

**Worship Material**  
**Awesome!**  
**Material from Roots Bible Study**  
**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Lord, we long to worship and praise you  
in all your majesty, mystery and power.  
You are greater than we can understand or imagine.  
You are awesome!  
Yet we thank you that, through Jesus,  
we can approach you with confidence and joy.  
**Amen.**

**Read Hebrews 12:18-29**

This passage is part of a section (12:14-29) praising the grace of God, the free gift of God's love, which sets us on the path to holiness and enables us to keep going. It draws on a complex set of contrasts between Old and New Testament imagery. The writer first describes the terrifying sight of Mount Sinai, where God gave the Israelites the Law (Exodus 19:9-25; Deuteronomy 9:19). He contrasts this with the destination of Christians. Mount Zion was another name for Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:6-9), chosen by David to be the home of the Ark of the Covenant. It was a place of rejoicing (2 Samuel 6:12-15). The second, heavenly Jerusalem, where God makes a home with humankind (Revelation 21:1-4), is equally a place of celebration – even the angels are partying (v.22; the phrase 'festal gathering' describes a happy, joyful festival). This is the home of the new Israel, where believers join with the people of faith who lived before Christ in a celebration of God, who offers them a renewed covenant relationship, mediated through Jesus, whose blood sets us free from sin (10:19-22).

The writer moves on to encourage his hearers again to accept God's invitation. Just as the divine voice shook the earth at Sinai (Exodus 19:18), so the voice from heaven will shake the whole universe. This one-off shaking (cf Haggai 2:6) will sieve out the stuff of creation, leaving only the eternal reality of God's kingdom. This image, along with the reference to 'consuming fire' (v.29; cf Deuteronomy 4:24) describes God's judgement in ways that are unusual in

New Testament thinking. Rather than expecting creation to come to a complete end, we hear mainly of a recreated heaven and earth, where everything is made new (Revelation 21:5). Both understandings of renewal lead to praise and thanksgiving to an awesome God.

### **Prayer**

Eternal God, we praise you for your humility and love:  
which draws us into your presence, though we are not worthy;  
which delights at our worship, though it is not perfect;  
which rejoices at our faith, though it is fragile;  
which celebrates our lives, though they are flawed.  
We praise you and thank you, for being so wonderful,  
wise and loving.

**Amen.**

### **A prayer to conclude**

Lord of awe and wonder,  
Lord of gentleness and strength,  
Lord of joy and celebration,  
we go out into the world with you.

**Amen.**