

Hebrews - Living on Mount Zion

by J. Glyn Owen

As believers, we have come to live on Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, where we can come near to God and experience joy and singing angels.

Duration: 54:41

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 12:18-24

Topics: "Mount Zion"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the significance of two voices mentioned in the Bible. The first voice refers to the words spoken by God on Mount Sinai, where the divine law was given to the children of Israel. The preacher emphasizes that these words were relevant and suited to human understanding. The second voice refers to the sprinkled blood, specifically the blood of Jesus, which speaks of pardon and peace to those who are guilty. The preacher contrasts the two voices, highlighting the superiority of the blood of Jesus in offering better things than the blood of Abel.

Transcript

Would you kindly take your New Testament in your hands and would you turn with me, if you please, to Hebrews chapter 12. And we are going to take as the basis of our meditation this morning verses 18 to 24. We have given the title to this theme as Living on Mount Zion.

If I were to ask you your address this morning, I'm quite sure every one of you could tell me where you live, zip code and all. There might be some forgetful soul here, but I don't suppose any of us would be unable to say where we live and give some details. It would be strange if there were.

But what is your spiritual address? Where does your heart live? Where does your soul reside? Where does your mind find rest? When the pressures of daily life are over, where does your heart turn? What is your spiritual address? For where your heart is, that's where your treasure will be. Does it surprise us to find one of the inspired writers in the New Testament turning to a whole congregation of God's people and telling them, you, he says, have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God. You've arrived there, every one of you, if you are in Christ Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.

The King, sorry, not the King James, the New English Bible opens verse 13 with these words, remember where you stand. What he's trying to do is to remind these Hebrew Christians of where they've come to spiritually by the grace of God in Christ and in virtue of receiving the benefits and the blessings of the new

covenant that he has inaugurated. Now a word of caution.

Do not rashly conclude that the writer of this letter is saying that there is nothing beyond the present experience to hope for. He doesn't say that. With a one breath he says we've already come to Mount Zion and we're living there.

In the next chapter he will tell us, here have we no continuing city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. So there is something yet beyond the present. Nevertheless, nevertheless, every believing man and woman, according to this inspired writer, is living on the slopes of Mount Zion, in the heavenly Jerusalem, in the city of the living God.

We are not only enrolled in heaven, but we have access to the city and spiritually this is our location. The Apostle Paul was very fond of addressing people as being in Christ. Before he did that in any epistle, he generally addressed them as being the saints of God, shall we say, in Ephesus, or in Galatia, or in Rome, or somewhere else.

That was their physical location, their physical address. But nevertheless, he lifted up their eyes and their thoughts and he wanted them to see themselves as men and women in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus their Lord and their Savior. Now it is a similar theme that we have here.

The language is different, but the underlying thought and principle is essentially the same. The Christian has two addresses, where his body is, where he physically dwells, where his heart is, where his soul is, where his spirit is. And spiritually, the people of God live on Mount Zion and we have no right to leave the mountain, for it is the city of the living God and we must never turn our backs on him.

Now just one other word by way of introduction. The writer states this, of course, in process of stressing once again how Christianity is infinitely superior to Judaism. Oh yes, he acknowledges that the Old Testament religion itself was the product of divine revelation in the law and in the prophets, and the offspring of a divine redemption, marked at the very beginning of it, redemption from Egypt.

But the Old Testament religion was largely preparatory, largely prophetic of something beyond itself. And though there are elements of the old that are taken on into the new, the new is nevertheless new. And we speak of a new covenant, with the coming of Christ and his saving work, the ultimate and the permanent and the unsurpassable has come.

We've come to live on Mount Zion, in the city of the living God, and what God has said and done in Christ cannot be surpassed, and will not. But now, that being the main theme, let me try and elucidate these verses before us today, taking up two threads that are found there. I want to speak first of all about the two mountains, and then just a few words in closing about the two voices.

You have your Bibles open, will you look at verse 22, and then at verse 24, and I want you to see these two as standing over against each other. Verse 22 begins, we shall read it as a whole in a moment, but first of all just these words. You have not come to a mountain that may be touched, he tells the Christians, implying that the mountain to which Israel came, Mount Sinai, as it's evident from the context, was a mountain that could be touched.

It was tangible, it was material, it had a particular geographical location. It tells the Christian, you have not come to a mountain that may be touched. The ancient people came to a mountain of that order.

Verse 24, but you, he says, have come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. Two mountains, Sinai and Zion. Now let's look first at the tangible and the earthly Mount Sinai.

Let me read now verses 18 to 21. You have not come to a mountain that can be touched, and that is burning with fire, to darkness, gloom, and storm, to a trumpet blast, or to such a voice speaking words, so that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded. If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.

The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, I am trembling with fear. Mount Sinai had its own distinctive features and significance of which the writer was very fully aware. Now that is reflected in his very careful references to what God did there on the occasion when he ratified his covenant with Israel as a people.

I want to notice two or three things about Mount Sinai. First of all, the occasion to which this passage refers. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not describing Mount Sinai as it was all the while, but he's describing Sinai on a given occasion, a special occasion.

The occasion when God came down in fire and smoke in order to impart his law to his people Israel, whom he had taken into covenant. Now you will find reference to this in the passage we read this morning from Exodus 19, also in Exodus 20, and again Moses writes of it 40 years later in Deuteronomy chapter 4. These are remarkable utterances and descriptions. Let me just remind you of some of the things we read this morning.

We read about thunder and lightning with a thick cloud over the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast sounded. Later on, Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the law descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace.

The whole mountain trembled violently and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. And later on in Deuteronomy, that Deuteronomy passage, chapter 4, you read words like this.

You read of the mountain with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the Lord spoke to you, says Moses, out of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but you saw no form.

There was only a voice, and Moses was afraid. Now get the picture. This is something very awesome and awe-inspiring.

God's law in substance or principle seems to have been written into the very nature of man as God made him after his own image. There was an innate knowledge given to our first parents, an innate knowledge of the will of God, of the law of God. But sin brought havoc in that area.

With man's fall, the efficacious munitions of that condition of heart were radically affected. Sin corrupted the soul of man and largely obliterated that. I say largely, certainly not completely.

But the authority of the inner voice that bore witness to the law of God and its demands, the authority of it was lost in large measure. Therefore, you see, when God started afresh with Israel and he called a new entity into being, he called Abram and started afresh, God gave his law anew. Because men cannot walk with God unless they know what he likes and what he dislikes, what he commands and what he commends or what he condemns.

It is necessary to know what is God's will, what are his tastes, what does he condemn, what does he commend. And you cannot walk with God unless you know what he wants of you. And so on Israel, on Sinai's slopes, God came down to impart his law to his people in covenant with him.

Now that's why we have these terrifying, what can we call them, eruptions, cataclysms, call them anything you like. This is why we have the fire and the smoke and the sound of trumpets and many other things and lightnings and thundering. They all come to indicate, you see, that the God of creation is well and alive, alive and well.

And none less than he who said in the beginning, let there be and there was, none less than he has come down on Sinai's slopes to give his law, to reveal his will to men whom he's taking into covenant. It is no light thing to belong to God. And we need to know that it is God who speaks.

God manifests it in a language that was understood by the people. They knew that the Almighty God, this was no man-made fantasy. This was not something that Moses had orchestrated.

This was not a conjurer standing on the slopes or the peaks of Sinai trying to make a loud noise. No, no, no, no. They knew it was God, the God of all creation.

And everything, everything added to the awesomeness, and may I say the awfulness of it, the location of Sinai itself added to the solemnity of the occasion. You see, Sinai was out in a desert place and it was wholly deserted. No one ever lived there.

So that you can't appeal to people, you can't run away from what's happening, there's no place to run. It's in the desert, there's no hiding place, there's no food to eat, there's no water to drink apart from the sovereign provision of God. It's in the desert, it's deserted.

Moreover, God chose to speak from the high peak of the mountain, out from the very heart on the top of a mountain peak somewhere, and it created a tremendous effect. It was almost a dramatization of what we read of in the New Testament as the future and final judgment of all nations. God stands aloft above his people and out of the thunder and the cloud, with a voice that wakes the dead, he utters his law.

He stands in solemn majesty, not eyeball to eyeball, as an equal with men, but as the Lord of all creation, speaking down and addressing them, thou shalt, thou shalt not. The only one who ultimately has the right to speak like that. The impression which Sinai made therefore was tremendous.

Those who saw Sinai on that occasion and heard the voice of God amid the thunder claps and the lightning flashes, to them it spoke with peculiar eloquence of at least two things. There are many other things too. It spoke of the unutterable majesty of God, and it spoke of the unapproachable glory of God.

They were warned not to come near. God is coming down to them, and he is going to speak from his own vantage point, but they were told not to come too near to him. I'm coming to you, and I will speak to you from the appropriate place in the appropriate way, but don't you come to me.

Sin separated you from me. I receive you into audience, but don't come too near. Don't touch the mountain.

The most humble beast and the best of men alike would be the objects of God's holy wrath if they touched the mountain of his presence. Now the half has not been said, but that was Sinai, and that's not where you

Christian are at this morning. If you're a believing man or a believing woman, you've left the slopes of Sinai behind for something that is infinitely better.

We've not come, says the writer of the epistles of the Hebrews, we've not come to the mount that may be touched with all its smoke and its fire and its awesomeness. This does not mean to say that all awe has gone out of religion in the New Testament by no means, but we've not come to that mountain with its terror. All Israel were afraid, even Moses was afraid, and he trembled terribly.

Now with that much reference to Sinai, let's look at the spiritual and heavenly Mount Zion. But you, says the writer, you have come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. Now there is a contrast here.

I'm not going to enlarge on this point, but we need to see the contrast between the tangible mountain where Israel physically gathered, and the spiritual mountain where Christians are brought in Christ. And this, of course, reveals the progress from Old Testament religion into Christianity, pure and simple. The contrast marks a movement from the tangible to the intangible, from the material into the spiritual, from the temporal to the eternal.

Many Christians want to go back like some of these Hebrew Christians of old. They want to abandon the spiritual, and they want to go back to something they can touch and handle and so forth. And they want to go back from the eternal to something that is temporal.

No, no, that's turning the clock back. And if you see Jesus Christ as He really is, you can't do it. If you trust Him as God has given Him to us, you can't do that.

It is to deny the faith. But Christ is not only the first, but the last. He's the Alpha and the Omega, and you cannot surpass Him.

To quote the title of a book by G. Campbell Morgan written many years ago, He is God's last word to man, and His redemption is a completed redemption. You cannot add to it. If you think you can, it means you've never known Christ.

Now let's get a little of the background of Mount Zion. Mount Zion was the site of the Jebusite stronghold which David captured and made his royal residence seven years after he had come to power as a king. You have the record, I believe, in 2 Samuel chapter 5. In 2 Samuel chapter 6, we are told that David made it a religious center when he deposited the Ark of the Lord there, and the tribes came and worshiped there.

So you see, it was the seat of David's kingly rule, and it was also the seat of God's worship. And these two things were bound together in the Davidic rule. David fell many times and did many things that were wrong, but he did some great things that I believe the church has yet to appreciate.

This was one. He tied his own royalty and his own rule to the divine presence and the worship of God. Perhaps that was why David was so much a man after God's own heart, despite his sin.

So Zion became the earthly dwelling place of God. The Ark dwelled in Zion. When later Solomon built the temple on the hill to the north of Zion and installed the sacred Ark there, the name Zion came to stand for the whole area, and it included the whole area equal to what we speak of today as Jerusalem.

Now as the earthly Zion was the meeting point of the tribes of the old Israel, so the heavenly Zion is the meeting point of the new Israel. Paul puts it remarkably, you know. I don't know that we have ever realized the significance of this word in Galatians chapter 4, where Paul speaks of the Jerusalem that is above, which is free.

He says, which is our mother. You don't think of a city like that, do you? The Jerusalem that is above, which is our mother. Whether you're a Jew or a Gentile, you are begotten by and to the city of Jerusalem that is above.

You don't belong to the earthly Jerusalem, even if you're a Jew, and certainly not if you're a Gentile. As the redeemed of the Lord, as the Israel of God, called into existence by the Messiah God sent, your mother city, says the Apostle Paul, is the Jerusalem which is above, which is free. A Jerusalem that is below is never wholly free.

Now granted then that Mount Zion stands for the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, to which we all belong who are in Christ. What is there to make so much fuss about it? What is the writer of this epistle got to say about it when he's coming to the end of his epistle? What's to talk about? What is there big? What is there great? What is there any better about this than about Sinai? Now let me try very briefly to sum up. If you read the passage carefully, you will see that he has said seven things about Sinai.

I have no time to discuss them. But then he goes on and he says seven things about Mount Zion, and I want to say just a little word about these, only a little word. I want you to see the privilege that is yours and mine this morning.

Men and women, have you been bought with the blood of Christ? Do you know what it is to come to the fountain where sin is washed away and put your arms around God's Messiah and trust him and acknowledge him as your own? Are you doing that? Is there anybody here this morning who hasn't done that? If you have done that, I want you to dance this morning. And if you can't dance, I want to suggest to you there's something wrong with you. What is there about this heavenly Zion, this city of the living God to which we've come and where we dwell, our hearts through whom? What is there about it? Let the man tell us.

Well, first of all, he says you have come to Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. Can I just say one thing about that? You know there's many things to say, but I can only say one. God visited Mount Sinai.

He visited it. He came down. He made himself heard and he made himself felt.

And he changed the course of history because of a visit he made there. But God dwells on Mount Sinai. It's his city.

It's his home. It's the place of his habitation. And the whole burden of the epistle to the Hebrews, you see, is this.

It is to say that the way has been opened for sinners to come in between the veil, even into the very place of God's own dwelling. You come to his home and I'd make you dance. You, Christian, are not standing on the slopes of Sinai and told to keep your distance.

You, in the language of the epistle to the Hebrews, are urged, let us draw near. Come near us, says God. I want you near me like a father calling his children.

Come near to me, boys. Come near to me, my girls. Come near to me.

I want you near. I want you in my home. Long before you have the new body that will enable you to walk the streets of the new Jerusalem, long before that, he wants your heart there.

He wants you spiritually there. That's what it means to be a Christian. Set your affection on things above.

Then, secondly, you have come, he says, to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly. Deuteronomy 33 and 2 refers to myriads of holy ones, angels, who were in attendance at Sinai. Neither are they absent on Mount Zion.

You don't see them, but they're around. I'm afraid we Christians know very little about angels. We ought to know more.

But the thing I want you to notice here is this. It's the change of mood. If the angels were present on Mount Sinai, then they were as awed and terrified as others were.

But here on Mount Zion, you notice ten thousands and thousands of angels in joyful assembly. This is the different mood altogether. Here, the angels of God have got a song.

You see, that's what John heard on Patmos. I'll be returning to this later on. He heard the angels singing.

And this is something tremendous. When the law was given and they knew the significance of the law, the angels couldn't sing because the law was going to condemn every man as a lawbreaker. Our angels could sing knowing that.

They could only weep and tremble. On Mount Sinai, it's different. The angels are singing.

John overheard them. You remember Revelation 5. Then I looked, he says, and heard the voice of many angels. Numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, they encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders in a loud voice.

They sang. Did you notice that? They sang. What are you going to sing? Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise and much else.

And if you go on to Revelation chapter seven, you will hear again. After others have been involved in singing, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. We read all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures.

And they fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, what are they going to say now? Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. The angels are singing on Mount Zion. The mood's different.

And you've come there. I've come there. If you're a believer, if you're a Christian man, you've come into the presence of angels that will teach you to sing.

Thirdly, enter the church or the assembly of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. The first Christian martyr Stephen tells us that Israel gathered in the wilderness as a church, an ecclesia, an assembly of God's people. That's what it means.

And Israel was more than a mere nation. It was a theocracy. It was God's, it comprised God's people.

It was, you remember, because Pharaoh refused to accept Israel's peculiar relationship to God that she was finally judged with a tenth plague. God said to Moses, tell them to let my people, my firstborn, free. My firstborn, Israel.

Pharaoh wouldn't have it. Very well, says the Lord, the firstborn of the Egyptians, both man and beast, I will take their lives away. Because they've despised my firstborn.

That's the rationale. Now here God calls through his servant, the writer of this epistle, he calls his redeemed in the New Testament age also, his firstborn. But what he says about them is this, that they are the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven.

You remember how the disciples, the seventy, came back to Jesus after their first mission out evangelizing, and they were so thrilled because they said, oh we've seen even the demons running away at the name of Jesus. We've been casting our demons in his name and it's amazing. Says Jesus, hold on, hold on.

That's wonderful, but don't make all that fuss about it. There's something more important even than that. I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

But wait a minute, he says, rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven. Believer, if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you come to Christ, your name is enrolled in the city of God, and the role there is safe and secure. It'll never be lost.

Over and over we read of it in other places as the Lamb, we read of the Lamb's book of life, probably referring to the same entity. The names of the redeemed are recorded in heaven. Fourthly, you have come to God the judge of all.

Now this should take our breath away. Israel was warned not to come near to God, the lawgiver, on the occasion of his visitation to Sinai. The new Israel has come to live in God's very house, in God's very home, in God's very city, and God, the God to whom we've come, is the judge more.

He's the judge of all men. There is no man, there is no woman, Christian or non-Christian, of whom it can be said, God is not your judge, God is your judge. But listen, the angels are singing in the presence of the judge.

They're in joyful assembly, and we have been brought to Mount Zion, and apparently God, the judge of all, is one that we can now speak to freely without altogether being overcome and incapable of joy, incapable of hope, incapable of anything other than turning our backs toward him. On Sinai, a sense of dread and awe brooded over the hosts like the overhanging black cloud that enveloped the divine presence. The mood on Zion's mountain is entirely different.

Even in the presence of God, the judge, the saints can lift up their heads and sing. That's the transformation. We'll come back to it in a moment.

Let me go on. That's not the only thing. And if you're following the argument, you will see how the picture accumulates amazingly, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect.

Can you rejoice in the presence of righteous men on earth? Are you at home with the godly and the fearing on earth? That's quite a test, you know. How do you fit in with the really godly people? You find them to be speaking your language, thinking your thoughts, breathing your own spirit. You find that? But listen, these are the spirits of just men, period, no not period, comma, made perfect.

And we've come into the presence of the spirits of just men made perfect. This is what is spoken of so often as the communion of saints. Our hearts are there too, and our spirits of contacts and communion with them.

We've come there. We've come there, says the writer of the epistle. Who are these? I have no time to try and talk about the different understanding and different interpretations.

I conclude that they refer to those who have been justified by faith through grace from Abram, day before Abram, Abel, down through the centuries of time. Those to whom righteousness has been imputed and imparted, and those who, because of the work of Christ, have been made perfect already in the sense that all perfection is theirs in Christ, and in the due process of time it will be applied to them. And lastly here, number six, to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.

We've come into the presence of Jesus. We've come to Jesus. You know those words came to me with renewed vigor.

I don't know that I've used them for a number of years. Come to Jesus. And I saw them here.

We've come to Jesus. We've come to Jesus. We've come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.

Are you ashamed to say that you've come to Jesus? God have mercy on you, if you are. We've come to Jesus. Israel boasted that Moses was the mediator between them and God.

He mediated the law to them. They asked God to be quiet, not to speak directly to them. God, we're told by the instrumentality of Moses.

Though he wrote them with his own fingers, he gave the law through the instrumentality of a mediator. But we can boast of a better mediator than Moses. We can boast of none other than the Son of God, God's only and well-beloved Son.

He is our mediator, and we've come to him. Before I go on, where are you this morning? Are you on Sinai trembling under the law of God, condemned by it, exposed by it, with no place to hide from him and from his law? And there is no place, my friend, other than the place that is spoken of here, to hide from the wrath of the lawgiver. God is the moral governor of the universe, and he is Lord, and we are answerable to him.

Are you on Sinai? Are you open to the anger of a holy God against your sin this morning? Or have you been transferred from Sinai to Zion? Can you walk in the presence of the judge? Can you sing with the spirits of just men made perfect? Are you at home with the saints, the perfected saints? And that brings me to the last word. I want to say a few words about the two voices. Now, if you've got your New Testament open, I want to take a phrase from verse 19 and a phrase from verse 24, and I want to see

them one over against the other.

In verse 19b, the second part of verse 19, we read of a voice speaking words. A voice speaking words. Strange statement.

In verse 24, the second part, the sprinkled blood that speaks better things than that of Abel. The voice that speaks and the blood that speaks better things than that of Abel. Just a word about these two.

A voice speaking words. Now, the reference here, of course, is to Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse 12, where Moses reminded the children of Israel later on, 40 years after the event, you heard the sound of words, he says, but you saw no form. There was only a voice.

The reference here then is to the awesome sound of the words that fell from the lips of the divine lawgiver on Sinai. No corporeal figure was visible to the human eye, and yet a voice speaking words. Words suited to human understanding, words relevant to human life.

A voice speaking words of revelation. Voice, the voice of God was heard from Sinai, out of the flaming mountain, out of the darkness and gloom and storm that enveloped the mount. A voice speaking word was heard.

That's all about that. But now look at this, the sprinkled blood that speaks, the voice of words, the voice of blood that speaks a better word or better things than that of Abel. Now, let me pose a question here.

How do you come from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion? How do you make the spiritual pilgrimage from the one to the other? Brothers and sisters, with awe, but with a sense of the wonder of it, anew upon my soul, let me remind you, it is only by the blood of Jesus. It is only by the blood of Jesus. It is only by the sacrifice of the cross.

It is only by the bloody death of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth, dying and dripping with blood upon the cross. It is only by the blood of Jesus that you come from under the terrors of Sinai into the joys and privileges of Mount Zion. There is no other way.

I have no time to argue about this. I can only worship at the thought of it. And I hope you can too.

If you come from Sinai to Zion, it must be by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, according to the Bible, the blood of Jesus. Ah, but it does not end there. The sprinkled blood.

The sprinkled blood. What on earth does that mean? Well, you remember, you go back to chapter 9 and into chapter 10 and you will see you have got it all there. He is speaking against the background of what he said.

In the Old Testament, when the sacrifice for sin had been made, then the high priest or the priest would take it and he would sprinkle the altar. Or on the Day of Atonement, once every year, the high priest would sprinkle the mercy seat. Sprinkle the mercy seat in which was the law, do not forget, as well as other things.

The law was in the Ark of the Covenant and the seat of gold was sprinkled. The lid of gold was sprinkled with blood. And that is why he was able to come in.

On the basis of the blood that sprinkled the mercy seat. Now you see the significance of all this is this. That our Lord Jesus, our great high priest, has passed through the heavens into the very presence of God in His glory.

And He sits in the presence of God as the Lamb that had been slain from before the foundations of the world. And His blood, at least metaphorically, sprinkles the throne of God and makes it our mercy seat. And it is because the blood of Jesus cries into the ear of God, the Judge, for mercy upon those for whom He has died and shed His blood.

It's because the blood of Jesus cries to the Father, you and I can enter in with peace. The blood of Jesus, the sprinkled blood of Jesus, speaks. It speaks peace in the presence of God, and it speaks peace in our hearts.

You remember the story of the blood of Abel, don't you? Genesis chapter 4, Abel slew his brother Cain. And God came around and He said, Abel, what on earth have you done? The voice of your brother's blood comes to me from the very ground that received it, demanding retribution and judgment and justice. The ground is unwilling to yield fruit for him, so he's going to be a vagabond.

He cannot live in this world having done this kind of thing. You see, in those days, though sin had come into the world, the cosmos was unwilling to put up with it. The very creation rebelled at sin, but today it's all so different.

The blood of Abel cried for vengeance. Here is something more precious. The blood of the Lord Jesus cries for mercy for those who come to Him as the mediator of promises that were covenanted, promised in Jeremiah and in Ezekiel, fulfilled in the blessed Son of God.

And on that night in which he was betrayed, he said, this is the blood of the new covenant in my blood. How do we get from Sinai to Zion? Brother and sister, come in under the blood of Christ. Leave your sin.

Come under the sacrifice of Christ. Put yourself under it. Come and trust under the shadow of His wing.

Come and trust Him wholly and only and exclusively and for all time as your Savior and your Lord. Is there anybody here this morning who doesn't do that? I beg you, do it now. You may never have the opportunity again that you're having this morning to come from Sinai to Zion, to come under the blood of Christ, just as the Israel of old put the blood of the lamb on the lintels and the doorposts of their houses, metaphorically sprinkle your life with the blood of Jesus and say, my Lord Jesus, I trust you in your sacrifice and resurrection as the lamb upon the throne to be my Savior and my God.

Will you do that? There is nothing in the whole world of human experience more precious than the voice of Jesus' blood. Well, may we ask, who was it? Was it Thomas Bilney who wrote that hymn? Oh, how shall I, whose native sphere is dark, whose mind is dim, before the ineffable appear and on my naked spirit bear the uncreated beam? And he answered his own question. There is a way for man to rise to that sublime abode, an offering and a sacrifice, a Holy Spirit's energies and advocate with God.

The blood of Jesus whispers pardon and peace to the guilty culprit today as yesterday. Now, I must close. I have one thing to say.

Somebody's asking me this morning what I'm often asked. It shows the limitations of my preaching. How does this relate to life? What's it got to say to me now going back to the problems of tomorrow or even

today? How does this relate to my very experience? Has it got anything to say? Is it purely doctrinal? Indeed, it is not.

It's experiential, if anything is. Let me give you the reply, the best reply I can give you. Somebody else may give you a better one.

But the one that comes to me and has come to me very forcibly to with great blessing to my soul over recent days is this. You remember John on Patmos? You remember the Apostle John? He was banished on Patmos for the testimony of the Lord Jesus and for the truth of the gospel. He was banished from men.

This was an uninhabited island measuring somewhere around by 10 miles by five. And there he was, probably with a wild beast. Somebody has suggested that there may have been some gods looking after him.

I don't know, but in any case, they wouldn't have been very friendly. He's separated from friend as well as believer, from his family as well as from those of the fellowship of the saints. He looks at the rocks that went down to the sea, the precipices, and he says, I can't go out there.

I can't go back. And he looks at the sea and he hears the turbulence. He hears the ocean waves.

There is no way out. And John is alone. What do you do in a situation like that? You know what he tells us? I was in the spirit on the Lord's day.

Hallelujah. What do you mean John? Oh, he said, I was on the wavelength of Mount Zion. I was tuning in, he says, and I was in touch.

And I was in communion. And the very memory of it, he says, makes me sing. Unto him that loves us and has washed us from our sins in his own blood and has made us a kingdom and priests even to God and our Father.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. John nearly forgot the letter he was to write because he was so absorbed with something that happened on Patmos.

What happened, John? Well, now you read the book of Revelation. I want you to see two things. What happened was this.

He saw the myriads of angels, thousands upon thousands and ten more thousands. And he heard them singing and he recognized two things. He saw the throne of God and he saw God upon the throne.

And in the midst of the throne, he saw the lamb. That's the one thing I bracket all that together. The other thing he saw was this.

In the midst of the churches, he saw one like unto a son of man who is, as the context will tell you, our Lord Jesus Christ. Really, we should have moved to it in the other way. First of all, he saw Jesus among the candlesticks, among his churches, right here with his people on earth, persecuted, beaten, cast down, alone like himself on Patmos.

But the Lord was with the candlesticks. One like unto a son of man whose kingdom is forever and ever. And then he saw the one among the candlesticks sitting on the throne of God in the midst of the throne.

And all that goes on seems to revolve around him and everything down beneath the beast and the harlot and all the other strange characters that are here in the book of Revelation. They're under his feet. They're under his rule.

He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Where is the emperor? It doesn't matter. Jesus is in the midst of the throne with God the Father Almighty.

You see what happened? He's got in touch with the heavenly Jerusalem and he's living in communion. And Patmos became the stage for communion and blessing that made the old man sing with joy unspeakable and full of glory. My friend, when you and I go back into another week, we need to remember our spiritual address.

Have you come to Mount Zion? For God's sake and your soul's sake, read your titles clear and the terms of the covenant and what are yours. And don't let the noise of the world stir you to such an extent that you lose touch with the mother city of the Jerusalem that is above. For it is only by keeping in the closest communion with God the Father, Judge and Savior and the Mediator and the spirits of just men made perfect that you and I can be a colony of heaven here amidst the problems and the sins and the temptations of earth.

And once you do that, you'll be able to sing the top lady. Ah, you can look back to Sinai and you can read the law and you know that it applies to you. These are God's requirements for you and from you and from me.

And you too will be able to sing the terrors of law and of God with me can have nothing to do. Shall I repeat that? The terrors of law and of God with me can have nothing to do. Why? My Savior's obedience and blood hide all my transgressions from you.

The blood of Jesus speaks the better things of pardon, hope and everlasting life. And I appeal again, if there is any man or woman here this morning who doesn't know this in experience, don't go out through those doors. Come to peace with God in Christ.

Come to trust him. Join his people as one of them and acknowledge him as your own. And I invite you to come to us if you think we can be of help to you.

Now let us sing to conclude this morning. A very familiar hymn number 297. Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God.

He whose word cannot be broken formed thee for his own abode. On the rock of ages founded, what can shake thy sure repose? With salvation's wall surrounded, thou mayst smile at all thy foes. 297.

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