

Mt Sinai or Mt Zion: Hebrews 12: 18-29

All right, we're continuing with the Book of Hebrews. We're on the 12th chapter. We'll begin reading in verses 18-24, "For you have not come to a *mountain* that may be touched and to blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which *sound was that* those who heard begged that no further words should be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, 'IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED.' And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling.' But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly," I think that should be as the marginal note indicates, to angels, to myriad of angels in festal assembly, "and to the church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood, that speaks better than the blood of Abel."

Verse 25-29, "So see 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 *shall we escape* who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the Earth then, but now He has promised saying, 'YET ONCE MORE WILL I SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN.' And this *expression*, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire."

I think verse 18-24 is a summary of the whole Book of Hebrews. This is what we have been talking about for weeks. He has been comparing the old with the new. Now he compares Mount Sinai with Mount Zion. So here is a comparison which summarizes all he has been saying in the Book of Hebrews. Verse 18-21, Mount Sinai, verse 22-24, Mount Zion.

Now Mt Sinai represents the old system. The system that he's been discussing that had its priesthood, and its offerings, and its sacrifices, and its ritual. It represents a system that was purely physical. It was narrow and restrictive. It applied only to the Jewish nation. And the sad thing about it in the Book of Hebrews is the whole system was under the judgment of God. In that system that he's describing, God is unapproachable. "The mountain," he said, "you came to could not be touched." It was a blazing fire, it was full of darkness, and gloom, and whirlwind. There was the sound of the trumpet, and the sound of words, which the people could not bear to hear. It was based upon fear. Even Moses when he looked at the sight of what was happening at the giving of the law, "Even Moses," he said, "said, 'I am full of fear and trembling,'" because he knew he was in the presence of God, and God was unapproachable. You didn't just walk up into the presence of God.

This was a system which was obsolete and was passing away. He pointed that out in chapter 8:13 when he said, "A new covenant, He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear." And as I said it was a system which had absolutely no spiritual value. Chapter 10:1, "For the law, since it was only a shadow of good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, can never make

perfect those who draw near." It can never answer man's problem of sin. It can never make him a better person, or really bring him any closer to God. That was the old system. The system before the cross.

Now the interesting thing here is, that these Christians had to be told that they were not a part of that system. "You have not come to that mountain." You're not a part any longer, you're not a part of that Old Testament systems under the law. That's what he's been arguing throughout the book. It has now spiritual value. It cannot take away sin. It cannot give forgiveness. It cannot bring you any closer to God. And he has spent the whole book telling them that. And now he summarizes it and says, "You're not a part of that system."

Now, Mount Zion on the other hand, beginning in verse 22, Mount Zion represents something, which to use Paul's description of God's ability in Ephesians 3:10, Mount Zion represents something that is exceeding, abundantly beyond all that we can even ask or think. We can't even begin to describe what Mount Zion is, especially when we try to compare it with Mount Sinai. Mount Zion, he says, "is the city of the living God. It is the heavenly, or the spiritual Jerusalem." It's the New Jerusalem. Mount Zion is the fulfillment of all that God has been doing from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Acts. Mount Zion represents the whole plan and purpose of God, which He started in the garden when He said to Satan, "I will put enmity between your seed and the seed of the woman. You'll bruise His heel, but He'll bruise your head." The first prophecy concerning the Messiah and the coming kingdom. And Mount Zion is the fulfillment of all that happened from that time until the day of Pentecost.

He describes it here as being not only the city of the living God and the heavenly Jerusalem, but he said, "You have come to myriads of angels in festal array, or festal assembly," as a lot of versions put it. "You have come before myriads and myriads of angels." Now in the Old Testament, the angels were the instruments of judgment when they brought the wrath of God upon the enemy. But in the New Testament, we have come to myriads and myriads of angels who are in festive assembly, and the Book of Hebrews says they are simply our servants. They are our servants. "They are sent forth to minister to those who inherit salvation," chapter 2:14. "And you have come to the church of the first-born ones who are enrolled in heaven."

Now if you go back and read about names being enrolled in heaven, or names being written in a book, Moses for example begs God to not blot out the names of the children of Israel from His book. John sees a book of life, and we talk about being written in the book. He said here, "The names of the church of the first-born ones are enrolled in heaven." I think that's simply a reference to the fulfillment of God's sovereign choice and election of His people. He knows who they are. He has called them and He has chosen them. They are a part of His plan and purpose. And then he said, "You have come to God, the judge of all." The emphasis, I think, is upon the all. And this is saying that God is dealing with all people, both Jews and Gentiles. Mount Zion is not restrictive and He's not dealing with just one people. He's the judge of all, both Jew and Gentile.

And then he says, "You have come to the spirits of righteous men made perfect." Righteous men who are made perfect. Now he has stated, when talking about the promise of God in chapter 11, that all of these that he mentioned there died in faith, without receiving what was promised, because God

provided something better for us. That apart from us they should not be made perfect. He's talking about those people. They are not yet made perfect. We are not yet made perfect. We have not yet received our new and our perfect body. That's our hope, a new body, described in 1 Corinthians 15.

But here he said, "You have come to the spirits, the spirits of just men made perfect." Zion in contrast with Sinai is spiritual. God has justified us in spirit. Our inner man, our spiritual man, has been born again. We are righteous in spirit. The flesh is not yet perfected. The flesh is destined to die, and God is going to give this righteous spirit a new body. So, Zion speaks of that which is spiritual, and not that which is physical. We are justified or made righteous in spirit.

We have come to Jesus, "the mediator of the new covenant." Zion represents a new covenant, the covenant that God promised Abraham, the covenant that He made in eternity with Christ. Our life is based upon covenant and not ceremony. And Christ, Jesus is the mediator of this covenant. He is the one who makes it happen. It doesn't depend on us and our keeping the law, or our keeping sacrifices and ritual. It depends upon Christ as the mediator.

"And we have come to His blood," he said, "His sprinkled blood which speaks better than the blood of Abel." His blood speaks of complete redemption. That's what he's been talking about in the book. Complete and whole redemption which brings us into the very presence of God. It's all upon the basis of His blood. Abel's blood cries out from the ground and it cries out for vengeance. And that's what we have in Mount Sinai. But in Mount Zion it is Christ's blood, and Christ's blood cries out redemption and forgiveness.

And now again, he has to tell these Christian people that they have come to all of this. He has to remind them they have not come to Mount Sinai, they are not a part of the old system. And he has to tell them what they have come to. "You have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God and to the heavenly Jerusalem."

There are two important things that I want you to see here. The first one is, "you have come." You are there. You're not going to Zion, you're not marching to Zion, "you have come" to Zion. You're not looking for a city, you have come to the city. And it's the city of the living God. It's the heavenly Jerusalem, the spiritual Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem. You have come. That's what he's been talking about in the whole book. The way has been opened so that you can come into the very presence of the Father. You can experience what Paul calls sitting with Christ in heavenly places. You have come.

And the second thing that he says is, he tells them where they have come to. "You have come to Mount Zion which is the city of the living God, which is the heavenly Jerusalem." Now I want you to get this. "You have come to Mount Zion, you have come to the city of the living God, you have come to the New Jerusalem." The Book of Revelation pictures this in symbols. The 14th chapter of Revelation and verse 14, "And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion," the Lamb has got to be Christ. He is standing on Mount Zion and the Hebrew writer said, "You have come to Mount Zion." And with him are 144,000 who have His name and the name of His Father written upon their foreheads.

Now the Jehovah's Witness can argue about this all they want to, and the prophecy teachers can tell you all they want about who these 144,000 are. But let's let John tell us who they are. First of all, they're the ones who wear His name and the name of His Father. Who does that describe but His church? Down in verse 3 of Revelation 14, he says, "the 144,000 have been purchased from the Earth." Who has been purchased from the Earth but the Christian? We are the ones who have been purchased. "These are the ones who have not defiled themselves," the picture is "these are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they are celibates (they have lived a moral upright life). These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb." Who's been purchased? He has purchased His church with His own blood. We have been purchased. "No lie was found in their mouth and they are blameless." Who is blameless? Read the Book of Romans and you'll see there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. The 144,000 picture the people of God, or the church. That's who they are.

Now go over to Revelation 21, and get your eyes open. Verses 1-3, "And I saw a new heaven and a new Earth; for the first heaven and the first Earth was passed away, and there was no longer *any* sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." I saw, John saw in symbolic form, I saw a picture of the holy city. I saw a picture of the New Jerusalem. And the Hebrew writer said, "You have come to the city of living God." John sees that city. You have come to the new Jerusalem, you have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. John sees it coming down out of heaven from God made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. Verse 3, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold (look, understand this), the tabernacle of God is among men.'" God is among men. That's what the prophecies all said. "I will dwell in them and they will be my people." I don't know how we got it so twisted around that all we can think about is going up. All we can think about is going to heaven whenever heaven has come to us. "Behold," he said, Look, Understand, God is dwelling among men. "And He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them."

Go down to verse 9, "And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, 'Come here, (I want to show you something) I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.'" I am going to show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great high mountain, and showed me (the bride, the wife of the Lamb) he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." And then he goes on and describes that holy city.

And we have been led to believe by prophecy teachers who have been talking through their hat that this is some kind of literal city off in the heavens somewhere, in the atmosphere beyond our galaxy, and they tell us that's where we're going to go when Jesus returns. But John said, "I'm going to show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he showed him the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of God from heaven to the Earth, and then he describes it.

Who's the bride of the Lamb? The bride of the Lamb is the church. The holy city is the people of God. The New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband is the people of God. You have not come to Mount Sinai, you have come to Mt Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem. You

have come to the city of God. That's what you have come to, you are not going to the city of God, the city of God has come down, and you have come to the city of God to the New Jerusalem.

Now, we're not going to deal with the description of this city now, but we will later. John describes it for us very well. What I want to deal with today are the questions: are we any more aware of this truth than these people were 2,000 years ago? And does it really make any difference?

Now the point is: Hebrews 12, verse 22, I think sums up his main argument in the Book of Hebrews. "You have come to Mount Zion to the city of the living God, to the New Jerusalem." That is what he has been talking about in the entire book Hebrews. In chapter 11:10, he said, "Abraham looked for it, the prophets spoke about it, the psalmists sang about it." And the Hebrew writer describes it in reality here, and The Book of Revelation describes it in symbols and signs. It is the fulfillment of all that God is doing upon the Earth. And evidently, these people could not believe it or accept it, until they experienced the physical destruction of Jerusalem, in verse 26, "I'm going to shake the Earth and the heavens." Evidently God had to do that before they could receive the kingdom which could not be shaken.

Now . . . this is the key, I think, to the life of the church today, and you will not find this in any standard publishing company literature. And you'll not find it in any books that our big preachers sell. In fact, I don't know where you'll find it. But I think this is the key, not only to the Book of Hebrews, but the key to the life of the church . . . to realize that we have come to Mount Zion, that we have come to city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem.

If we don't accept that, if we don't accept the fact that we have already come to Zion, that we have come to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and if we don't accept the fact that city of God and the heavenly Jerusalem is the church, then we might as well throw away the Book of Hebrews. Because it doesn't have anything to say to us. And I think the problems of Conservative Christianity today, and of the church today, is that we don't know this, and we don't believe this. We don't believe it. And that's where a lot of our problems come from.

No wonder I can visit a church in Starke, Florida, and the choir is standing and singing with faces as long as Farmer Brown's mule, and a little boy asked Farmer Brown, or asked his daddy, said, "Is Farmer Brown's mule a Christian?" And he said, "Why in the world would you ask such a question as that?" And he said, "Well, Farmer Brown's mule is as long as some Christians' faces. So I thought maybe he was a Christian."

So no wonder people are going through life with no joy, with the look of unhappiness on their face. No joy in serving the Lord, gloom and doom and darkness. Because they don't have anything here in this life. It's a hard struggle here, and we don't have anything here, because we have been taught our entire life, in fact for the last 2,000 years, it's all over yonder. And we're not going to get it until we get over yonder. No wonder they're sad, no wonder there's no joy, no wonder there's gloom, and doom, and darkness . . . if we don't have anything to help us in this struggle, if we have to wait until we die to get it, no wonder we're sad. And no wonder the world looks upon us as a bunch of mules.

If we don't understand this and don't accept it, the abundant life that Jesus talked about, "I came that

they might have life and have it abundantly," if this abundant life is not for now, then the grave becomes our idol. We will only have abundant life whenever we die. So, the grave, and not Jesus Christ, becomes the giver of life, See? Victory is not now, the devil and his crowd has taken over, and there's no victory for the church now. No wonder Hal Lindsay books are so popular. This is the late great planet Earth, and we can't do anything about it because the devil has taken over. The devil hasn't taken over, we have given it to him! We don't want it, and we think it will be so bad that God doesn't want it either . . . He is going to blow it up and end it all, and take us out of it (rapture), hallelujah.

God didn't create this Earth to give it to Satan, or to blow it up, or to take us out of it. He wants to get us into the world, and not out of it. The lies (and there are more) hold us in bondage by our belief that we won't have victory until we die. That is ironic to me. Death is said to be our enemy, and yet death is when we're going to get victory? Death is going to give us victory? Pompous preachers stand at funerals and tell the grieving family members that death is not real, that death is their friend, that the dead person has passed over into victory, that death has given them victory over the sufferings of this life. Death doesn't give victory. Jesus Christ gives victory. Death is our enemy.

So we sing, I won't have to worry anymore . . . You don't have to worry now. Everybody will be happy over there . . . You ought to be happy now. Happiness is not over yonder, happiness is in the joy of knowing the Lord. O land of rest, for thee I sigh . . . He is our rest. We have, the Hebrews writer says, "Entered into that rest." Oh well, we'll understand it better by and by . . . Paul said, "He has given us His in order that we might know the things of God." And he commands us, "Understand what the will of the Lord is." He didn't say, Wait until we get over yonder and I'll show it to you. He said, Understand it now, walk in it, and live in it.

I've got a mansion over there, I just can't wait till I get there . . . Jesus says, "You are the mansion and God dwells in you." There will be peace in the valley . . . Jesus said, "I give you my peace" (but we won't take it), "I give you My peace, My peace I leave with you." And then the old classic, I'll Fly Away . . . Jesus never told us to fly away (or be raptured), He never promised us to fly away. He said, Stand, in the midst of an unbelieving generation, and witness, and be alive, and show the world that the power of God is present in you.

Now the questions is, do we really take this seriously, or is it just an idiosyncrasy? But do we take it seriously? Or does it mean something to you, do you really take it seriously? Is it serious enough to get our attention and to give attention to? No wonder the church is so materialistic. It has a materialistic hope in a materialistic heaven. And whether or not we believe we have come, and whether or not we believe the city, the New Jerusalem is the church determines our Christian lifestyle.

I like that phrase, Christian lifestyle because there's a lot of different lifestyles. If we believe that we have all things that pertain to life and godliness, which Peter says He has given us, if we believe what Paul says when He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, if we believe that we have the mind of Christ, and the power of the Spirit, and if we believe that He is present with us and living in His people, then are we going to use all of this that we have, which the Hebrew writer calls the resources of heaven, which are ours, **are we going to use that to try to get somewhere**

over yonder whenever we die, or are we going to use it to do something for God while we live?

If you're spending all of your time trying to be good enough to get into heaven, you're not going to be able to do much while you're here upon the Earth. He said, "Pray Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Pray that Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven." God wants to transplant heaven to earth, and that's what He's going to do. We may not be here to see it, but Isaiah 64, 65, and 66 says it's coming.

It's the difference in defeat and victory. The church is not something just to help us get through life. It is God's source of power in the world. And we should add, it's God's only source of power in the world. And if God does anything in the world, He is going to do it through His church, because the church is the body of Christ. And whatever the head determines, the body will do. I'm convinced I'll not see it, and my children and grandchildren won't see it, but I'm convinced that the knowledge of the Lord will cover the Earth as the waters cover the sea. The Earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord. It's going to take some time, but it's going to get there. (We are no farther along in our belief in God and understanding His Word than we were 2,000 years ago, but it will get here).

So no wonder people shop so much for different churches. They don't like something in one church, they can leave and go to another one, or threaten to leave and go to another. No wonder there's so many different denominations, because people don't have any sense of what God is doing in the church. If we have the idea that the church is just to help us make it through, then we're going to try to pick the church that will do the most for us to get through, not how much we can do for God in this world.

So we demand that the church raise our children, or we find a church that gives us social status, or one where we can impress the world with it, a church that can make us feel good, or a church that can entertain us. No wonder you see so much apathy and nonchalance, and unconcern, take it or leave it attitude, lifelessness in the church, o today and off tomorrow . . . we are looking for bargains, not for war and conflict. We have come to Mount Sinai, instead of Mount Zion . . . no wonder people look upon the church as they do, from the outside. You have come to Mount Zion, and that means something, and we'll be talking about that.

Right now, let's conclude with verse 25. If all of this is true, he said, "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking." Don't refuse Him who is speaking, listen to what He is saying. He has said throughout this book that the way into the holy place has been opened for us, and we have access to the throne of God. We are a part of the new covenant, and because Jesus is the mediator and the guarantee of the covenant, then we have all of heaven at our disposal. This is what He tells us, "See that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those who did not escape when they refused him who warned upon the earth (that was Moses and the law), much less *shall we escape* who turn away from Him who warns from heaven." It's God Almighty Himself who is speaking. And His voice was able to shake the Earth then, He is going to shake it again. And in the midst of all this shaking, and let me say you better get a hold of something in your life that can't be shaken, because most everything you see and most everything we are acquainted with in this earthly life can be shaken and is being shaken, or it will be shaken. And the only thing that cannot be shaken, he said, is the kingdom. "Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let's show gratitude to God, by

which we may offer to God an acceptable service," that's what God wants, offer Him acceptable service . . . God wants service, because "our God is a consuming fire."

Now, what I'm saying is, we had better listen to what God is saying about who we are, and where we are, and where we have come to, and what we have come to, because all of that explains what God is doing in the world through the church.