

"The Chastening of God"

Hebrews 12:5-24

Part 10

Introduction: Tonight in our study of Hebrews we have come to one of the richest and deepest texts which we have looked at so far and the text we are going to look at is **Hebrews 12:18-24**.

Before we step into this text we need some information to give to us the proper background. The first word of verse 18 is a connective so therefore we must grasp what is in the previous verses in order to understand the text before us. Before we look at the previous verses let me remind you of the theme of the book of Hebrews.

The writer has written this letter to show the Hebrews that Jesus Christ is better. He is better because He is the Mediator of a New Covenant which is far better than the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was conditional which means it was dependent upon the faithfulness of the people of Israel.

Exodus 19:5-8

⁵ Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

⁶ And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

⁷ And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

⁸ And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

The New Covenant however is an unconditional covenant. It was dependent upon the faithfulness of God.

Jeremiah 31:33-34

³³ But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

³⁴ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the

*greatest of them, saith the LORD: for **I will** forgive their iniquity, and **I will** remember their sin no more.*

This Covenant depends completely upon the faithfulness of God and therefore it is better than the Old Covenant and Jesus is the Mediator of this New Covenant.

The recipients of this letter were struggling due to the persecution which they were facing. Therefore the writer has been doing all he can with his pen to encourage them to stay the course and to run the race with patience/endurance.

Notice Hebrews 12:12-15

Here in these verses the writer encourages them to support one another so that none fail of the grace of God. He then went on and pointed to Esau who traded his birthright for the desires of the flesh and who then greatly regretted his decision and could not reverse what had been done. If the Hebrews who read this letter turned back to the Old Covenant then they would one day deeply regret their decision.

Now the writer is going to present his grand finale in the verses before us. He will once again use his pen and to encourage the Hebrews to stay the course and he will do this by contrasting the 2 covenants one more time.

I. **The Incentive**

Part 1

A. **Mount Sinai**

Notice Hebrews 12:18

The key phrase in this verse is "the mount that might be touched". This is a reference to Mount Sinai where Israel was given the Law. Sinai was a physical mountain. The writer will contrast this physical mountain with the spiritual mountain of Zion.

Notice Hebrews 12:22

So getting back to verse 18 the writer is going to remind his readers what the people of Israel faced at Mount Sinai. Now Sinai represents the Law and some of the Hebrews were looking to go back to Judaism which would have put them under the Law.

Some of them were weary and tired. So here the writer reminds them that they have not come to Mount Sinai. In other words when they made the decision to follow Jesus Christ they were not coming to a place where they needed to fear.

We need to look at what happened at Mount Sinai.

Exodus 19:9-20

⁹ *And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.*

¹⁰ *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,*

¹¹ *And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.*

¹² *And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:*

¹³ *There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.*

¹⁴ *And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.*

¹⁵ *And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.*

¹⁶ *And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.*

¹⁷ *And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.*

¹⁸ *And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.*

¹⁹ *And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.*

²⁰ *And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.*

Exodus 20:18-19

¹⁸ *And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.*

¹⁹ *And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.*

Now let us get back to our text.

Notice Hebrews 12:18-21

The writer of Hebrews is summarizing what Israel faced at Mount Sinai which is what we just read from Exodus. At Sinai Israel could not even touch the mountain. If they were to touch the mountain they would surely die instantly. If an animal touched the mountain they were to kill the animal with stones or a spear because they could not even touch the beast that touched the mountain. Israel had to take 3 days to prepare to just approach the mountain. It was the most frightening scene they ever faced. There was the piercing blast of the trumpet, the fire, the smoke and the earth shook violently. All of this was a manifestation of the HOLINESS of God and because their SIN DEBT had not been paid for (Jesus had not yet died on the cross) they were not able to enter into the presence of God. Mount Sinai not only represents the Law but it also speaks of DISTANCE and DEATH.

Now let me explain what the writer of Hebrews was communicating to these people and mainly to those who were not yet saved but had stepped away from Judaism on their way to the cross. For them to turn from Jesus Christ and go back to Judaism would be to return to Mount Sinai or to go back under the Law. It would be to go back to the Mountain of Separation. It would be to place themselves under the Law which is certain death/separation. Let me show you what Paul recorded concerning the Law.

2 Corinthians 3:6-7

⁶ *Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for **the letter killeth**, but the spirit giveth life.*

⁷ *But if the **ministration of death**, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:*

Here Paul refers to the Law as the "ministration of death" and he also states that the "letter killeth" and the LETTER refers to the Law. It has been said that the Law is the greatest mass murderer of all time. The reason is that when any man is confronted by the law he is instantly declared to be guilty and he is declared to be dead which means separated from God. The Law has never and will never save one person.

Romans 3:19-20

¹⁹ *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and **all the world may become guilty before God.***

²⁰ *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

The Law was given so man could see his true spiritual condition that he is lost and in need of a Savior.

Galatians 3:24-25

²⁴ *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

²⁵ *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

The Law was given to reveal to man his true spiritual condition and to bring him to Jesus Christ. After a person is saved they are NO LONGER UNDER THE LAW.

Now let us get back to our text in Hebrews.

B. Mount Zion

Notice Hebrews 12:22

Here now is the contrast. Mount Sinai was a physical mountain but Mount Zion is a spiritual mountain. They had come to Mount Zion which is the city of the living God and is the city of the heavenly Jerusalem. Mount Zion is the Mountain of Grace. This is the incentive. They were tired and weary but what an incentive. They were to know that they were free from the Law if they were in Christ and they could not enter into the presence of God because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. At Mount Sinai Israel could not even touch the mountain but at Mount Zion a believer can come boldly unto the THRONE of God or the THRONE of grace to receive mercy and grace to help in time of need. Mount Zion is the place of God's residence.

Psalms 132:13-16

¹³ *For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation.*

¹⁴ *This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.*

¹⁵ *I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.*

¹⁶ *I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.*

This was the city which Abraham looked for.

Hebrews 11:8-10

⁸ *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

⁹ *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:*

¹⁰ ***For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.***

Conclusion:

We are going to stop here for this evening because there is much to be seen concerning Mount Zion and we will look at that next week. In closing I want to just remind us that we who have accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior are residents of the Heavenly City of Zion. This world is not our home. Our home is in the Heavenly City of Zion.

Philippians 3:20

²⁰ *For our conversation {citizenship} is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

All of our valuables are located in the city of Zion. Our Church family which has died is there, our Heavenly Father is there, our Savior is there, our inheritance is there, our name is written there, and our Savior is preparing us a place there.

But for now we are here as ambassadors.

2 Corinthians 5:20

²⁰ *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

We are citizens of heaven living in a foreign land representing the King of Zion to the unsaved world.