

**Hebrews 12:18-24** For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, <sup>19</sup> and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. <sup>20</sup> (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." <sup>21</sup> And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") <sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, <sup>23</sup> to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, <sup>24</sup> to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

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One mountain, covered in smoke, engulfed in flames. Its peaks covered in darkness. That darkness pronouncing gloom to all in its presence. The whole sight causing only fear to all who beheld it. The sound of a loud trumpet and the incomprehensible sounds of voices only adding to the ominous scene. Death promised to anyone coming too close to the mountain. The one man who was chosen to climb to mountain also filled with fear. A terrible sight indeed.

Another mountain, the city of the living God, a heavenly Jerusalem. Angels gathered together in festive assembly celebrating. A gathering of all the firstborn whose names are enrolled in heaven. Righteous ones made perfect assembled there in their rightful place. God Almighty, the Judge of all, accessible to all. And Jesus, the One whose blood makes this mountain real, present for all. A blessed sight indeed.

And one final mountain. Dark in appearance. God Himself hanging on a cross, bleeding that all might be made perfect. God Himself suffering the judgment of that first dark mountain in order that He might deliver His people to the joy of the second mountain.

The first mountain Sinai, where God delivered His commandments to Moses. The second mountain Zion, the heaven to which God delivers His people. The last mountain, Calvary, where the Mediator of the new covenant, Jesus, bled to satisfy the demands of Sinai and to deliver His people to the bliss of Zion.

We who have been baptized into Christ have not come unto Sinai where we must be fearful to approach a Holy God surrounded in flames and smoke. But rather because of Jesus' death atop Mount Calvary, we have come unto Mount Zion, already part of the celebration of God's people made perfect by the blood of Jesus. We

have come to Mount Zion where we have direct access through prayer to God the Father and His Dear Son, our Savior Jesus. We approach our God not with the threat of death looming but rather with the promise eternal life looming. The demands of God's law have been satisfied by the blood of Jesus. We rejoice now knowing that only the blessings of God's gospel await us when we come into His presence.

Right now, you stand atop Mount Zion by faith in Christ. The blessings of that mountain are yours. Right now, they are yours by faith. And one day what is yours by faith right now will also be yours by sight. One day, on the Last Day to be precise, Jesus will place your feet upon the soil of Mount Zion. There you will live forever with all of the angels and all those saints who went before you in the faith. And as the song our children often sing at baptisms proclaims, "Best of all Jesus will be there." This Mount Zion that we have by faith is not just some abstract reality we will never touch, but is a very real tangible place where we one day by God's grace will live.

When Christ returns, He tells us that He will shake the earth and the heavens once more. Everything that is shakable will be shaken. Every corrupted thing in this world will be shaken into dust and consumed in fire. Only one thing can survive this final shaking. That one thing is Christ's kingdom filled with His people like you and me. Only His kingdom will be taken out of this corrupted world and be placed onto Mount Zion for all eternity.

In that light, let us hold firmly to this kingdom that He has given us. Let us receive all the gifts God gives to us with gratitude. Let us receive the kingdom gladly from the font, the Word, and the altar again and again. And then, in grateful response, let offer to God acceptable worship. Let us give our whole lives to the work of His kingdom. Let us hold nothing back. Let us pour our hearts and souls into His work.

Indeed, it is the author of Hebrew that encourages those of us on Mount Zion by faith to offer God acceptable worship. Want to know exactly what the author of the Hebrew means by acceptable worship? In the next chapter he gives some very concrete ways in we, the inhabitants of Zion, may worship God acceptably. Next week we will read the entire list he gives, but let me give you the quick run through this week. Acceptable worship is letting brotherly love continue, showing hospitality to strangers and remembering those in prison. Acceptable worship is keeping the marriage bed undefiled by refraining from sex before marriage and not

committing adultery while married, being content with what you have, and honoring those who speak God's word to you. Acceptable worship is not being led away by false teaching, bearing any reproach that comes from been faithful to Jesus and being thankful to Christ continually. Acceptable worship is doing good and sharing what God has given.

Such sacrifices, says the author of our text, are pleasing to God. These are the things which will not be shaken when Jesus comes again. These are all works of the kingdom and those kinds of works cannot be shaken. Indeed, these are the very works, the book of Revelation reminds us, follow the saints right into heaven.

Indeed, today we are called through our text to do two things. First, we are called to realize where we stand with God. We are called to recognize that we do not stand underneath a fearful God awaiting his punishment, but rather that we stand with a loving, forgiving God awaiting more grace. Therefore any attempt to appease a wrathful God by our good works is useless. Approaching the Holy God of Sinai by ourselves will only result in our temporal and eternal death. But when we simply allow the Holy God of Zion to welcome us into His presence having sprinkled upon us His blood, we are blessed indeed. We live our entire lives not in fear of God's wrath but ready expectation of His grace.

Secondly in light of His grace to us, we are called to live as ones with feet firmly planted in Zion. We are called to live holy lives worthy of the grace that we have received. We who have been baptized into Christ are called to also walk in Him. We seek not to appease an angry God by our works but rather are called to offer worship that is pleasing to our gracious Father. We do this by living the life He has called us to live. We offer worship pleasing to Him by heeding His word, following His commands, and thanking Him all along the way for the grace He offers when we fall. As people given an unshakeable kingdom, we gladly and naturally begin to do the work of that kingdom.

Today, I urge you to take some time to ponder how awesome it is to be on Mt. Zion by God's grace. Ponder how scary it would be if we had to approach the Holy God of Sinai without the blood of Christ. And having truly taken in again how wonderful it is to be on Zion with Jesus, let the gratitude you feel in your hearts

work its way into action in your life. Listen to Jesus as He speaks to you in His Word and respond in thankful obedience. For you, Christian brothers or sisters, have not come unto Sinai, but unto Zion. Amen.