

CONTRAST BETWEEN MT SINAI & MT ZION

TEXT: HEBREWS 12:18-24

Introduction:

1. The book of Hebrews was written to confirm and encourage Jewish Christians by showing that Judaism had come to an end through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. There are several warnings given about the danger of Jewish believers (and professed believers) lapsing back into Judaism.
3. *The Scofield Study Bible* says, "It is clear from the Acts that even the strongest of the believers in Palestine were held to a strange mingling of Judaism and Christianity (e.g. Acts 21:18-24), and that snare would be especially apt to entangle professed Christians amongst the Jews of the dispersion."
4. The key word in this epistle is "better." The book of Hebrews presents a series of contrasts between the good things of Judaism and the better things of Christ.
5. For example, Christ is "better" than angels, better than Moses, better than Joshua, and better than Aaron.
6. Furthermore, the New Covenant is far better than the Mosaic Covenant. This is the contrast presented here in our text tonight.
7. "The mount that might be touched" (Heb. 12:18) is Mount Sinai, which represents the dispensation of law. God gave the law to Moses up on Mount Sinai (cf. Exodus 19:9-25).
8. "Mount Sion" (Heb. 12:22) represents the dispensation of grace.
9. Regarding this stark contrast, H.A. Ironside said, "Could stronger language be used to show that no lasting blessing can come to fallen man through the law?" (*Hebrews*).

I. THE FUTILITY OF LIVING UNDER THE LAW

1. The first notable contrast: "For ye are not come..." (Heb. 12:18), and "But ye are come..." (12:22).
2. That ought to settle it, "For ye are not come..." (Heb. 12:18).
3. All throughout the New Testament we are told that one cannot mix law and grace. Romans 11:6 says, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."
4. We read in Exodus 19:8, "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do."
5. They were sincere, but they were sincerely mistaken.

6. The readers of this epistle -- Hebrew Christians -- are taken back to the frightful sights and sounds of Mount Sinai (12:18-21).
7. The reference to not touching Mount Sinai is found in Exodus 19:12. The awesome details -- fire, blackness, darkness, tempest -- would be familiar to Hebrew Christians (Exodus 19 & 20, Deuteronomy 4 & 5).
8. The scene at Mount Sinai was so terrifying that the people did not want to hear the voice of God (Heb. 12:19; cf. Ex. 20:18, 19).
9. All of these manifestations of God's power were designed to impress upon the people the absolute holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Ex. 20:20).
10. Mount Sinai could not be touched by either man or beast (Heb. 12:20; cf. Ex. 19:12, 13).
11. Death was the penalty for wilful disobedience or even the accidental touch by an animal. The lesson taught was God's inapproachable holiness.
12. People often misquote I Peter 1:16, and they say, "Be ye holy; *as* I am holy." But it doesn't say that. It says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy."
13. No one can be holy as God is holy. This is the lesson of Exodus 19 and 20.
14. "So terrible was the sight" (Heb. 12:21) that even Moses was afraid.
15. Moses spoke to God face to face. Exodus 33:11 says, "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."
16. Deuteronomy 34:10 says, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face."
17. Moses is referred to as "the servant of God" nine times in Scripture -- in Numbers 12:7, 8; Joshua 1:2, 7; I Chronicles 6:49; II Chronicles 24:9; Nehemiah 10:29; Daniel 9:11; Revelation 15:3.
18. Moses led Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land.
19. Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible.
20. If even Moses was "exceedingly" fearful (12:21), what hope could any other Israelite have in being saved by keeping the law?
21. But on the basis of grace, all who come to God through faith in Christ are saved "to the uttermost" (Heb. 7:25).

II. OUR BLESSINGS RIGHT NOW

1. Regarding Hebrews 12:22, FB Meyer wrote, "He refuses to admit the thought of it being a future experience, reserved for some high day, when the heavenly courts shall be thronged by the populations of redeemed and glorified spirits...Mark that present tense, 'Ye are come.'... And what was true of them is true of each reader of these lines who is united to the Lord Jesus by a living faith" (*The Way Into The Holiest*).

2. Mount Zion represents God's bountiful grace. Psalm 78:68 says the LORD chose "the mount Zion which he loved."
3. Psalm 125:1 says, "They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever."
4. Though we enter into these blessings the moment we get saved, there are many future blessings which await us. During Christ's millennial reign, Mount Zion will be the center of His kingdom.
5. Psalm 2:6 says, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

III. OUR FUTURE BLESSINGS

1. Some day we will enter into "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22).
2. This is called "the new Jerusalem" in Revelation 3:12 and 21:2.
3. Up in heaven there is "an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22). Revelation 5:11 says, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands."
4. "The general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (12:23) refers to all believers in the church age -- those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.
5. What a meeting that will be!
6. God the Father is "the Judge of all" (12:23), and according to John 5:22, He has committed all judgment unto the Son (cf. Acts 17:31).
7. "The spirits of just men made perfect" (12:23) refers to Old Testament believers whose salvation has been "made perfect" (complete) by Christ's finished work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.
8. The Lord Jesus Christ is "the mediator of the new covenant" (12:24). At Mount Sinai, Moses was the mediator. In Exodus 20:19, we read that the people said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."
9. But now we have a better mediator, which is emphasized in Hebrews 3.
10. There is also a contrast between Moses and Christ in Hebrews 8:6 -- "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."
11. Today, in this dispensation of grace, Christ is our only mediator. First Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."
12. "The blood of sprinkling" (12:24) refers to Christ's blood which He shed on the cross for our sins. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

13. There is a debate among Bible preachers and teachers about the blood of Christ, but this Scripture indicates that the blood of Christ is in heaven with believers, angels, God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

14. First Peter 1:18, 19 says the blood of Christ is precious and incorruptible. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel" because it speaks of pardon and cleansing and forgiveness and redemption and salvation.

CONCLUSION:

Abel's blood cried out for vengeance, but Christ's blood cries out for forgiveness.