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# Words of Truth

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## Hebrews 12:18-24

By: Brian A. Yeager

*“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel”*  
(Hebrews 12:18-24).

As this epistle has already established, there is a new law in place (Hebrews 8:7-10:18). Jewish Christians needed to understand that what they had through Moses was not comparable to what they have in Christ (Hebrews 7:14-8:6). With that goal, this context starts explaining the difference between the literal mount Sinai and the now figurative mount Sion. The Law of Moses was delivered from mount Sinai (Exodus 34:1-35). This was the mount that burned with fire, darkness, etc. (Exodus 19:18, Exodus 24:17, Deuteronomy 5:4-5, Deuteronomy 5:22, and Deuteronomy 9:10).

That mountain from which the Law of Moses began was a mountain that could not be touched until the long sound of the trumpet (Exodus 19:1-25). Consider the result: *“And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die”* (Exodus 20:18-19).

The people were not the only ones to fear. Moses did too. He especially feared when the people erred and he witnessed the reaction of the Lord (Deuteronomy 9:13-29). Why is that significant? Isn't fearing God a good thing (Philippians 2:12)? The answer is both yes and no. Fear can lead to initial obedience. However, fear can also be debilitating. Consider two Scriptures on this matter: *“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father... There is no fear in love;*

*but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (Romans 8:15 and I John 4:18).*

Thus, the lesson turns to “*But ye are come unto...*” The children of Israel should have been somewhat familiar with the prophecies concerning mount Zion (Isaiah 2:2-3, Joel 2:28-32, and Micah 4:1-2). Those who had converted to Christ should then have also understood that those prophecies were fulfilled when the Gospel was preached in Jerusalem on the first pentecost after the death of Jesus (Acts 2:1-41). They should have also understood that this is when the saved were added to the church of our Lord (Acts 2:47). For those who converted from being obedient to the Law of Moses to the Law of Christ, they would understand these figures to represent the freedom they had which did not exist under the Old Law (Galatians 4:1-31).

This epistle will not allow the honest reader to think of the city of the living God to be a place on earth (Hebrews 13:14). Christians then and now should know that our conversation [citizenship] is in Heaven (Philippians 3:20). When John saw visions of things above he saw a great number of angels (Revelation 5:11-12). When you put these things together we have the fact that the kingdom of Heaven is comprised not only of the saints alive on earth now, but even the angels that are in Heaven. Let that sink in. So often Christians have limited their thinking of the church to the local assembly. The church is far greater than the local assembly. Thus, we are reading about the “general assembly” in this context.

The language of “the church of the firstborn” should not be confusing to Christians. We know the firstborn is in reference to Christ (Colossians 1:12-18). The reference to those whose names are written in Heaven is about those who are in the book of life (Exodus 32:32-33, Psalms 69:28, Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 21:27, and Revelation 22:18-19). The continuation of the description of those who are part of the city of the living God includes the spirits of just men made perfect. Being made perfect is language already used in this letter (Hebrews 5:8-9). Here, like the previous usage, it is in reference to those who have completed life in this world. The subject matter of the just has been covered too (Hebrews 10:38-39). So, both they and us should understand this language.

Finally, regarding the text of our study in this article, Jesus is put forth as the new mediator. Moses was the mediator [go between] of old. He was the one who interceded for the children of Israel with God (Exodus 32:1-14). Now there is one mediator. That one mediator is Jesus (I Timothy 2:5-6). He offered His body as a sacrifice (Ephesians 5:2 and Hebrews 10:19-22). While Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice (Genesis 4:1-10 and Hebrews 11:4), Jesus’ sacrifice declares better things. Jesus gave His life to be a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). Not only did He die for sins to be forgiven (I Peter 3:18), but also so that redemption from the Law of Moses could occur (Galatians 3:13). The fact is, everything is better because of what Jesus did for all of mankind. Be thankful for that!