

"You Have Come to Mount Zion"  
(Hebrews 12:22-24)

Introduction: Today, you may have noticed on your calendars, is Palm Sunday. This is the day that is traditionally celebrated as the Sunday in which our Lord, in His state of humiliation, entered into the earthly city of Jerusalem, riding upon the foal of a donkey to offer Himself up for the sins of His people. This was to be His last entrance into Jerusalem during His ministry on earth. For it was here that He was to lay down His life. Even the animal upon which He rode, the foal of a donkey, indicated His purpose for coming, for this beast was often used in the making of covenants, as a sacrificial animal. And it is fitting for us on this Lord's Day to reflect upon that sacrifice. Every Lord's Day is a wonderful testimony to the atoning death of our Lord. When the people of God gather on the first day of the week, they are showing by this, that they are those whom the Lord has redeemed by His blood. But it is even more fitting that we remember it this morning, as we prepare to come to that one visible representation of our Lord and His sacrifice in worship, the Lord's Supper. But we want not only to reflect upon His sacrifice itself this morning, but also what He accomplished through it. He has opened the doors of heaven that we might go in. And this is especially comforting in light of the departure of our dear brother, John Smink, who has just this last Saturday entered into its reality.

Our text this morning is taken from the book of Hebrews, a book which throughout contrasts for us the Old Covenant and the New. It shows us that the Old Covenant was full of types and shadows of the coming glories of the New. It shows us that in every way, the New Covenant is vastly superior to that of Mosaic Covenant. The Old Covenant was an administration of the Covenant of Grace, and people of God were saved only by grace to be sure. But it was marked preeminently with a legal flavor. The grace which was present within its structure was not as pronounced. But in the New Covenant we see an even greater display of God's glory and grace. John wrote, "FOR OF HIS FULLNESS WE HAVE ALL RECEIVED, AND GRACE INSTEAD OF GRACE. FOR THE LAW WAS GIVEN THROUGH MOSES; GRACE AND TRUTH WERE REALIZED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST" (John 1:16-17). And in our text this morning, we see this contrast between the two administrations very clearly. And as we notice the differences, realize that it was the coming of Christ that made the difference. What I want you to see this morning is that,

*You have not come to that mountain of God which you are forbidden to touch, but you have come to that much more glorious and gracious spiritual dwelling of God which you are encouraged to draw near through the work of Christ.*

- I. *You Have Not Come to that Holy Mountain at Sinai as the Old Covenant People of God.*
  - A. *Remember That It Was There that the Lord Established the Mosaic Covenant and It Was There that He Was Teaching Them about the Things that He Would Bring to Pass in the Future Through Christ.*
    1. *There was a tangible, physical mountain which the people of God were standing before.*
      - a. *It was "A MOUNTAIN THAT MAY BE TOUCHED." That is, it was not spiritual, but material.*
      - b. *However, they were not allowed to touch it. Rather God had*

commanded that "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED."

- c. No one dared to draw near, except for Moses, the Old Covenant mediator. If anyone else were to touch this holy mountain, they would have to face the righteous wrath of God, even as Uzzah, who put out his profane hand to catch the holy ark of God and was struck down immediately by God.
  - d. No one could approach this holy God without a mediator.
2. But the Lord was teaching them other things through the terrible manifestations of His presence.
- a. They had not only come to the mountain, but to, "A BLAZING FIRE, AND TO DARKNESS AND GLOOM AND WHIRLWIND, AND TO THE BLAST OF A TRUMPET AND THE SOUND OF WORDS WHICH SOUND WAS SUCH THAT THOSE WHO HEARD BEGGED THAT NO FURTHER WORD SHOULD BE SPOKEN TO THEM."
  - b. The mountain was all in flames like a burning furnace. The Bible says, "FOR OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE" (Heb. 12:29). It was especially noticeable because of the darkness which surrounded it. Moses wrote, "AND THE MOUNTAIN BURNED WITH FIRE TO THE VERY HEART OF THE HEAVENS: DARKNESS, CLOUD AND THICK GLOOM" (Deu. 4:11).
  - c. And out of the fire and darkness, and the wind which blew with the force of a whirlwind, the noise of a trumpet was heard and the voice of the Lord crashed like thunder claps as He spoke. Again Moses wrote, "NOW MOUNT SINAI WAS ALL IN SMOKE BECAUSE THE LORD DESCENDED UPON IT IN FIRE; AND ITS SMOKE ASCENDED LIKE THE SMOKE OF A FURNACE, AND THE WHOLE MOUNTAIN QUAKED VIOLENTLY. WHEN THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET GREW LOUDER AND LOUDER, MOSES SPOKE AND GOD ANSWERED HIM WITH THUNDER" (Ex. 19:18-19).
  - d. "AND ALL THE PEOPLE PERCEIVED THE THUNDER AND THE LIGHTENING FLASHES AND THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET AND THE MOUNTAIN SMOKING; AND WHEN THE PEOPLE SAW IT, THEY TREMBLED AND STOOD AT A DISTANCE" (Ex. 20:18). "AND SO TERRIBLE WAS THE SIGHT, THAT MOSES SAID, 'I AM FULL OF FEAR AND TREMBLING'" (Heb. 12:21).
  - e. God revealed Himself in this way so that His people might know that He is holy and will be treated as holy. He meant to strike fear in their hearts and in ours. Man may not come to God on His own. If any sinner dared to approach God without a mediator, without someone to stand in the gap, then God would break forth upon him instantly and destroy him.
- II. But the Wonderful Message in This Text, As Well as That in the Lord's Supper, Is that You Have Not Come to a Mountain Which May Be Touched, But You Have Come to Spiritual Mount Zion by the Grace of Christ.
- A. The Zion Which We Are Told of Here Is Not Like Sinai.
    - 1. This mount may not be touched.
      - a. It is a spiritual mountain. It may not be touched with our material hands.
      - b. It is the reality behind the Old Testament Mount Zion upon which Jerusalem sat. And it is that same holy mountain of God which was in the garden of Eden. Remember that Ezekiel,

speaking of Lucifer, wrote, "YOU WERE IN EDEN, THE GARDEN OF GOD . . . YOU WERE ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF GOD" (28:13, 14).

- c. This is the mountain where God is pleased to dwell. It is a spiritual mountain which is in heaven, the holy place of the Most High God.
2. But this mountain is not barren. It does not stand by itself. Rather there is a city built upon it, the heavenly Jerusalem. "BUT YOU HAVE COME TO MOUNT ZION AND TO THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD, THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM."
    - a. Our God is the living God. He is not a god of wood, or stone, or metal. He is the God who is, and who was, and who is to come. He is alive, and He is the One through whom all living things have their life.
    - b. And this living God dwells, not in limbo, or in some ethereal region of light, but in a city, the city which is called the heavenly Jerusalem. Yes, God does dwell everywhere at once; He is omnipresent. But the Bible tells us that He is pleased to reveal Himself in a special way in this heavenly city.
    - c. John, the revelator, wrote, "AND HE CARRIED ME AWAY IN THE SPIRIT TO A GREAT AND HIGH MOUNTAIN, AND SHOWED ME THE HOLY CITY, JERUSALEM, COMING DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN FROM GOD, HAVING THE GLORY OF GOD" (Rev. 21:10-11).
    - d. Even as the earthly Zion pictured the holy mountain of God in heaven, so did the earthly Jerusalem picture His heavenly city.
  3. But God did not make this city that He might dwell in it alone. A city is not for an individual, but for a society. God made it that His holy creatures might live there with Him.
    - a. "BUT YOU HAVE COME TO . . . MYRIADS OF ANGELS, THE FESTAL ASSEMBLY, AND TO THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN WHO ARE ENROLLED IN HEAVEN, AND TO GOD THE JUDGE OF ALL, AND TO THE SPIRITS OF RIGHTEOUS MEN MADE PERFECT."
    - b. In this holy city are myriads of angels, that is, there are ten thousands of angels, or an innumerable host.
    - c. These are the holy angels who did not fall in the rebellion against the Lord, instigated by Lucifer. These are the elect angels that were sustained and upheld by the mercies of God.
    - d. And now we see them in heaven, in festal assembly, that is, rejoicing and singing and praising God for His mercies upon them. It is a holy celebration for their deliverance from evil. The Bible also tells us that the angels rejoice when God saves even one sinner from his sin. Jesus said, "I TELL YOU, THERE IS JOY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS OF GOD OVER ONE SINNER WHO REPENTS" (Luke 15:10).
    - e. But also present in this city is the church of the first-born. On the surface, this might seem to apply to Christ alone, for He is "THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, THE FIRST-BORN OF ALL CREATION" (Col. 1:15). But the word firstborn here is in the plural. It refers to all those who have the rights as the first-born, those who are holy to the Lord from among His people.
    - f. They are the elect of God. But they did not gain the right of the first-born by themselves. Rather, it was by their

adoption into the family of God, through their union with Christ, who is "THE FIRST-BORN OF ALL CREATION." He is the One who earned the right of first-born by accomplishing the work of redemption. And when His people are united to Him by the grace of God, That blessing is bestowed on them as well.

- g. They are also called here, "THE SPIRITS OF RIGHTEOUS MEN MADE PERFECT." When they, having trusted in Christ in this world, depart to the next, though they are still polluted by their sin, yet when they arrive in heaven, they are perfected.
- h. The bodies of God's saints are laid to rest in the grave when they die. They undergo decay and corruption. They fall asleep in Christ to await the resurrection of the dead. But their souls, which is the immaterial part of their being, is immediately taken into heaven by the holy angels, and there they are perfected. Their bodies still belong to their spirits, but they will not be reunited again until the day of Christ's coming.
- i. These too are in heaven, rejoicing in the work of the Lamb, and sharing His perfect love and fellowship with all of heaven's citizens.
- j. And, of course, the blessed God, the Judge of all men, is there as well. Heaven is His dwelling place. He is the One who brings blessing to it. If He were not there, then it would be a hell to God's people, for they long for fellowship with the living God.
- k. He is the One who has loved His people before all time, who sent His Son into the world to redeem them, and who has passed the sentence of not-guilty upon them for the sake of His well-beloved Son. And He is also the One who will judge the sinners who refused to flee to His Son on the last day through His Son.
- l. And lastly, we are told that Jesus is there, our Lord and our Redeemer. Jesus is the One that we all long to see. He is the One who gave His life to buy us back from sin, if we have trusted in Him this morning.
- m. He is the One who poured out His blood and removed our guilt. His sacrifice speaks better than that of Abel's. This does not refer to Abel's own blood, but to the blood of his sacrifice. Abel was the first man recorded in Scripture to offer a sacrificial animal to God. It was the first sacrifice of the Old Dispensation.
- n. But Christ's sacrifice is far better. The animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant only covered over sin, and had no ability to remove it, except through the merits of Christ. But Christ's sacrifice of Himself removes sin once and for all, for all of His people.

B. It Is Not Mount Sinai that You Have Come Near to This Morning, But You Have Come Near to This Heavenly Mountain of Blessing.

- 1. You have not yet made it to this heavenly place. You will not as long as you are in the body or until the Lord comes again.
  - a. The dead in Christ are there. They are enjoying the full benefits of the work of Christ.
  - b. But you are still on the earth. You are still in the body. And to be present in the body is to be absent from the Lord.

2. *But in another sense, you have come to this heavenly Mount Zion.*
  - a. *The Spirit of the risen Christ lives in you. He is the spiritual link which connects you to Christ.*
  - b. *He is your foretaste of glory. He is the down payment of spiritual blessing.*
  - c. *In the Spirit, you are lifted up into the heavenlies in worship.*
  - d. *You are in the already, though you are still in the not yet.*
  - e. *In the Spirit you are already seated with Christ in the heavenly places. You have already come to this holy mountain.*
  - f. *But until that hope of yours becomes sight, until you are removed from this world by God's mercy to take you home, you still have need of the gracious means which God has supplied to strengthen and to cheer you on your way.*
  - g. *And the Lord's Supper is a means of grace. In it, the risen Lord descends to commune with you spiritually and to strengthen and nourish you.*
  - h. *The Lord's Supper is to remind you that it is Christ alone whom you must rely on to get you there. He is the Mediator who brings you to the unapproachable God.*
  - i. *It is by His shed blood, it is through His perfect work of law-keeping, that you or I will ever enter into heaven.*
  - j. *Your own works are like filthy menstrual rags in the sight of God. They are like offering to God a bucket full of maggots, or dung, when what He requires is a mountain of pure gold.*
  - k. *Are you trusting in your own works of righteousness to save you this morning? Do you believe that you are making your own way to heaven? Do you think that your works add up to anything at all in the sight of God? Are you casting aside the Mediator and attempting to approach Mt. Zion on your own?*
  - l. *If you could have earned your way to heaven, then Christ died needlessly. If that mountain of Sinai could have been approached without a Mediator, then you could also have done it on your own. But Christ died to show you that you could never make it. If that cup could have passed it surely would have. God would not have afflicted His Son for nothing.*
  - m. *If you are trusting in your works to save you this morning, turn from them now and flee to Christ. Take hold of Him by faith. He stands ready to receive all who come to Him in faith and repentance. Do not deceive yourself into thinking that you do not need Him. Outside of Christ you will surely be swept away in judgment.*
  - n. *But if you do know Christ this morning, if He is your gracious Mediator, then prepare to come to His table with joy. For it was for you that He laid down His life, and it was for you that He gave this spiritual meal. Let us now come to Him and partake of His benefits by faith which He has mercifully provided for us. Amen.*