



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 12:18–24; Exodus 19:16–22; 20:18–21; Deuteronomy 4:11–12; Haggai 2:6–7

“Mount Sinai and Mount Zion”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, again we ask Thy blessing upon us as we study the Scriptures. We again thank Thee for the privilege that is ours, when we think about the fact that the vast, vast majority of the people who live on this globe have no idea of, really, what the Scriptures are, nor do they have access to the Scriptures as the word of God. We have been greatly blessed. We pray, Lord, that we may be responsive to Thy word, properly, and may be means for the spreading of the word of God to others, who do not know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and do not understand how important it is to have the word of God; to read it, to ponder it, to believe it, and to enjoy the blessings that are set forth in it, for those who belong to Thee through Jesus Christ. We ask Thy blessing upon us this evening as we look at the end of the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. May it be a time of spiritual blessing for each one of us, for him who speaks, for those who hear. We give Thee thanks for our Lord Jesus Christ. We think of all of the things that this author singles out in this very passage, concerning him. And we give Thee thanks. May Thy presence be with us, through the Spirit, in spiritual blessing.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] I'd like to read three passages, really four passages from the Old Testament, as preparation for the passage in Hebrews, chapter 12. So turn with me, first, to Exodus chapter 19,

verse 16 through verse 22. These passages except for the final one, well really, the final one in the Old Testament, have to do with the giving of the Law. And in 19:16 of Exodus, we read these words.

“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. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 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. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.”

Now, in the next chapter, chapter 20, in verse 18, the effect upon the people of the giving of the Law.

“Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, ‘You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.’ And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.’ So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.”

Now, in Deuteronomy chapter 4 in verse 11, we have a reflection of Moses on that event. And verse 11 and verse 12 of Deuteronomy 4, have to do with what we've been reading. Verse 11, Deuteronomy 4.

“Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice.”

Now, turn all the way over to the book of Haggai. The book of Haggai—that's in the Old Testament. It's near the end of the Old Testament, and it's between Zephaniah and Zachariah and so, if by chance you hit upon one of those prophets, you're close. Haggai chapter 2, verse 6 and verse 7. Now, the prophecy, of course, has to do with the future, but you can see that what he states is something that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews lets us know that he's read, and he's going to comment upon it. Verse 6, Haggai 2.

“For thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Once more it is a little while I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the desire of all nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

Now, notice the prophecy of the shaking of the nations. Now, we turn to our passage in Hebrews chapter 12, and it's obvious the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has read these passages and makes them the fundamental ground of what he's going to say here in chapter 12, verse 18 through verse 29.

Remember, in the preceding section, he has mentioned the fact that they should strengthen themselves, strengthen their hands which hang down, the feeble knees, make straight paths for your

feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated but rather be healed. He said, in verse 15. “Looking carefully lest any one fall short of the grace of God,” and then gives the illustration of Esau, who does just that. Now, verse 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, [He’s thinking about those passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy] 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. 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.” [That last clause “or shot with an arrow,” is not found in what New Testament scholars consider, generally, as the best manuscripts. But it is found in the Authorized Version. Verse 21]: And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.’ But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 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, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. 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, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, ‘Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.’ Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom, which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.”

Many students of the Epistle to the Hebrews feel that in some ways this particular chapter is the climax of the epistle. His dominating aim has been to have his readers harken to the voice of

God; the voice of God as he would expound it or expand it, as the final priest, the final covenant, and the final sacrifice. This is what God is trying to let his readers know. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to point out there is one final priest, there is one final covenant and one final sacrifice.

Now, he makes these last points. He points out that the Old Testament or the old covenant was a transitory and changeable manifestation of God. The New, on the other hand, is eternally stable. You can see from these things that are mentioned here, with reference to Moses, and the mountains quaking, that what he contrasts with the things that we have now, are things that are changeable. The changeable manifestations of God that were there; but now we have the things that are eternally stable.

The old Covenant stressed his inaccessible majesty. And, of course, you can see that, particularly, in the giving of the Ten Commandments. The people were not allowed to touch the mountain upon which the Lord spoke to Moses. And, as a matter of fact, they, themselves, wanted to be as far away from it as they could because, evidently, the sense of the holiness of the Lord God so fell upon them that they felt their own inadequacy. And, not only felt their own inadequacy, but they felt the fear of a creature in the presence of the holiness and majesty of the Lord God in Heaven.

So the old Covenant stressed his inaccessible majesty and throughout the Bible we have a lot of that, of course. But in the New Covenant, as our author points out, the things to which we have come, what we now have come to in Jesus Christ, but only in Jesus Christ, is his approachable humanity. In fact, as he winds up his list of the things to which we have come, he reaches the climax in saying, “And to Jesus,” notice he does not say, “to Jesus Christ.” He does not say, “to our Lord.” He does not say, “to our Lord Jesus Christ.” He says, “to Jesus the Mediator.”

Now, the simple term “Jesus” is one of the favorite terms of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. If you will read through this book with that in mind you’ll find that in a number of places. That term, by itself, of course, underlines the humanity of our Lord. He’s one of us. He’s our

Mediator. He’s our Redeemer and we stand in him; he stands for us, what he did in dying upon Calvary’s cross he did for his people, for whom he stood.

So when we say, the old stresses the inaccessible majesty of the Lord God as illustrated in the giving of the Law; the New Testament, the New Covenant, in the light of the way it sets forth our Redeemer as the God-man, stresses the approachable humanity of our Lord. Verse 24, particularly, “To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”

Now, the author also makes one other interesting point. He says that the old covenant, if disobeyed, it brought liability to fire and smoke. But the new covenant is so much greater than the old covenant that when disobeyed, the liability is to the eternal flame himself, for it concludes with, “For our God is a consuming fire!” “You have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest.” But our God is far more dangerous and perilous than that. He, himself, is a consuming fire.

Now, I think, you can see, as we draw near the end of this epistle, the beautiful unity of the book. The author returns to the idea of his opening paragraph; that is, that God has spoken to us. He’s spoken to us in the prophets and he’s spoken to us in his Son. Now, he comes back to the idea of that opening paragraph of the two voices; the voice of God in the old covenant, the voice of God in the new covenant. One shook the earth at Sinai, the other shall shake both heaven and earth at the Second Advent, when he ushers in the unshakable kingdom. And the appeal of the author, of course, to his readers is O, that there may be no apostasy. That’s the appeal that we receive, when we read this book. The appeal is that we may not be like those that he feared were in the body of the believers; those who had made a profession of faith but did not really have a fundamental trust in the Lord; who now because of the condition of their spiritual life gave evidence to him that they might be individuals who had never, truly believed. He speaks about that in chapter 5. So O may there be no apostasy upon the part of you who profess faith in our Lord. That’s something that all of us, in this auditorium, all of us in our church, and those of you who come from other churches, all of us in

all of our evangelical churches, need constantly as a warning. Be sure that we really do belong to him who died for sinners.

Well, we recover here the lost accent of God’s word in the twentieth century, of the holiness of God. There’s a marvelous hymn that is often cited. I don’t know that it’s sung very much but its words are, “Eternal Light, Eternal Light, how pure the soul must be, when placed within Thy searching sight, it shrinks not, but with undisturbed delight, can live and look on Thee. The Spirits that surround Thy throne, may bear the burning bliss, but that is surely theirs alone, since they have never, never known, a fallen world like this.”

Well, I think, you can see if you’ll just look at these verses here in verse 18 through verse 29, that what our author is doing, fundamentally, is comparing and contrasting the two covenants. Notice verse 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.” And then, verse 22, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” And then, of course, he appeals in verse 25, to the greater obligations that coming to Mount Zion and the city of the living God lays upon us who are professing believers.

So we want to look at it now, and the first thing we look at, always, when we are studying the Bible is the first word, usually. “For.” For. Well, now, why does he say “For”? “For you have not come.” Why doesn’t he just say, “You have not come.” Well, because, he’s giving us a connected argument, a connected treatment of thought. The epistles of the New Testament constantly have this. Peter, especially Paul, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is a master of connected thought. Scholars talk about the argument of an epistle, or the flow of the epistle’s thought; but particularly of the argument. What is the “for” related to? Well, he has set up in verse 15, “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God,” “For.” Now, he’s going to tell them, “For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire,” but you have come to Mount Zion.

So we must look diligently. We must look like bishops. We must look like elders. Look diligently for our privileges and responsibilities are infinitely greater than the Old Testament saints. He states the privileges negatively and positively. “For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched,” I am really, I am so glad I was not in that company of Israelites who had to stand around that mountain and see that awesome sight that provoked such fear that they said, themselves, “We don’t want to hear God, let God talk to Moses and let him talk to us.” But we don’t want to hear the Lord God in Heaven. So it’s a privilege for us not to have been there with the children of Israel. So he’s contrasting then, if I may put it this way, the Sinaitic revelation and the Zionitic revelation. That is, the revelation of the old covenant law, the revelation of the new covenant, which he’s expounded so marvelously in his epistle.

Notice the two words; they are exactly alike in the original text, “You have not come.” That, of course, with the negative. And then, verse 22, “You have come.” without the negative. So “You have come,” “You have not come.” So he’s talking about what they have not come to; what they have now come to. The former, the Sinaitic revelation is the revelation of the sheer majesty of God, the absolute inapproachability of God, the sheer terror of the presence of the Lord God apart from the blood of sprinkling of the cross of Calvary. That’s so important for us to remember because it’s a marvelous picture of how our sin and our judgment, and the fact that apart from Jesus Christ we should experience the lostness of eternal life, of eternal judgment.

Now, I won’t go into detail there, because, I think, reading those passages is sufficient to give them. We want to look at the greater covenant, covenant beginning with verse 22 through verse 24.

Now, he says that, “You have come to Mount Zion.” Well, now, I don’t remember ever having come to Mount Zion, since I am in Texas, it’s even less likely that I’ve come to Mount Zion. If it was in Western North Carolina, you might look around for something that might more suitably be called “Mount Zion.” I know, someone is going to tell me, some Texan is going to come up and tell me, “We have high mountains, too.” We do have high mountains, there just isn’t anything on



them but rocks. Have you seen Texas’ mountains? Now, I have not been to the Big Bend country. Now, you’re going to say, “That shows how unqualified you are to talk about the beauty of Texas.” And I admit, if you say that to me, you have a point.

But, here he says, “You have come to Mount Zion.” Now, when, I think, about this “you have come” and to “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” the very fact that he puts it this way that we “have come” would let me know that he’s not talking about what we have in experience now, but what we have by position being in Christ. So we have in principle come to this position before the Lord God. We have come to Mount Zion. We are as if we have come to Mount Zion. We are as if we have come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, because it’s so certain that we will experience these things. The future is already present for us in the sense that in today and the blessings that we have in Jesus Christ, we possess the things that will be ours in the future.

One of the interesting things about this word, that’s used twice in verse 18 and verse 22, “you have come.” Verse 18 with the negative, “you have not come.” But the same word, same verb, “you have come,” is in a tense that ordinarily refers to something in the past, the results of which continue, at least, to the present. So, in other words, it’s not “you came,” but “you have come,” and you now stand in this position of being possessed in reality of Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of the firstborn and all of the other blessings that are set forth here. This is our permanent status, so to speak. We say “our position” before the Lord God.

Many years ago, I was reading in the paper. In fact, I was in Cincinnati at the time and preaching there, and on March the third, nineteen sixty-nine, I was looking at the Cincinnati paper, *The Post and Times*, and was attracted to an article that says, “Miser leaves two hundred thousand dollars.” Now, this is not about any friend that you or I may know, you understand. “Miser leaves two hundred thousand dollars. No one ever learned what happened to Scotchie Shemansky, that winter night seven years ago.” So he died or at least he disappeared in nineteen sixty-two. “Now they are disposing of the fortune Scotchie built while working as a repairman along the Pennsylvania

Railroad tracks for fifty years. He lived alone in caves and shacks, and skillfully invested his money in the stock market. He didn't take *The Wall Street Journal*. He went into the bank and into the other buildings in the little town of Mocanaqua.” I hope that's the way you pronounced that, it's an Indian name. Some Pennsylvanian, we have some in the audience, Pennsylvanians can come up and correct me. Mocanaqua. “But he, evidently, invested the small amounts of money that he had, when he was born in Poland, came over here, and in fact, this article says, “He walked in his old clothes to the banks to pick up second hand copies of *The Wall Street Journal*.” Well, they finally, after seven years, settled his estate. They went to the shack in which he lived. It was a little four-room shack. And he had stacks of old *Wall Street Journals*, which he had been reading all of that time. He left two hundred thousand dollars and lived like a total miser. Everybody thought that's all that he was, just a miser. He was so tight that he never spent any money one of the policemen said. But everyone knew that he never carried any money either. He kept it all in investments and in banks; even kept his bank books in the bank. So there is a man walking around and you think, my, he needs a handout. Put him down on the corner. Will work for food, or something like that. And all of the time, this is twenty-five or thirty years ago, when two hundred thousand dollars was a good bit more than it is today, a wealthy man.

That's what we are. We're not misers, I hope. But we are just like that. No one ever really knows what we have, without investing in the stock market, without ever reading *The Wall Street Journal*, without anything like that. We “have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the angels, the general assembly, the church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven and to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” What a marvelous position we have. How rich we really are.

There's a passage in the Old Testament. I'm going to ask you to turn to it. It's 2 Chronicles chapter 20, verse 21 and 22, in which Jehoshapat gives us a little bit of help, on how we ought to regard the blessings of the Lord, 2 Chronicles, 20:21, and 22. And we read these words. This is, I'll read verse 20.

“So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, ‘Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.’ And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying, ‘Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever.’ Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.”

Now, we don’t normally do things like that, in that order, do we? We would go out and fight with all of our energy. And then, if we were to succeed, we’d give thanks. But Jehoshaphat and the children of Israel give thanks ahead of time and praise the Lord God for his mercy; and then go out and God provides a victory for them.

That, of course, is the way in which we should conduct our life. To remember what we are in Christ and to live in the light of it; and as He gives the things that we need, then give Him, give Him thanks before hand and give Him thanks afterwards, as well.

Now, the magnificent antithesis here is not so much that of unapproachability alone, but of the objects to which approach is made. One: dark and terrible, the mountain with the lightnings and thunder, and the whirlwinds. And the other: the glorious, and gracious promises that the Lord God has given to us by the new covenant. The old covenant, the covenant of the Law, in itself, could not convey blessing; that the Apostle Paul makes so plain in the New Testament. He points out that by the Law comes the knowledge of sin. The Law is not a saving instrumentality. Never was a saving instrumentality. It is the revelation of the righteousness and holiness of God. It is holy just and good, but it does not save. We are not saved by the works of the Law, the apostles make so plain. We are saved by the grace of God in our Lord Jesus Christ.

You think of Christian as he was making his way to the city, he came to the place where someone gave him some advice that what he needed to do was to go to Mr. Legality's house and Mr. Legality, you will remember, dwelt in the village of Morality, and he had his pretty young son, whose name was Civility, and this is what Bunyan says, with reference to it. “Christian, if this be true, which this gentleman hath said, my wisest course is to take his advice.” “Sir, which is my way to this honest man's house?” House of Legality. “Do you see yonder high hill?” “Yes, very well.” Worldly Wise man is speaking to him. “By that hill, you must go and the first house you come to, it is his.” So Christian turned out of his way. Ah, how many Christians do that? They turn out of the way, turn into the Law of Moses, become so burdened by the things that they feel that they must keep, and lose the joy of the Christian life. So, Christian turned out of his way to go to Mr. Legality's house for help; but behold, when he got now hard by the hill, it seemed so high. And also that side of it that was next to the wayside did hang so much over that Christian was afraid to venture farther, lest the hill should fall on his head. What a hill to have to climb. Not a Texas hill. Wherefore, there he stood still and knew not what to do. Also, his burden now seemed heavier to him than when he was on the way. There came, also, flashes of fire, Bunyan knows about Exodus chapter 19, and Exodus chapter 20, and Deuteronomy chapter 4, there came from the mountain flashes of fire, that made Christian afraid that he should be burned. Therefore, he did sweat and quake for fear. Such is the man who puts himself under the law of Moses.

Now, these marvelous blessings; I'm just going to list them. There are seven of them I want to, you can divide these in different ways. In fact, I'm going to do it in eight ways, I forgot there are eight. But these are the super-sensible and final blessings. Their positional character is evident from the very first one of them.

You have come to Mount Zion. Well, we have not come to Mount Zion in any kind of physical sense and so this is our position. Mount Zion? What was Mount Zion? Why is that mentioned? Well, you may remember, that Mount Zion was where David set up the worship of the children of Israel. It was there that the law began to be observed in Mount Zion, and so that's in his

mind. This represents the worship of the children of Israel. So you have come to the earthly, the earthly Zion was the meeting point of the tribes of Israel. Mount Zion to which we have come is the meeting point of the children of God in Heaven, itself. You have come to Mount Zion.

Then he says, you have come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. It's rather interesting that the heavenly Jerusalem is called a city. Bismarck, the great German chancellor once said that “Great cities are great sores on the body politic.” What he meant by that was that great cities were a problem.

Now, when we look at the word of God, do you remember who built the first city? Well, it was Cain who built the first city, wasn't it? And he built it in independence of God. So we might argue from that that cities are not good. But the Bible does speak of this city “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” And man innately desires to have a common life, which is good. His cities, however, basically are failures. Almost all of them are failures. The reason they are failures is because God is generally forgotten in our cities. If you look at the cities across the face of the United States, that is basically what you find. If you look at government, now, across the United States, you have a government that has forgotten God. The cities of the Bible that are more reflective of the cities that we live in now, are the cities of Babylon, the city of Sodom, and so on.

But, nevertheless, there is the desire for community, and there will be the city of God or the heavenly Jerusalem. And we have come “to the city of the living God,” that is where our citizenship is now. So Paul tells us in Philippians chapter 3. Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior.

“The city of the living God.” It would indicate, of course, that embodiment as one Bible expositor has put it, “is the end of all the ways of God.” And so when we think about heaven, we are not thinking as to use his words “of the pallid, anemic beyond for the soul.” Heaven is the heavenly Jerusalem can be called the city of God.

Then, he says, we have come, thirdly, “to an innumerable company of angels,” in vestal gathering is probably the way in which we should take that in verse 22. “To an innumerable

company of angels,” my text has, “to the general assembly,” but that word can be rendered, “in vestal gathering,” and I think that’s probably the way in which it should be used.

We need more than these, of course. We are uncomfortable in the presence of the angels. As a matter of fact, among my acquaintances, there is no angel. I mean, really, you understand. Really heavenly angel, oh, of course, there are ones that I might think of. They are angels, like my wife, or my children. Things like that. Howard Prier. [Laughter] But we really don’t have any real angels. But so we have more than just the company of the innumerable angels. But, I am looking forward to being there. I’m looking forward to seeing the great angelic services that have been rendered to the saints of God; those men that you know about from the Gospels and from the prophecies of the Old Testament. You want to see them and have acquaintance with them, no doubt.

The fourth thing, I should say, in verse 23, “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn.” Now, that is very interesting. “Church of the firstborn,” because, remember, back in verse 16, we had an individual who had firstborn rights. His name was Esau. “Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of bread sold his birthright.” Sold the right of the firstborn. “But we are the church or the assembly of the firstborn.” And we have those rights and we cannot sell them. They are ours.

And he describes them further in verse 22, as saying they “are registered in heaven.” Written in heaven. Incidentally, that word, “written in heaven” is also used in a tense that suggests that they have been written in heaven and their names are still there on the roles in heaven. In ancient cities, there were roles of the cities and everyone who was born in many of those places, when he was born he was immediately enrolled as a citizen of that city. And so the Lamb’s book of life is a parallel to that.

So with reference to us, as he says here, we are “written” or we are enrolled, registered, in heaven, so that our place is also there. And as I mentioned, Paul tells us in Philippians, chapter 3, our citizenship is in heaven. That’s where we are enrolled. We’re not there yet. But we know about

this. I imagine that some of you have already, perhaps, enrolled one of your children in college, although they are not there yet. I know a number of people who do that in college that are difficult to get into. Some people who've graduated from Wheaton College like to enroll their children in Wheaton College when they are born, hoping they will get in. I don't know that that is true of Aggie Land, but I wouldn't be surprised that something like that would be attempted by an Aggie, who would want to be sure that his child is there. So we have been enrolled. We are going to be there. So “The church of the firstborn, enrolled in heaven.”

And then, he says, fifthly, “To God the Judge of all.” Back in chapter 21 in verse 3 of the book of Revelation, there's a magnificent text that reads like this; “I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.’” That's a rather interesting expression because it can be rendered this way, if the text that there is, and there is textual support for it, if we render it this way, “God with them shall be their God.” And if it is rendered that way, if it's legitimate to take Revelation 21:3 that way, “God with them shall be their God,” using the text that is a valid text there and personally I think is the true text then we have the answer to the question, why is it that the Lord Jesus Christ is not specifically called Emmanuel? His name shall be called Emmanuel, God with us, and yet we read through the whole of the Bible, and there is no reference, specifically, to our Lord's name as Emmanuel. No one ever called him that, so far as we know. But if this is the right reading in Revelation 21 in verse 3, then “God with them shall be their God,” is “Emmanuel shall be their God,” and He does have throughout eternity that name, Emmanuel, God with us.

Then sixthly, he says in verse 23, that we have come “to the spirits of just men made perfect.” What does he mean “made perfect” because, after all, Christ is not, the benefits of Christ's death would not, it seemed, have been fully appreciated by everyone yet? But if he means “have now been made perfect,” in holiness, because they're in heaven, as a result of what Christ has done, then, of course, that would be valid. And I think that's what he means. “The spirits of just men made

perfect,” believing men, they are now perfect in holiness, since our Lord has come and has died on Calvary’s cross.

Then seventhly, he says, “To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” Jesus, that contains the divine name, Jehovah, actually. *Yeshuab*. Jehovah, our Savior. What he has done is make the unapproachable approachable. He’s the Mediator of the new covenant. He has died. He has died for sinners. Not all. He has died for his sinners, and they have been represented in him, by what he has done. And because they have been represented in him, he is their representative, the benefits of his saving work are theirs, by virtue of what he has done. Certain to be theirs, in the case of those who have not yet been saved, for they belong to the company of the elect. So “To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.”

And then finally, “To the blood of sprinkling.” That’s very interesting to me, that we have had, here, three important mountains before our vision. We’ve had Mount Sinai, and then we have had radiant Mount Zion. Mount Sinai flaming, radiant Mount Zion, and now we have crimson Mount Golgotha, the mountain on which the Lord Jesus Christ died. That is our hope.

One of the great preachers, really, one of the great preachers of all time was Richard Baxter. Generally, a very sound man; one or two things about his theology I would object to but a great man of God. He was a man who suffered a whole lot; he was persecuted; he was imprisoned. As he lay in his last illness, suffering so grievously, a dear friend came by to see him. And he asked, “Richard, how are you doing?” The great preacher replied, “Oh, Sir, I am almost well,” and died then. Think of that? Think of stepping on a shore and finding it heaven. Think of grasping a hand and finding it’s God’s hand. Think of breathing new air, and finding it celestial. Think of lying down and awaking not in Dallas, but in heaven. And think of waking up and finding it home. Dr. Criswell, many years ago, said those words. I thought they were exceedingly good.

Mr. Spurgeon when he was in his last illness, he said, as he lay upon his deathbed, after so many years of faithful service, he said to his friends who visited him, “My brethren, my theology has come very simple. It consists of four words.” Now, please don’t get the idea that, therefore, you



shouldn't pay attention to the teaching of the word of God, all of which is theology. But what he meant by it was that that's the fundamental fact of it, and that's that upon which his hope rested. “Jesus died for me.” That's the confession of all real believers.

One of the greatest of the Dutch theologians, Herman Bavenick, when he was on his deathbed, he made this specific statement. He said, “Now my theology no longer saves me. It's my God and Savior Jesus Christ who does.”

Reminds me of the fact that in heaven, we read texts like, “I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, the living creatures and the elders, the numbers of them as ten thousand times ten thousand, thousands of thousands, saying with a great voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that has been slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and might, honor and glory, and blessing.’” In other words, in Heaven, the Lamb stands out and the salvation that he has accomplished for us.

Now, this is, of course, a great salvation. These are great privileges. And, our author, more than once has pointed out, that great privileges demand great responsibilities.

Now, notice what he does. “See that you do not refuse Him who speaks.” Listen! God speaks. Pay the more attention. For the New Testament stands on a higher plane in the salvation of God. The author, himself, stands on a high plane than the Old Testament prophets. Our Lord Jesus Christ stood on a higher plane in his work here. So “See that you do not refuse Him who speaks.” Moses transmitted God's words. Jesus Christ, of course was that word. And, in the case of our Lord's ministry, when he spoke, God spoke. God with a child on his lap. God with a loaf in his hand. God with a sob in his throat. God with a towel in his hand. God with a cross on his back. This was God speaking. When Philip came to him, “Lord, show us the Father?” Thomas “Philip, have I been so long time with you. He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father. How sayest thou then, ‘Show us the Father?’” All of these things are the messages that he Lord God has spoken to us. “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,”

In other words, if men when they disobeyed the Mosaic Law were punished, and punished severely, how much more when we disobey our greater Moses in Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ? The author had said more than once. Take just chapter 2, for an example.

“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things, which we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels [the law] proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing them witness with signs and wonders. So 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, [and then our author goes on to say]: whose voice then shook the earth; and now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” [Now, he’s going to expound yet once more. ] Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom, which cannot be shaken, let us have be thankful, by which [thanks] we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

This is such a magnificent statement, that it’s hard to know where to begin to expound it. The Old Testament manifestation of God was accompanied by shaking of the mountain, when the Law was given. The New Testament manifestation lies in the future. And in the future, at the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, then he says, he’s going to shake not only the earth, but heaven itself. In other words, the whole creation is to be shaken by the Lord God, when Jesus Christ comes at his Second Advent.

Now, he concludes with a most striking statement. “Our God is a consuming fire.” I’d like to read you something that one of the finest of the Old Testament scholars of the last generation

wrote, about a passage in the book of Isaiah. He’s talking about, it’s Isaiah chapter 33 in verse 14, perhaps, I ought to read that. Isaiah 33, verse 14, these are the words.

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”

George Adam Smith, one of the great Old Testament scholars, wrote these words in connection with it. Trying to explain something about the meaning of God as a devouring fire, and then, of course, in our passage, our God a consuming fire, he said, “To Isaiah, life was so penetrated by the active justice of God that he described it as bathed in fire. As blown through with fire. Righteousness was no mere doctrine to this prophet. It was the most real thing in history. It was the presence which pervaded and explained all phenomena. We shall understand the difference between Isaiah and his people, if we have ever for our eye’s sake looked at a great conflagration through a colored glass, which allowed us to see the solid materials, the stone, the wood, the iron, but prevented us from seeing the flames and the shimmering heat. “To look thus, is to see pillars, lintels, crossbeams, twist and fall, crumble and fade, but how inexplicable the process becomes. Take away the glass and everything is clear. The fiery element is filled with all the interstices that were blank to us before and beating up on the solid metal. The heat becomes visible, shimmering where there is no flame, just so had it been with the sinners in Judah for forty years. Isaiah alone faced life with open vision, which filled up for him the interstices of experience; and gave terrible explanation to fate. It was a vision that nearly scorched the eyes out of him. Life as he saw it was steeped in flame, the glowing righteousness of God. Jerusalem was full of the spirit of justice, the spirit of burning, the light of Israel is for a fire and His holy one for a flame. So Isaiah saw life, but the Israelites did not.”

What we look at in our society, we look at through colored glass. Our God is a consuming fire. And if the glass were taken away, we would see the flames, the shimmering heat of the presence

of the all Holy God. That’s what makes it so strange, that in our society today, we have in the religious world so much departure from the faith.

I wish I had time to read this. I see my time is really up and I don’t have time to read it. But, it’s a marvelous little paragraph about Saint John the Divine Church, in the city of New York, envisioned originally a hundred years ago as a great Anglican or Episcopalian Cathedral. It would bring glory to God. But now, they have people who are Japanese Shinto priests taking thanksgiving services. Muslim Sufi’s performing bi-annually. Lenten services focusing on the ecological passion of the earth. And the church has no longer anything but a heretical apostate house.

Novelist Kurt Vonnegut wrote for the cathedral’s centennial brochure that, “The cathedral is to this atheist a suitable monument to persons of all ages and classes. I go there often to be refreshed by a sense of non-sectarian community, which has the best interest of the whole planet at heart.”

The dean has said, “This cathedral is a place for people who like me, feel constricted by the notion of excluding others.” He goes on to talk about the fact that he’s in perfect harmony with all of the kinds of worship that are there. And he says, “We make God a Minnie Mouse in stature, when we say these experiences profane the Christian church.”

Kent Hughes, pastor of the College Church in Wheaton adds this paragraph, which I think is so good. “The Scriptures would argue that it is Dean Morton who has made the great God of Sinai and Zion into a mousy deity, whose only virtue is sub-biblical toleration. It’s difficult to conceive how much farther one could depart from the awesome God of the Scriptures; a God who tolerates no other gods before him, who forbids idolatry, demands the holiness of his people. Why? Well, because everything else is error. He is the only True God; therefore, only he should be worshiped. This is fundamental. Instead of giving his people a golden calf, the cathedral dean has given them a Mickey Mouse reflection of popular culture, a profoundly vapid idolatry.”

A couple of nights ago, I was reading a little book by Faith Cooke, *Samuel Rutherford and His Friends*. Many of you know I love Rutherford, the Scottish Calvinistic theologian and godly man

whose sermons are some of the most marvelous devotional material anyone could ever read. She mentions Jock Purvis, a missionary, traveler, preacher and writer, who died in nineteen eighty-eight.

“Faced with his own last illness, Jock Purvis was still deriving benefit from the letters of Samuel Rutherford and could write. And Oh, that quotation from S. R. [that is, Samuel Rutherford]. Oh, that quotation from S. R., ‘My faith hath no bed to sleep on but omnipotency.’” What a marvelous position for the Christian to have; a faith that rests and sleeps upon the omnipotency of our great God and Savior. May that be your hope, too.

Let’s bow in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these marvelous sentences that this author has written for us—to fully expound them. We could never do that. We thank Thee for the greatness of them, for the comfort of them, and we pray that our hopes may in these great truths that express what we as individuals saved by Jesus Christ have come to and now rest there. We look forward to the future. Lord, if there should be someone in this audience who doesn’t really have that hope, O Father, move in their hearts so that they, too, may rest for time and eternity on the bed of omnipotency and saving grace.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.