Marvin Gaye penned the lyrics of this song summarizing a number of the negative realities of the world, and asking the question, "What's going on?" He knew that something was amiss bringing havoc on many dimensions within our world and society.

A similar question is often asked by Christians. They wonder, "What's going on? What is happening?" As we look at the landscape of the society in which we live, a day does not go by where there does not seem to be more calamity, more chaos, more confusion, and even more uncertainty.

This uncertainty doesn't just occur in our society, though. There are countless numbers of people who are looking at their own personal lives and struggles and raising the question, "What is going on with me? What is happening in my life?"

In the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, the author is writing to Jewish Christians who are raising the very same question. They are about to enter into the most climactic time that their generation has ever experienced as Jerusalem is about to be besieged by Titus and his army. The temple will soon be destroyed and the dark clouds of despair have already gathered on the horizon. Later on in the book of Hebrews we even learn that some have been imprisoned while others have had their property confiscated.

As you might imagine, in the midst of the pain, turmoil, disruption and uncertainty, the question that emerges is, how is a person to respond to the chaos ensuing all around? Thus is the setting for the book of Hebrews.

SERMON POINTS:

1. LIFE BEFORE THE CROSS

Remember the Old Covenant (Hebrews 12:18-21)

- At Mt. Sinai, God established the old, Mosaic Covenant
- The Mosaic Covenant was ratified by the blood of animals

Recall God's holiness, which prevented the Israelites from approaching Mt. Sinai (Hebrews 12:18-21)

- Any man or beast who touched the mountain would be stoned
- Even Moses was afraid to climb the mountain

2. LIFE AFTER THE CROSS

Thank God for the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:22-24)

- The blood of Jesus ratified the New Covenant
- Because of the cross, we no longer live under the Old Covenant

Realize the display of God's holiness on the cross (Hebrews 12:22-24)

- God proved His holiness by pouring out His wrath on Jesus

our society's problem
is not solely our *government's* problem.
it is **the church's** problem.
it is *our* problem.





- Now we can approach God the Father with confidence because of Jesus Christ's death on the cross

3. NEW ENVIRONMENT OF THE CROSS

Start living in your new environment

- Before the cross, people lived with terror, trembling, and insecurity
- The cross moved us to a new city, a new realm, and a new relationship with God through Jesus (Hebrews 12:22-23)

Understand what Jesus Christ's blood accomplished

- In Genesis, after Cain murdered his brother, Abel's blood cried out from the ground for God's justice (Genesis 4:10)
- In the New Covenant, Jesus Christ's blood satisfied God's justice and is therefore better than Abel's blood (Hebrews 12:24)

4. STABILITY OF THE CROSS

Don't trust in relationships, money, or your own good works (Hebrews 12:21-25)

- Our world is unstable and can't provide ultimate security
- If your world has been shaken up, you're not alone

Trust in the cross (Hebrews 12:21-25)

- Only through faith in the cross can we find ultimate security
- Remember that you are part of the New Covenant community
- God has a purpose in allowing your life to get shaken up

5. ATTACH YOURSELF TO THE CROSS

Allow God to detach you from worldly things

- When life gets shaky, God's goal is to detach you from trust in the things that don't provide security (Hebrews 12:25)
- God speaks through the instability in your personal life – finances, relationships, etc.
- God speaks through the instability of our world – politics, weather, etc.

Allow God to attach you to the cross

- Accept the painful process of detachment from the

world, knowing that it will lead to attachment to the cross (Hebrews 12:27)

- The Israelites faced an uncertain situation when the Egyptian army and the Red Sea blocked them in (Exodus 14)
- Like the Israelites, we need God to erode our trust in earthly things so we can see our need for heavenly things (Haggai 2:6-7)

6. THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE CROSS

Fix your eyes on the stability of the cross

- When the walls of Jericho crumbled, Rahab's house didn't because she trusted in the God of the Israelites (Joshua 2:15)
- When your life crumbles, trust the promise of the New Covenant and you won't crumble

Allow God to continually remove unstable things from your life

- Remember that God will continue to "shake" your life so that you put your trust in Him, not in money, careers, relationships, etc.
- God will always prove Himself to be the most stable foundation—for eternity

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

LIFE BEFORE THE CROSS: When Tony Evans was a young child and an enormous thunderstorm would develop outside, his grandmother would always make him turn off the television or the radio because, as she put it, "God is talking." So they would all sit there in the silence as "God talked." Actually, it was just thunder, but the principle holds true when things become shaky in your life. God is talking and He wants you to listen.

LIFE AFTER THE CROSS: You are not living at Mt. Sinai where there is terror, trembling, insecurity and where you are being uprooted. That is not your home as a believer in Jesus Christ because of what Jesus accomplished at the cross. Why? Because the blood of Jesus Christ has orchestrated a New Covenant. Therefore, you are functioning underneath the umbrella of a whole new realm, and a whole new way of life in that Jesus has served as Mediator between you and God. Through Christ's atoning blood, God has set up a brand new arrangement whereby He is covenantally committed to you.





STABILITY OF THE CROSS: When you wake up in the morning and you need to wear a nice outfit to work or to church, you will often want to iron your clothes before putting them on. This is because you don't want wrinkled clothing to reflect you poorly to those around you. So what you do is take out your iron, plug it in and let it get too hot to the touch. Then you slowly move it back and forth over the wrinkles in your clothes. Your clothes feel the heat, the pressure and the sting of the iron. You aren't putting the hot iron on your clothes because you want to burn them. You are not trying to be mean. You are simply trying to improve them and return them to their intended look. Your iron becomes a consuming fire. It doesn't consume the clothes, it consumes the wrinkles in the clothes.

ATTACH YOURSELF TO THE CROSS: The writer of Hebrews quotes the prophet Haggai where God references that He is going to shake things up in order to transfer things over. An easy way to get a picture of this is by comparing it to a child's piggy bank. The child's piggy bank would need to be shaken and shaken in order to get out the valuable items from within it. God says He is going to "shake" things up in order to shake something loose from one realm and deliver it to another, His own.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE CROSS: What the blood of Christ did on the cross was mediate a new arrangement – a new realm – that God has with every believer, as well as with His church. That new arrangement is called the New Covenant. Yet in order for this New Covenant to manifest itself in your life, God needs to first disconnect you from the illegitimate blockages in the arteries of your spirit. He needs to remove your attachment and dependency on that which is not Him. God has to remove that attachment because it is standing in the way of your relationship to Him.

BACKGROUND BIBLICAL HISTORY AND CULTURE:

MT. SINAI: "On Mt. Sinai, God spoke to Israel in the Old Testament (Exodus 19). When God had come down and spoken prior to giving the Ten Commandments, it was a sight to behold as the mountain began to smoke and quake. All of the environmental aspects happened in order to let the people know how serious a moment it was. God's presence on the mountain shook the entire mountain so much that the people ran away, did not want to listen, and even Moses himself trembled."

MT. ZION: In the Old Testament, Mt. Zion seems to be equated with Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:31). King David calls Zion both the mountain of God and the city of God (Psalm 2:6; 48:1-14). Isaiah refers to Mt. Zion as the mountain in Jerusalem from which God would one day reign (Isaiah 24:23). And according to Revelation 21:10, the heavenly Jerusalem, Mt. Zion (Hebrews 12:22), will descend and God's dwelling will be on earth. "On Mt. Zion, we are introduced to the New Covenant given to us by the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross. It is under the tenants and truths of Mt. Zion that Christians live today. It is precisely because of the cross of Jesus Christ that we no longer live in light of Mt. Sinai."

NEW COVENANT: In Jeremiah 31:31-34, God promised to institute a New Covenant in which He would write His law on His peoples' hearts and forgive all their sins. Through the cross of Christ, this New Covenant has been established. Now Jesus serves as the only mediator of the New Covenant between humans and God.

SERMON LINES:

This sermon will help you trust the stability of the New Covenant when the world around us crumbles.

This sermon will outline five aspects of New Covenant living that will help us detach from worldly things and attach to the cross.

QUOTES ATTRIBUTED TO DR. TONY EVANS:

"While things around you may become shaky, when you fix your eyes on Jesus you will remember the promise of His covenant and that you belong to an unshakeable kingdom."

"The trials in your life are there to reveal the treasure of the new covenant and the stability and permanence that comes with alignment under God."

"When things in your life seem messed up, shaken or are uncertain, you need to view God and His relationship with you through the lens of this new arrangement—the cross—or you will get it all wrong."

"God's goal is not simply to announce His presence and lead you to fear, awe and trembling to such a degree that you beg Him to leave because you cannot bear it. No, rather it is to announce His presence in order to draw you close to Him"





because He has something that He wants to not only tell you but also to do in you."

"Frequently, when God is ready to do something new in our lives, He knows that we are not ready for it. . . . Because we are not ready, He makes us ready. A separation to what we previously depended upon must occur so that we will not only look to Him but be able to see Him."

"When God either allows or creates discontinuity in your life, He is speaking. . . . What He is saying is that He wants to disconnect you from the things, thoughts, or people of this world order so that He can reveal to you eternal things."

"As long as you are too attached, or too dependent, on anything other than God and His relationship with you, you are not hearing Him which means He must continue to turn up the heat in your life."

"Friend, if you are only looking at the stock-market pages, the banking system, your job, co-workers, family members, health, relationships, or that which you can see – you are looking at things which can be affected by what goes on around them. If that is all you can see, you will be shaken."

"Our God is a consuming fire. He renders discipline on that which does not belong in our lives in order to remove that which can be shaken so that we can fully experience the unshakeable stability of Him."

