

Late next month I'll be headed back to the Timberland Drive church in Lufkin for their Summer Bible Series. It will consist of three lessons – Thu-Sat. The theme this year is “Mountains of God.” We are interested in the way God uses mountains or mountain imagery to create fellowship between Himself and man.

I taught here in April a sermon about Israel's interaction with God on mount Sinai. His power and their response and how we would have hoped to react and how we should react today.

I taught a lesson here last year on Mount Everest and George Mallory and how he ascended to the high place but didn't make it home. And communion with God (through baptism) is amazing, but we must make it home! But I suggested that theme in Lufkin, almost entirely to force myself to answer a long running personal questions: In Hebrews 12:22-24 – What is Mount Zion? What is God showing me? What does it mean?

Hebrews 12 – “Mount Zion” – The description of this incredible mountain is short, captured in terms of its name, description, and the people around and upon it in **12:22-24**. *It's a middle piece to the discussion. Maybe the “High Point” with a lead up to it (v.1-21) and beyond it (v25-29).*

So let's approach this correctly – in the sequence the author desires.

12:1-4 – Men of old went through incredible challenges because they believed in God. They trusted Him. His power sustained them. (referencing the hall of faith in chapter 11).

We have their example, and even better, we have Jesus. His example, His sacrifice, His endurance and trust in God gives us a heart of commitment and strength in His shadow.

12:4-8,11 – Times of challenge will come: times of persecution, sacrifice, temptation. God will allow the world to lean against us and Satan to try us. But so that God may shape and mature us. To live without such things would render us without discipline and not God's children.

12:12-17 – Don't let anything get in the way of being faithful to God. Don't let weakness or conflict with others or bitterness toward anyone, or immorality. Life is a test of faith – don't fail it! Esau did and he never got the blessing back. Consequences can persist. Let's pass these tests and grow.

To give the Christian some inspiration and passion for strength in God, the author does a little throwback to the Mount Sinai Jewish experience. He wants to compare what they came to with where you and I are now.

12:18-21 – Far be it from me to belittle in any way the 1) spectacle that ensued on that mountain or 2) the idea of God coming down to be there with Israel or 3) the sounds of trumpet and God that would strike heart stopping fear into anyone, believer or otherwise. However, the minimizing of that immense moment, for the sake of comparison, is exactly what the Hebrew writer is doing.

- *Sinai's glory was bound by SPACE – it was a physical location, one only, and is still over there.*
- *Sinai's glory was bound by TIME – God was there for a year only. It has no glory now.*
- *Sinai's assembly was DETACHED from God – He was on the mountain and they were not.*
- *Sinai's assembly was DISOBEDIENT to God – Preserved for lineage not faith. Moses feared.*
- *Sinai's visuals were largely about FEAR – God was humbling the people by the sights.*
- *Sinai's sounds were largely about FEAR – Trumpet and Voice stopped them cold.*

We did not come to that – *that one place, for that one year, with those questionable people, subjected to God based largely on the fear He created to get them to conform to Him.* If we had, we should obey Him, right? If we had, we should have honored Him, never forgot it, and lived our lives, His way, up until the end of our days. They didn't. But we would have done better, right? Well, we didn't come to that.

You have come to **Mount Zion!**

I always struggle with the answer to this question: “What is Mount Zion?” Is it the church, the fellowship Christ built between us and God, here and now? Or is it heaven, the future abode where we will forever be in the presence of God? But my questions are too limited.

Mount Zion is not bound by Space – it doesn't have to be here on earth in the church – or – beyond this earth in the eternal place called heaven. It can and it is BOTH and ALL of those things. Not by *Location*.

Mount Zion is not bound by Time – it doesn't have to be here today in Christ – or – something to behold later once time is not more. It can and it is BOTH and ALL of those things. Not by *Duration*.

Let me very quickly show you the absoluteness of this in the terms we have:

“the city of the living God” “the heavenly Jerusalem” -- That is certainly heaven, the place where God dwells on His throne, but do not limit it. God rules here. We are in His city right now. (**Rev. 21:1-2, 10**)

“the myriads of angels” – Yes, I know they are in heaven. One day we will see countless angels ministering to God and to us in heaven. But, **Hebrews 1:13**, they are here too. They are around us.

“the general assembly and church of the firstborn” – Certainly this has so much more than heaven or earth as its limitations. We are in this assembly at this moment, but there are countless others, not only all over the world, but gone on to heaven.

(By the way – note the assembly of Israel who was constantly disobedient as a nation and governed by fear, but the assembly Christians, now & forever, seeking to be obedient and bound & governed by LOVE).

“God, the Judge of all” – Where is the Creator and His Judgment – after the judgment and beyond the destroyed world? – well, YES. But here, now, in the room and ruling with righteous judgment? YES!

“the spirits of the righteous made perfect” - We might immediately think of heaven and the martyred souls given perfect peace (**Rev. 6:9-11**). Great, that's what this is! But wait, aren't we made perfect, purified & saved in Christ, cleansed of sin and death today? We are. Restoration is boundless!

“and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood” – Where is Jesus? When is Jesus? Is He later for you, experienced when you see Him on the throne in heaven? Yes. Is He here, now, always with you, bridging the gap between you and God in His covenant and covering you with His redemptive blood? Yes. He is. He was and He is and is to come. Jesus is forever. **Heb. 13:8**.

Imagine Mount Zion as a massive physical mountain, with God on the top and Jesus at His side, surrounded by angels and by Christians gone before us. But that mountain extends downward and outward and covers all the land, and we, right now, in Christ are also on it, maybe a little further down, but on it, the assembly, able to touch it, not in terror of it, but in awe of it, experiencing the aid of angels who come down to us and even Jesus who walks down among us. That, my friends, is to what we have come.

Okay, so what in the world are you supposed to do with that imagery today and on Monday?

Hebrews 12:25-29 – Our God will destroy all space, time, things, bodies and life here, and Mount Zion will still be there, dominating all eternity. God is mighty and amazing. His covenant with us is led by LOVE not fear but He is still a God that will consume the physical, only Zion will remain.

Two Attitudes:

- 1) **Show Gratitude (v28)** – Are you thankful or this? This unshakeable, all-scoping, eternal kingdom? This dominion that reaches to eternity and down into your life today? We ought to be the most overwhelmingly thankful and grateful people this world has ever known.
- 2) **w Reverence and Awe (v28)** – Same idea. Absolutely changed by God. Utterly affected by God. In complete awe of His power, His Love and His ability to consume all off that mountain.

Two Actions:

- 1) **Do not Refuse Him (v25)** – Who can hear His voice and not be drawn to it? We don't ask it to stop out of fear, we are drawn to it out of Awe. Believe, Repent, Be Baptized, Live Righteously.
- 2) **Offer Service to Him (v28)** – Can we not see our purpose? From the moment we are baptized, we live upon Mount Zion. This residency never ends, nor does our purpose – we exist to praise Him, welcome others to Him, serve and love and live for Him... on His mountain.