

Sunday January 20th 2013
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Seventy Two

1). Heb 12:18 ¶ *For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19 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. 20 (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." 21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 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, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

a). We have had laid out for us in previous verses the 5th and final part of the progressive warning that we have been tracking through the Book of Hebrews; a warning which revealed to us the climactic conclusion of appearing at Christ's Judgment Seat having despised our birthright through a lifestyle of focus on the things of this world and showed us the rejection that we will find there because of it, poignantly pictured here in – Mt 22:12 *"So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."*

b). Our verses in Hebrews then continue with drawing again from the experiences of the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt as they have done many times before. This generation, as Esau, had brought the despising of their birthright to its zenith at Kadesh Barnea by refusing to enter the land that God had given them –Heb 3:9 *Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. 10 Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they*

have not known My ways.' 11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'....."16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

c). This is the generation of a nation who is given to us as an example of that which will befall us should we do as they did – 1Co 10:11 *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

d). Ro 11:19 *You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. 22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.*

2). Now the place v18-21 of Hebrews Chapter 12 takes us to in the historical record is Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Law with a view to the Theocracy being set in place with Israel occupying their position as God's firstborn son within the land – Ex 4:22 *"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn.*

a). This then is one of the most significant events in God's dealing with His creation – it is an inherently 'good thing', and yet when we read the description of it there is no other word that comes to mind but 'scary' – Ex 19:10 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. 11 "And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 "You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 'Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain." 14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. 15 And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives." 16 ¶ Then it came to pass on the third day, in*

the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. 19 And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.

b). And according to the record in Hebrews the sight was so terrifying that even Moses said, 'I am exceedingly afraid and trembling'. Now if this event falls within the remit of the goodness of God, which it must, then just how much more terrifying will it be for those, pictured through Esau, who encounter the severity of God as a result of despising their birthright?

c). Heb 10:28 *Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

d). Even if we move from Mt. Sinai to Mt. Zion will still find this recorded of John's experience in the presence of the Lord - Re 1:16 *He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. 17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid;*

e). Again, if John the Apostle, the disciple whom Jesus loved, is struck as if dead with fear when he has nothing to fear, then what of the experience of those who hear the words, 'depart from Me I never knew you'?

f). And again from a slightly different direction let's remember that the events at Sinai foreshadow a future day when the Lord will judge Israel, both those who are alive following the Great tribulation and those who are resurrected, before He establishes the new covenant and places them at the head of the nations - In that day Israel will see both the goodness and the severity of God - Joh 5:28 *"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 "and come forth--those*

who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

f). If the warning concerning despising the birthright is the stone thrown out into the middle of the pond then the consequences of doing this are the ripples that reach our shore over and over and these ripples reach to the very end of Chapter 12 - Heb 12:29 *For our God is a consuming fire.*

g). And will hopefully continue to wash over us in the days and weeks ahead to remind us of that which we have learned and the warning we have received.

3). Now the contrast that is presented in Hebrews 12:18-24 between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion is also given to us to demonstrate once again how much better is the fulfillment of God's purpose in Christ than that given through the shadow to Moses.

a). The Law given at Sinai, the Levitical priesthood and the earthly tabernacle were all shadows of that which would be accomplished in Christ – in this sense they always had a limited shelf life that would expire at Christ's advent. Not that they were in any sense worthless, but rather were there in order to be brought to completion and therefore of themselves would be made obsolete when the better arrived - Ga 3:23 *But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

b). We might remember this from our study of earlier Chapters of Hebrews - Heb 9:11 *But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 ¶ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

c). Heb 10:1 ¶ *For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. 5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. 7 ¶ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come--In the volume of the book it is written of Me--To do Your will, O God.'" 8 Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), 9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. 10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

d). And we will no doubt also remember that the day will come, following Israel's repentance, as we noted earlier, when God will inaugurate the new covenant with His son Israel - Jer 31:31 *"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah- 32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*

e). The inauguration of this new covenant is markedly different to the old covenant which we see at Sinai - Heb 8:6 ¶ *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*

f). Heb 8:13 *In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

4). Now here is the point for us here - Heb 12:18 ¶ *For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched.....22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God,*

a). God is dealing with us on the basis of His Son's completed work and through His High Priestly ministry in the Heavenly Tabernacle – consequently the Law of Moses has no bearing on the way we are to relate to God – our promises are heavenly not earthly – we have no enduring city on the earth, but we look to the heavenly city, the city of the living God which we wait for by faith.

b). And Paul speaks of this same thing this way in - Ro 8:1 ¶ *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 ¶ and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

c). And again in - Ga 4:21 ¶ *Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar-- 25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children-- 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are*

not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband." 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.

d). And finally note how dramatic this contrast is between that presented in - Ex 19:12 *"You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.*

e). And that presented in - Heb 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

f). It would be beyond refute that what God has provided for us within this present dispensation through and by His son is incredible and extraordinary and gives us all the more reason to make sure that we are diligent so as not to fall short of His grace.

5). Let's just take a moment to look again at the description we are given of Mt. Zion - Heb 12:22 *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 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, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

a). The heavenly Jerusalem would immediately take us to the thought of rulership as it is from the New Jerusalem that Christ and His co-heirs will rule the Gentile nations during the Millennial Kingdom - Re 2:26 *"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations-- 27 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' --as I also have received from My Father; 28 "and I will give him the morning star.*

b). Now, unlike Israel at Sinai, we cannot touch the New Jerusalem with our physical senses, but we do have access to it by faith as God reveals its mysteries to us through His Word by His Spirit - 1Co 2:7 *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*

c). By faith we have access to city with foundations now that we may come boldly to the throne of grace and through faith this will one day be our home – by faith we acknowledge that our citizenship is in heaven now and through faith our citizenship in that day will be realized.

d). We have come and will come to an ‘innumerable company of angels’ Re 5:11 *Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,*

e). And we have come and will come to ‘the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven’ – the ‘church of the firstborn’ we would understand at once – the phrase ‘the general assembly’ adds into this the idea of a gathering in celebration amidst a festive atmosphere. And this really can only take us to events beyond the determinations of the Judgment Seat - 1Pe 1:8b *Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

f). Re 19:7 *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

g). We have come and will come ‘to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,’ – here is Christ no longer seen as High Priest, but now as Judge of all, both the living and the dead and here is the so great a cloud of witnesses, those who have successfully completed the race of the faith and are awaiting us before receiving the promise – Heb 11:39 *And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.*

h). We have come and we will come ‘to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel’ - Heb 9:19 *For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." 21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. 22 And according to the law almost all things are purified*

with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. 23 ¶ Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

i). And Christ's blood speaks of better things than that of Abel because Abel's blood shed at the hands of Cain provides the type whereas Christ's blood shed by His brother Israel is the fulfillment of the type and therefore inherently better.

j). There was no efficacy in Abel's blood apart from pointing to Christ, but Christ's blood makes possible the redemption of those typified by Cain in fulfillment of that which was prophesied in - Ge 4:6 ¶ *So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should [shall] rule over it."*

k). Had Cain come to repentance and done that which the Lord had commanded he would have been accepted, but instead he killed his brother and the consequences of not following God's command were waiting for him 'at the door', to overcome him – but ultimately he would come to repentance – pointing to Israel and what would be their experience in the antitype. And what makes Israel's repentance and restoration possible? The death and shed blood of the brother they slew – their national Passover Lamb.

6). And so having presented all this to us and having filled us with encouragement we are warned against complacency as a ripple from the 5th warning reaches our shore - Heb 12:25 *See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, 26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."*

a). The beginning of v25 has the idea of making sure as a matter of urgency, that we are to be continually looking, that we continually have our eyes open in a figurative sense, to make sure we do not refuse Him who speaks.

b). And this would take us back to the very beginning of the Book – Heb 1:1 ¶ *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,*

whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

c). And would echo that previously heard in our progressive warning Heb 3:7 ¶ *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, & Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,*

d). And the reason for this is made very clear - *For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,*

e). But this will have to wait until next time – if the Lord is willing.