

A CALL TO WORSHIP: WHICH MOUNTAIN? (pt 5)

Hebrews 12:18-24



March 31, 2019 | DAVID ANDERSON

In Hebrews 12, the writer of Hebrews describes two mountains of worship: 1) Mt. Sinai and 2) Mt. Zion.

- One mountain is the mountain of condemnation; the other mountain is the mountain of emancipation.
- One mountain is the mountain of fear; the other mountain is the mountain of festive joy in the assembly.
- One mountain is the mountain of Yahweh's righteous requirement and the other mountain is the fulfillment of that holy law in the person and work of a bloody mediator, Jesus Christ.
- One mountain speaks of fire, darkness and gloom; the other mountain speaks of forgiveness, mercy and grace.

On which mountain are you worshiping today?

¹⁸ For you have not come to something that can be touched, to a burning fire and darkness and gloom and a whirlwind ¹⁹ and the blast of a trumpet and a voice uttering words such that those who heard begged to hear no more. ²⁰ For they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." ²¹ In fact, the scene was so terrifying that Moses said, "I shudder with fear." –Hebrews 12:18-21

One of the greatest visuals of all time is what took place at Mt. Sinai, the mountain of Law, the mountain of judgment. You couldn't ask for a more impressive proof of God's existence and His majesty, power and holiness. The revelation of God to Israel at Mt. Sinai was seen, heard, smelled and felt. It was sensory overload for the Israelites and it terrified them. The whole thing was so overwhelming that the Israelites tell Moses: don't let God speak to us because we will die. Moses, you speak to us instead (Ex. 20:19).

If anyone was going to buy into the holiness of God and live it out, it would have been these Israelites who experienced all of these signs and wonders. Instead, while Moses is still on Sinai, the High Priest, Aaron, creates a golden calf, which they worshiped instead of the one, true God (Exodus 32).

The truth is that Sinai could never bring life. The Mosaic Law could never bring righteousness. If it could have, the Old Testament would have ended at Exodus 20, the giving of the Law. Hebrews 7:19 says, "... for the law made nothing perfect." Sinai was not capable of bringing sinful men near to God.

If the Law's purpose wasn't to give life, what was its purpose? The Law's job was to expose our sin and confine us so that we would cry out for a Savior (Gal. 3:19-22). The Law, the sacrifices, and the high priests were always prototypes, shadows, always moving us towards the final sacrifice of Christ. They were able to put sins off, but never paid them off. Mt. Sinai is in the desert in a very desolate place and the end was not Sinai and darkness and gloom. The purpose of Mt. Sinai was to get us to another mountain.

²² But you have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the assembly ²³ and congregation of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous, who have been made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks of something better than Abel's does. –Hebrews 12:22-24

Instead, Christ has secured for us a new worship experience and standing before God - the holy mountain of Zion, the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem. In Revelation John says that thousands upon thousands of angels will join us in this scene, worshiping the Lamb of God (Rev. 5:11-12). You are not alone on this mountain; you are in a congregation, an *ekklesia*. It is no ordinary assembly; it is a *panagyrei*. It's a joyous party. It is a festival and because of our union with Christ, we are a part of this congregation of the firstborn, enrolled in heaven, permanently inscribed in heaven.

God, the perfect judge, has rendered His verdict—not guilty! The writer of Hebrews uses the same word that Jesus uses in John 19:30, *tetelestai*, to describe the saints that have been perfected, *teteleiomenon*. By faith, God perfected the Old Testament saints and He has perfected us through Christ (Heb. 11:40).

Abel's innocent blood cried out for justice (Gen 4:10), but Jesus' innocent blood says something different. What does Jesus' blood speak? Jesus' blood cries out and offers forgiveness, mercy and grace to the guilty sinner. Jesus' blood ushers us into the Holy of Holies where he offered Himself once for all and death could not stop Him. He arose victoriously from the grave and is exalted forever on Mt. Zion.

On which mountain are you worshiping today: Mt. Sinai or Mt. Zion?

MT. SINAI	MT. ZION
You assume you are still under God's condemnation as you disregard your new covenant blessing. "I don't belong here. I don't deserve to be here. Everyone knows it, God knows it and I know it. I'm inadequate."	Jesus' blood speaks to you and you begin to trust that you are secure and safe because you have been permanently placed in heaven by the mediator of the new covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a kingdom that cannot be shaken.
You might think you have life figured out and you stand in judgment over everyone else around you who doesn't have a shiny, impressive life like you. Your heart's desire is control not abandoned trust.	You worship with a festive assembly, a congregation of the firstborn who too have been rescued and given to you by God to receive your love and give you love.
You have secrets and all kinds of unresolved sin, but you're unwilling to let go of your death grip. You think if people knew that your marriage or kids or life is struggling, you would lose your seat at the table. It's too risky. Just hold it together	When you struggle, the blood of Jesus speaks to you through this assembly, "You are one of us. We are with you! Would you please loosen your death grip on your secrets and unresolved sin?"
All of this comes at a brutal cost. These things keep you self-centered, immature and unavailable to others. As you come to worship, you can't move towards people in love. You can't allow others to move towards you in love.	You know God is maturing you in His way and in His timing and He not only loves you but He enjoys you and He wants to release your life to others.