

THE MEANING OF ZION: Hebrews 12: 22

We are in Hebrews, chapter 12, beginning in verse 22, he said, "You have come to Mount Zion." We are not marching to Zion, we have come (past tense) to Mount Zion, we are already there by faith. He identifies Mount Zion as the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

The book of Revelation identifies the city, the new Jerusalem, as the bride of Christ. And Paul identifies the bride of Christ as the church. So, you have come to the church, you have come to Mount Zion, or to the kingdom of God.

Now to understand Zion, we need to go back in the Old Testament to the beginning, when it is first mentioned, and see how it developed into a prophetic model of the coming kingdom. II Samuel 5, reading verses 7 and 9, "David captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David." David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. David built all around from Milo inward. Over in II Samuel chapter 6, verse 2, "David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baalah, Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name, very name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim." And then bringing up the ark is described. There is some delay because of Uzzah's death and touching the ark, and the ark rests in a farm house for about 20 years before it's finally brought home.

And David comes with much praise and leaping and dancing and shouting as the ark is brought back. In chapter 6, verse 17, "So they brought the Ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent, which David had pitched for it." Now understand what we're saying here. David brings the ark of the Lord back from captivity, it had been in captivity, it had been captured by the Philistines, and David brings it back into Palestine and places it in a tent he built for it on Mount Zion. David positioned the ark on Mount Zion (Jerusalem), knowing the Lord's tabernacle and priests were in Gibeon, approximately 5 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

Go over to I Chronicles 16:39-40, "*He left Zadok, the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place, which was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar of burnt offering continually morning and evening, according to all that is written in the law of the Lord, which He commanded Israel.*" Now in chapter 21, verse 29, it says, "*For the tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were in the high place at Gibeon at that time.*"

The ark was a symbol of the throne of God. It was symbolic of the presence of God among the people. It was the place where God would commune and fellowship with the nation. It represented the glory of God in Israel. **To have a Holy place without the ark was to have a nation that did not know the glory and the presence of God. It was like a nation without a king. It was having religion without the presence of God. Without the ark, there was no glory and there was no presence of God among the people.** The Philistines had captured the ark and put in their temple of Dagon. It had been out of Israel for nearly a hundred years, since the time of Eli . . . all during the reign of Samuel, as a prophet, and during the time of Saul, as king over Israel, there was no ark in Israel. For more than 100 years, the tabernacle continued its

sacrifices and offerings without the ark of the covenant. And for the last 20 years before David became King and brought the ark to Mt Zion (Jerusalem), the ark had been sitting in a farmhouse in Baalah, Judah, while the worship of Israel occurred at Gibeon, in the tabernacle that had come out of Egypt, or had come out of the wilderness, in the day of Moses. And when David brought back the ark, he did not take it to Gibeon, he placed it to Mt Zion, the City of David.

By placing the ark in the new Holy of Holies in a tent David had built on Mt Zion, instead of placing it in the tabernacle 5 miles to the northwest in Gibeon, God initiated through David a drastic and unparalleled break from all that had gone on before in Israel, the ark was always in the tabernacle . . . and in chapter 22, the Hebrew writer is telling us when Christ ascended and God accepted His sacrifice, God initiated through Christ a similarly drastic and unparalleled break by telling us in verse 22, "But you have come to Mt Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . ." An epic change has occurred as a result of Christ's ascension, and for 2,000 years we have missed this change just like the religious leaders in Gibeon missed it.

Zion exists today, but without faith to enter in and receive all that God has made available for us now in Christ (don't wait until you get over yonder), Zion exists in the midst of a lot of religious ritualism that is going on with no power and no glory compared to what God has intended for us. In Christ, God has made us both Kings and Priests over 2,000 years ago at Christ's ascension, but no religious leader has intervened, by either faith or confidence, to teach us about this change, and none of our modern and enlightened religious leaders have the faith or confidence to correct our spiritual course today! That's sad.

In Gibeon, Israel had the ritualism, all the offerings and the sacrifices, the priesthood, the burning of incense, and that had been going on for generations without the ark and without the glory of God. But when David brought the ark back, and placed it on Mount Zion, God's presence in the ark began to be known. No wonder David danced and worshiped and shouted when he brought the ark back. It was a symbol of the presence of the glory of the Lord. It meant that the Lord was taking His true place in the center of the nation.

In Psalm 24, verse 9, the latter part, when it talks about the King of glory coming in, "Lift up your heads . . . that the King of glory may come in," some say that song was written as David brought the ark back and placed it on Mount Zion. The worship then that began on Mount Zion under David, was unparalleled in praise and in glory, and in the later years, years after David had passed from the scene, the prophets summed up this event in Zephaniah 3, verses 14-17, "Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O Israel. Rejoice and exalt with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away *His* judgments against you. He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst." They could say that because the ark of the covenant was there. "The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst (He abides on Mount Zion); you will fear no more disaster. In that day it will be said of Jerusalem: Do not be afraid, O Zion; do not let your hands fall limp. The Lord your God is in your midst."

This is a prophecy of what Zion represented. It's a prophecy of what's coming, when the Messiah comes. He will come to Zion. Zion will become a reality. Verse 17, "The Lord your

God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exalt over you with joy. He will be quiet in His love. He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.” That is a description of Zion.

So Jerusalem became known then as the city of God. It was no accident that it became known as the city of God because that is where David placed the ark of the covenant, and that is where God's presence was. The tabernacle was up at Gibeon, the priests were up at Gibeon, the sacrifices were being offered at Gibeon, but the Lord's presence and His glory was on Mount Zion, in Jerusalem. So Zion and Jerusalem were referred to as the Holy Hill of Zion. The hill of the Lord. It was called the Mountain of the Lord's house. And Israel was referred to as the virgin daughter of Zion. The Psalms constantly praised God for His presence in Zion.

Let me go back and read for you Psalm 132, verse 13, “For the Lord has chosen Zion,” Zion becomes a prophecy of the coming kingdom. It becomes a prophecy of the church. “He has desired it (Zion) for His habitation.” The Lord dwelt where the ark of the covenant was, and the ark of the covenant was in Zion, so the Lord was dwelling in Zion as far as the Israelites were concerned. But the prophets and the psalmists are writing of a day coming whenever Zion will become a reality, it will not be a place, it will be a kingdom, and the Lord has desired it for His habitation. Verse 14, “This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.”

What God desires above everything else is that He might dwell in his people. Verses 15-17, “I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needs with bread. Her priests also I will clothe with salvation; and her godly ones will sing aloud for joy. There will I cause the horn of David to bring forth, I have prepared a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon Himself His crown will shine.” That is the prophecy concerning the church, and it is called Zion.

The prophets prophesied of a King coming out of the Zion, and ruling from Zion. Zechariah, chapter 9, verses 9-10, this is a familiar passage which is quoted for us from the Old Testament, but listen to what he says, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea.” This is not just a local thing. This is not physical Jerusalem He is talking about now. This is Zion, “His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.” To the prophets, Zion became a picture of the ruling king, and it all started on the Hill above Jerusalem where David set the ark.

But then later on in the history of Israel, they built a temple. The temple was built in Jerusalem, the ark was placed in the temple behind the veil, and it was seen only once a year by the priest. **But the prophets, get this, the prophets never forgot Zion. They never forgot that time when David brought the ark back and what happened about that Hill outside of Jerusalem.** It wasn't the priest offering sacrifices. It wasn't the tabernacle worship. What happened in Zion was a small piece of history that became a prophecy of the age to come. And they experienced that. They entered into a time of joy, a time of worship, a time of praise, and a time when they could come into the very presence of God without the priest and without sacrifice, but with a joy

and praise and thanksgiving that they had never known before in Israel. With the ark on Mount Zion, it was happening, and they were experiencing it, and they never forgot it.

After that brief experience, they took the ark and put it behind the veil and built a temple around it. But the prophet said when the Messiah comes, what had been briefly glimpsed on Mount Zion would become a way of life. What they had experienced for just a moment, the very presence and glory of God, the prophets prophesied and said, that's going to be a way of life when the kingdom comes. Zion, as a place, you see, passed away, but the experience of Zion, it's message was a prophecy of the day when the glory of God would be revealed to men, and men would be able to live in it. The day was coming when all will be able to experience Zion.

The concept of Zion became the foundation of their prophecies concerning the kingdom of the Messiah. When they talked about the Messiah coming, they said it's going to be like it was on Mount Zion. When they talked about the kingdom, they equated it with Zion. When they talked about the Messiah coming, they equated it with Zion.

The word Zion is used seven times in the New Testament. In Matthew 21:5 and John 12:5, it is used of the triumph for entry whenever these writers quote from Zachariah, the prophecy we read about ago. Zion is used in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6 describing the place where God was going to lay the cornerstone, that is Christ. That shows you it was a prophecy concerning Christ. And then it's used in Romans 11:26, where it says, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME OUT OF (FROM) ZION." And the two other places that it is used in the New Testament are: Revelation 14:1 when John sees a picture of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion with 144,000 with Him, which he identifies as those who have come out of the tribulation of the earth and have been washed in the Lamb's blood. The lamb is standing, he said, on Mount Zion, and with Him are His people. And then it is used in this text we read this morning from the 12th chapter of Hebrews and verse 22 which says, "You have come to Mount Zion."

All of these passages, except the ones in Revelation and the one in Hebrews 12, are simply quotations from the old Testament. But in Revelation 14 and Hebrews 12, they are saying that we have come to Zion, we are a part of Zion, and Zion is a reality. What they experienced many, many years ago in Israel without priest, without tabernacle, without offering, and without sacrifice, what they experienced on Mount Zion, the glory and the very presence of God, is now ours. You have come to Mount Zion.

What is Mount Zion? Zion is the place where God is given His true place. It was the center of the nation of Israel. Zion was the place where God was given His true place in the nation. You have come to Mount Zion. You have come to the place where God has been given His rightful place in your life, and His rightful place in the world. That's Mount Zion.

So Jesus says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness and (then) all these other things shall be added unto you." Why does he say that? Because He is saying God wants to have His rightful place among His people. Jesus says, "Pray thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," let Mount Zion become a reality among your people. The Hebrew writer says, "You have come." You are giving Him His true and rightful place in your life. You are experiencing Mt Zion.

There are really only two places you can be as far as God is concerned, if you claim to be His people. You can be up at Gibeon if you want to, going through a ceremony, going through a ritual, barren and empty religion, making a profession of faith, but not doing anything about it, living as you please and squeezing God in whenever you want to make a sacrifice, depending upon others, letting the priests go into the presence of God for you. You can be worshiping at Gibeon and your life be empty of glory and praise and adoration and the presence of God. Or you can be in Zion, which means you are in the very presence of the Lord, and He has His rightful place in your life, He is your life, He is the only life living in you. You have come to Mount Zion.

It is in the church then that God finds His rightful place in our lives. Let me say that again. It is in the church that God finds His rightful place in our life. And it is in the church that you find your rightful place in God. You have come to Mount Zion. You have come into His very presence. It is not ritual, it is not works, it is knowing the presence of God. That's Zion.

Now, something else. In Zion, all things are spiritual. Zion represented the presence of God. All things are spiritual. There's is no such thing as the secular and the spiritual. That division is gone. It is all spiritual. And that is the concept of the New Testament that somehow or another we have missed. We still divide life into the secular and the spiritual. We still have our secular lives and our relationships to the world and, then on the other hand, we have our church life and we have our relationship to God. We have two lives; the secular and a spiritual, but there is no such thing. If you have come to Mount Zion, you have come to that which is spiritual and everything is spiritual.

Let me read a passage from Zechariah 14, verses 20 and 21, "In that day (the day of the Messiah), there will be *inscribed* on the bells off the horses, 'HOLY TO THE LORD.' And the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the bowls before the altar." the bowls before the altar were sacred. They were dedicated and set apart, used only in offering of sacrifices. And Zechariah says, someday the cooking pots will be like those bowls. Verse 21, "And every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Lord of Hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts in that day."

What is he saying? The expression, HOLY TO THE LORD, was inscribed on the miter of the high priest back in Israel. The high priest alone could go and enter into the presence of the Lord and stand in His glory. He could only do that one time a year on the Day of Atonement. When the high priest went in, written upon his miter was, "Holy to the Lord." Zechariah is saying the day is coming when Holy to the Lord will not just be written up on the priest's miter, it will be written upon the bells of the horses. That's quite a jump, isn't it, from the Holy of Holies to the bells of the horses.

What he is saying, the day is coming, when the people of God, when they're going about their daily business, when they are driving through the streets, when they are cooking in the kitchen, there would be described as those who are living within the veil. They are living in the presence of God. Holy to the Lord is not something that is just found in the Holy place by the priest. Holy to the Lord is found on the bells of the horses when you are plowing in the field. Holy to

the Lord is found in your cooking pots in the kitchen whenever you are cooking dinner. You are in the very presence of God. You don't have to go to the tabernacle to be in the presence of God. You are living in the presence of God every day of your life, and in every activity of your life. You have come to Zion. You are in the presence of the Lord, and all things are spiritual.

It doesn't really matter whether Trump or someone else wins the Presidency, or what happens in Washington. There is no such thing as spiritual and secular anymore. We are living in the presence of God, and God is overall, and whatever happens around us doesn't matter because on the cooking pots and on the horses' bells is written Holy to the Lord. You have come to Mount Zion, you have listened to and understand all those prophecies that he made about Zion.

The last thing I would say, Zion means: God is in union with His people. God only works through His people. That is scary, really scary. I know that God has always shown His signs and wonders, we know He is in charge. We do not deny that, but God's work of the kingdom is done only through His people. And that is scary because that is us. God is in union with His people. Let's go back to Psalm 110, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'sit at My right hand' until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet." In other words, Jesus is going to be at the right hand of the father, interceding for His people, until God makes His enemies a footstool for His feet. That is going to happen to us. The enemies of Christ are going to become the footstool of His people. And Paul includes all enemies whenever he talks about it. He says the last enemy that will be conquered and put under His feet is death.

Now understand what he is saying . . . Thine enemies are going to become a footstool for Thy feet. Where are His feet? The feet are not attached to the head. The feet are attached to the body. The feet are in the body. Christ is the head and the church is the body. All enemies are going to be put under the feet of the church. Verse 2, "The Lord will stretch forth Thy strong scepter (that is ruling power), from Zion." When God stretches forth His ruling power, He stretches it forth from Zion. That is the church. When God rules, He rules through Christ and Christ rules His people, and this is what He will say, "Rule in the midst of Thine enemies."

I heard a good old gospel song on the radio talking about the time when we go to heaven, we're going to reign with Christ. I don't know what is up there that we are going to reign over. If He takes us out all of His enemies, there is not going to be anyone left to rule in their midst, Right? He is ruling in the midst of his enemies now. The ruling of heaven takes place in the midst of all that is going on in the crookedness and the evil and the debauchery of this world.

I don't know why Christians have to sit around and whine and debate and complain about how evil and how bad everything is and how worse it will become. God put us here to do something about it. He put us here to reign in the midst of it in Christ. And if it is so bad, whose fault is it? It has to be laid at the feet of the church, because while we have been holding our councils, conventions, debates, and arguing over the Trinity, preaching the rapture, looking at the prophecy charts from the book of Revelation, and everything else we do, **the enemy has taken over.** We have been so busy amongst ourselves trying to be religious and trying to out-religion everybody else, that we have not paid any attention to what is going on around us, resulting in **not much ruling in the midst of Thine enemies.** But that is what he says.

Verse 2, "Thy people will volunteer freely in the day of Thy power, in holy array, from the womb of the dawn, the youth are Thee as the dew." He connects this with Hebrews. Verse 4, "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind. Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. The Lord is at Thy right hand; He will shatter Kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country." If He's going to do that, He is going to do that through His people. He is going to do that because God, through Jesus, is in union with His people. The most exciting thing that is going on today is what God is doing in the midst of His enemies. He is doing a lot, we just do not see it, and we do not know anything about it because we have not come to Mt Zion, have not entered heaven itself, into the very presence of God, to receive all that He has for us.

Here are a few prophecies relating to Mt Zion are: John 14:23, "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.'" If you believe on me and you accept me and you love my Father, we are going to come and We are going to live in you. You see, that is what God wants. II Corinthians 6, beginning in verse 16, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE." That Is Zion.

Verse 17, "THEREFORE, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE (SACRED)," says the Lord. DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAR; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." Don't get entangled with the world to the extent that they cannot see any difference in your life and the lives of other people. You are there for a purpose. You are there so God can dwell in you. Paul speaks about it again in 1 Corinthians 6, verse 16, "Do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO WILL BECOME ONE FLESH." But listen to this, "The one who joins to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*." We are one spirit with the Lord. We have the same spirit. God dwells in His people. That is Mount Zion.

Now, after they built the new temple in Jerusalem, put up the veil, and placed the ark in the new Holy of Holies, the nation of Israel was divided later on and the nations of the world overshadowed and ruled over Israel. And although they took Israel into captivity, the prophets kept talking about Zion. They said, "Israel is now a stump." It's not a tree, it is just a stump. But in Isaiah 11, verse 1, he said, "Then a shoot will spring from the stump (stem) of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit, and the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him." The Messiah is going to come.

And Daniel could say in chapter 2, verse 44, "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all of these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." Today and forever, there is nothing that can overpower or destroy the kingdom. With that in mind, the Hebrew writer, in chapter 12, verses 26-28, says, "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.' 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.” Everything that is created and man-made is going to be shaken, including Wall Street. Verse 28, “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which 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.”

Let's come to Mount Zion, and realize that by faith we are there, in the presence of God.