

## “Marching to Zion (Part 2)” – Hebrews 12:18-24

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*[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, [www.welovethegospel.com](http://www.welovethegospel.com)]*

Take a Bible and meet me in Hebrews, chapter 12...

As I mentioned last week, the passage before us is generally regarded as the climax of the argument the author has been making in the last twelve chapters. The final chapter will offer some pastoral instructions, similar to what we find at the end of most of Paul’s letters, but the entire argument of Hebrews has really been building to the passage we find at the end of chapter 12. We will consider the first half of it this morning. Let’s have a look, beginning in verse 18. Follow along as I read. This is God’s Word...

*“For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest<sup>19</sup> and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.<sup>20</sup> For they could not endure the order that was given, ‘If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.’<sup>21</sup> Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear.’<sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,<sup>23</sup> and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,<sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:18-24)*

Notice that the passage begins with the word “for”, which reminds us that it bears a relationship with the preceding section. There we found the author issuing a call for his readers to pursue peace with one another and holiness before God, while pursuing and guarding against those who refuse to do the same so that they may not share the fate of Esau, who traded away rich blessing for short-lived satisfaction in the world. Our text this morning is providing “the reason why Christians can strengthen their tired hands and weakened knees and make straight paths for their feet”<sup>1</sup> (see 12:12-13). They can do so because God has brought them not to a Mt. Sinai experience, but to a greater a Mountain. That is what our text is contrasting—two mountains, representing two experiences. And our author believes that if the Christian can understand the Mountain to which they have come, they will find the motivation they need to persevere to the end.

The first mountain, though unnamed, is clearly Mt. Sinai. The original audience would have recognized this immediately because the imagery used so obviously calls to mind the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19. Sometime after redeeming the Hebrew people from their bondage in Egypt and delivering them safely through the parted Sea on dry ground, the Lord leads them to Mt. Sinai, where He first revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush. Once there, the Lord instructs Moses to tell the people that they are to prepare themselves because He is going to descend upon the mountain. They are to consecrate themselves, wash their clothes, abstain from sexual relations, and wait for the Lord. They are warned in no uncertain terms, “*Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live*” (Exod. 19:12-13). And then we read this,

*“On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.<sup>17</sup> Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.<sup>18</sup> Now Mount*

*Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.* <sup>19</sup> *And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.* <sup>20</sup> *The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain.*” (Exodus 19:16-20a; cf. 20:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:11-12)

This is the experience Israel had after their deliverance. This is when they were first brought into contact with their God. And this clearly is what the author of Hebrews has in mind in our text. He says, in verse 18, that they had come to a mountain that “*may be touched*,” which is to say that it was a physical mountain, but, as we have seen, they were not to touch it when the Lord’s presence was manifest upon it lest they die (even the animals). Such is the holiness of God. And this was what the divine fireworks at Sinai—the “*blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest*” (Heb. 12:18)—were meant to convey. The holiness of God. We are not meant to think of the comforting flames that dance across the embers of a soothing fireplace on a cool winter evening. No this is a different sort of fiery experience. It’s the threatening sort. The kind that consumes. The kind that reminds us that “*our God is a consuming fire*”, as Hebrews 12 concludes. The flames at Sinai conveyed the same message “delivered by the flaming sword of the angel at the gate of the Garden of Eden. It was a barrier to access, and a deadly one.”<sup>2</sup> As B. F. Wescott put it, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

“That which the writer describes is the form of the revelation, fire and darkness and thunder, material signs of the nature of God. Thus every element is one which outwardly moves fear... The mountain is lost in the fire and smoke. It was, so to speak, no longer a mountain. It becomes a manifestation of terrible majesty, a symbol of the Divine Presence.”<sup>3</sup>

And, notice, that it wasn’t just what they saw that caused their knees to quake at the base of that mountain. It was what they heard. The “*sound of a trumpet*” (Heb. 12:19), we are told, “*grew louder and louder*” (Exod. 19:19). And when they heard something of the “*voice*” of God, they begged that God not address them directly. They said to Moses, “*You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die*” (Exod. 20:19). But even Moses, their spiritual leader and mediator, trembled in fear (Heb. 12:21).<sup>4</sup>

Contrast this with the casual presumption and swagger that marks the approach of so many in our day. No mediator. No caution. No fear. No sense of the “*dangerous holiness*” of God.<sup>5</sup> And what is the reason for this carelessness? Is it not because, in general, people in the world believe that they are among the “*good guys*.” The assumption of our age is that we are pretty good and moral people, certainly better than lots of other people, so God will welcome us and receive us and there is no need to fear.

But then you read the Bible. And there you find people coming into contact with God’s presence and having any sense of personal worthiness dashed to pieces upon the rock of God’s holiness. Job—a man described as “*blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil*” (Job 1:1)—when he comes into contact with God’s presence, he cries out, “*I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know...I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes have seen you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes*” (Job. 42:3, 5-6). When Peter gets a glimpse of Jesus’ divine power, he falls to his knees and cries out, “*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord*” (Luke 5:8), not “*Oh, hey Lord! It’s so great to see you and be in your presence today.*” When Isaiah sees the Lord, “*high and lifted up*,” seated upon His throne, he cries, “*Woe to me!...I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty*” (Isa. 6:1, 5). Do you know why? “*Because*,” as Tim Keller explains,

“in the presence of God finally is revealed our unbearable lightness of being, our unbearable smallness, our unbearable ‘flawedness,’ our unbearable ‘creatureliness.’ We are in deep denial. We in no way have the slightest willingness to admit how selfish we are, how cowardly we are, how much evil we’re capable of. We have no idea.”<sup>6</sup>

But any inflated sense of self is vanquished when God’s presence unveils itself, as it did the day God’s people stood at the base of Mt. Sinai. As one writer puts it,

“The only thing that matches the incredible display you are witnessing is the seismic trauma in your heart! The people were visibly, physically assaulted with the holiness and majesty of God. This palpable divine display on Sinai communicated far more than any speech or written word ever could—and all Israel, young and old, could understand.”<sup>7</sup>

But what is the writer of Hebrews trying to help us understand by bringing this experience to mind? Is it to impress upon us the sheer holiness of God and unworthiness of men? Yes, or course. But he is conveying something else as well, something key to his entire argument. To see it, we have to see what Mt. Sinai is here representing.

You see, “the great problem with the trip to Sinai was that while men and women could come to see God’s holiness and their sinfulness, the Law provided no power to overcome sin.”<sup>8</sup> The net result is that there was no way to “draw near” to God. There was just a looming sense of “the absolute unapproachableness of God”<sup>9</sup> and nothing that the Law—the Old Covenant—could do to alter that situation.

But that’s not our situation. The author of Hebrews says, “*you have not come to*” that mountain (12:18). That’s not your mountain. Yours is a New Covenant mountain. And the mood and situation that exists there is quite different. It reminds me of the old pithy saying that’s usually attributed (perhaps wrongly) to John Bunyan (1628-1688),

Run, John, run, the law commands  
But gives us neither feet nor hands,

Far better news the gospel brings:  
It bids us fly and gives us wings.<sup>10</sup>

This is the basic contrast between the Old and New Covenants, between divine distance and closeness, between the Law’s inability and the Gospel’s power, between promise and fulfilment, between Moses and Christ. This is the contrast that the author of Hebrews is setting up by comparing Mt. Sinai with Mt. Zion in verses 22 and following.

Why is that important to the author? Because, remember, there were some among his first readers who were tempted to turn from Jesus—and the New Covenant He mediates to God’s people—back to Moses—and the Old Covenant he mediated in the Law. But as this letter has labored to show, the Law was meant to ready us for Jesus. That covenant has been replaced by something new. And why would anyone want to go back to the old, when the new has come? Why would one want to go back to the mountain of the Law, with all its terror and separation, when we are invited to the mountain of Grace, with all its joy and closeness? That’s the point of the contrast. He puts these two mountains side-by-side and asks, “Why would you ever want Sinai when you could have Zion?”

It is reminiscent of Paul’s argument in Galatians 4, where he...

“...identified Mount Sinai and the law delivered there with the ‘present Jerusalem,’ the center of Judaism of his day, which rejected Jesus’ gospel of grace. By contrast, believers in Jesus, whatever their racial background, can look to the ‘Jerusalem above’ as their mother (Gal. 4:21-31).”<sup>11</sup>

The writer of Hebrews is making a similar point. They had their mountain. But that’s not your mountain. “He paints this terrifying picture of Sinai for his readers in order to make the contrast with the radiant, glorious, and

gracious new covenant.”<sup>12</sup> And his aim in all of this is to keep his readers from falling away from Christ, which the warning passage that comes next (the text we will consider next week) shows. But to see how compelling his argument is, we need to reflect on his description of our Mountain, which the writer calls, in verse 22, “*Mount Zion*”. This is what we will consider with the remainder of our time.

What is “*Mount Zion*”? Al Mohler gets at the right associations in his commentary, where he writes,

“In the Old Testament we find that the earthly Zion was part of Jerusalem, captured by David (2 Sam. 5:7). Mount Zion eventually was so identified with Jerusalem that it became synonymous with the city. Here, however, the author is not connecting Zion with the earthly Jerusalem; he’s connecting it with the eschatological [i.e., end time] new Jerusalem.”<sup>13</sup>

How do we know? Because of what we read in verse 22—“*But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...*” He’s not speaking of the earthly city in the Middle East. He’s speaking of the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, which the psalmist calls, “*the city of our God, which God will establish forever*” (Ps. 48:8).<sup>14</sup>

But I want you to notice the tense that is used in your translation of verse 22. It says, “*you have come [in the past] to Mount Zion...*” How can he say that? If this Mountain is “*the heavenly*” city, then surely he can’t mean that we have already arrived there, right? Well, not so fast. This relates to this tension we see quite a bit in the New Testament that is usually referred to simply as the “already/not yet” by theologians. We’ve considered it before. It simply means that it is possible for something to be fulfilled in our life in one sense now (already), but in another, more full sense later (not yet). That seems to be the idea here. The text suggests that “they have come to Zion, and yet the fullness of Zion is not yet theirs.”<sup>15</sup> In that sense, then, believers “are in principle already where we shall be forever, since we are in union with Christ in the heavenlies”.<sup>16</sup> This is what Paul communicated to the Ephesians when he wrote,

“*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*” (Ephesians 2:4-7)

Christians are (now) seated with Christ “*in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...*” Do we experience the fullness of those “*heavenly places*” now? Of course not. But our union with Christ—by grace, through faith—has ensured that those promised realities are so secure and so certain that it is no problem for the apostle to speak of them as though they were our experiences now because they are already Christ’s experiences and we are “in him.” Therefore, as Paul said in Philippians, the Christian’s “*citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Phil. 3:20).<sup>17</sup> This is the city to which the believer has in a very real sense come. Mohler expresses the paradox well—“we’ve already come to Zion, but we’re still waiting to get there.”<sup>18</sup>

And who will we find when we arrive? Verse 22 says we will find among the inhabitants of Zion “*innumerable angels in festal gathering*”. This is imagery of worship and celebration. I cannot read that reference and not think of the book of Revelation, which paints so many pictures of heavenly worship.<sup>19</sup> For instance, in John’s vision of the scroll and the Lamb, he vividly describes the experience:

“*Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’*” (Revelation 5:11-12)

Can you imagine that heavenly choir of “*innumerable angels in festal gathering*”? Well, brothers and sisters, you won’t have to imagine for long because that is our Mountain. And consider what John describes later in Revelation...

*“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,<sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’<sup>11</sup> And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,<sup>12</sup> saying, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.’”* (Revelation 7:9-12)

There they are again, these “*ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation*” (Heb. 1:14). How should this inform our worship when we gather together on the Lord’s Day? “It calls us”, as Dennis Johnson so wonderfully put it, “to look through what is ‘touchable,’ accessible to our five senses, and to stand amazed that—through faith—in our songs, prayers, sermons, and [ordinances] we are participants in the liturgy of heaven itself, joining our hearts with those of countless angels and the cloud of witnesses who have run the race before us.”<sup>20</sup>

And, yes, that cloud of witnesses is already there too, for you notice at the end of verse 23 it mentions “*the spirits of the righteous made perfect*” as also present. The Bible says, “*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*” (Rev. 14:13). And this explains why—they are present with the Lord. And they are “*made perfect*” through the work of Christ.

“Our righteousness and perfection depends [*sic*] entirely on the imputed righteousness of Christ. His perfection is our perfection. His righteousness is our righteousness. There is no [other] human righteousness. There is only Christ’s righteousness.”<sup>21</sup>

And, by the way, do you know why these deceased believers are referred to simply as “*spirits*” in verse 23? Because they do not have their glorified bodies yet. They have not yet received their resurrected bodies because that awaits the Second Coming of Christ. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, yes, but we wrongly speak of the deceased as having new bodies now.<sup>22</sup> The resurrection of the dead will follow the return of Christ. Come Lord Jesus! Nevertheless, their spirits are present—and free of sinful imperfection—at the very Mountain that we are said to “*have come*” in Christ. And this should encourage us, not simply for what it means for many of our loved ones, but for what it implies for us as Christians and for other Christians we are in relationship with. Richard Phillips’ explanation is worth reading at length.

“Think about this the next time you sit down in church. Perhaps you will find yourself next to a weak, sinful Christian, perhaps one who has just about worn out your patience, has plumb dried your reservoir of Christian love. Think about this next time at Bible study when new believers come in, ignorant of the Bible and only two steps down the road of sanctification. They are, if they really have believed on Jesus Christ, destined not just for improvement, but for glory. If you could see them now—those people whom you require so much effort to live amongst in the church, who let you down, who struggle with sin—if you could see them now as they will certainly be in the city to which they now belong, you would marvel at the glory God has prepared for those who love him. They are destined for glory, to be perfected, conformed to the image of their firstborn brother, Jesus Christ. They have become citizens of God’s mountain city because they have come in faith to Christ.

Think about this, too, when you look at yourself, when you despair over besetting sins, when you find yourself so weighted down with filth and weakness and doubt and fear. Here God pulls aside the veil and shows you what he already sees in you: ‘the spirit of the righteous made perfect.’

A Christian bumper-sticker reads, ‘I’m not perfect, I’m just forgiven.’ But in God’s sight that statement is not true. Yes, there is much to be done, a whole network of sin to be thrown out and replaced by truth and grace. Yet so sure is this final perfecting in Christ that the writer of Hebrews could say, ‘We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...By a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified’ (Heb. 10:10, 14). We are not just forgiven, but we are made perfect in Christ. This is how God sees us now in Christ, and this is our destiny according to the power of God’s saving grace.”<sup>23</sup>

And if that wasn’t enough to get excited about, consider that this Mountain is our Mountain because, in the words of verse 23, it is associated with “*the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven.*” The term “*assembly*” comes from the Greek word *ekklēsia*, which generally in the New Testament refers to the “church” and does here as well given that the term “*firstborn*” is plural in the Greek. This is a reference to the “*assembly of the firstborn [ones].*” And who are they? The Church.

But wait, isn’t Christ Jesus the true “*firstborn*” (1:6; cf. Col. 1:18)? Yes. Absolutely. He is uniquely so and is therefore uniquely “*heir of all things*” (1:2). And weren’t we just reminded in 12:16-17, through the folly of Esau, that only one son in the family can enjoy the rights and privileges of the first born? Indeed, we were. “Yet many firstborn children of God make up this heavenly ‘assembly.’ This is because all whom the unique divine and messianic Son calls his ‘brothers’ share by grace in the Son’s inheritance (2:12; Rom. 8:17).”<sup>24</sup> We are part of this congregation at Mt. Zion. Our names “*are enrolled in heaven,*” in the Lamb’s “*book of life*” (Phil. 4:3). This is our Mountain. And this is something to celebrate.

Do you remember the story in Luke 10, where Christ had sent out His disciples and given them power to preach and do miracles? When they come back they are all amped up because it worked. They say to Jesus with great joy, “*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!*” (Luke 10:17). But do you remember what Jesus said to them? He said, “*do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*” (10:20). Miracles are cool and all. But nothing compares to the assurance that comes from the truth of the Gospel, the assurance that Christ’s death and resurrection secures our place in glory. That didn’t come through your great efforts—even the miraculous sort like casting out demons—but through the work of another, the Savior, the Son of God. Through faith in this Son, brothers and sisters, we show that our names “*are enrolled in heaven,*” for that is the place of our true citizenship. That is our Mountain.

And what makes our Mountain so special is not the dizzying number of joyful angels, nor even the gathering of the saints of old. What makes it so special is that God is present there. Yet, the first reference to God, in verse 23, is attached to an ominous title—He is described as “*the judge of all.*” Doesn’t that title feel somewhat out of place? All these joyful descriptions and then we come to God and the author highlights His role as Judge. What are we to make of that? Well, it too is something that can be the source of our joy, when we remember the work of Christ. David McWilliams captures this well in one of his books:

“‘God, the judge of all’ (12:23). This is both solemn and reassuring. Through Christ we have been reconciled to the Judge. His throne is not one of condemnation but of grace. Christians are called upon now to ‘draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water’ (Heb. 10:20). Our ‘confidence to enter the holy places’ is solely ‘the blood of Jesus’ (Heb. 10:19). Remarkably, because of the sacrifice of Jesus, who loved us and whom we now love in return, ‘we may have confidence for the day of judgement’ (1 John 4:17). It is that confidence to which we have come now. The confidence of the believer is that the Judge will bring the enemies of his people to the bar; it is the confidence that the Judge who poured out the due deserts of our sin upon Christ receives us totally.”<sup>25</sup>

Amen, someone? This is our Mountain. God hasn’t changed. He is still a God of justice and holiness, who will not let sin go unpunished. But His verdict on the believer has changed. Why? Because of the One ruling from

Zion, verse 24, “*Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant*” and His “*sprinkled blood*” that was shed for us. Yes, we see on this Mountain God as Judge, “yet the fire and smoke and dark and gloom, the threatening blare of trumpets—all the trappings of condemnation—are gone!” That is the power of the work of Christ! “Indeed, the very fact that [God] is the Judge increases our comfort all the more, for he will be righteous in accepting us in Christ, who already paid the entire debt of our sin.”<sup>26</sup>

Would you be free from your burden of sin?  
There’s power in the blood, power in the blood;  
Would you o’er evil a victory win?  
There’s wonderful power in the blood...

Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow?  
There’s power in the blood, power in the blood;  
Sin-stains are lost in its life-giving flow,  
There’s wonderful power in the blood.

You know the song. But hear the Word...

*“For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,<sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.<sup>15</sup> Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.”* (Hebrews 9:13-15; cf. 10:22; 1 Peter 1:2)

We have come to this “*Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to [His] sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel*” (12:24). You remember Abel, the first victim of murder in the Bible, killed by his own brother. His blood cried out to the Lord. “Its cry was for avenging justice, but Jesus’ blood intercedes for mercy and forgiveness.”<sup>27</sup> And the One who sent Jesus was none other than “*God [the Father], the judge of all*” (12:23), so He “is pleased to grant the petition of that precious blood on our behalf.”<sup>28</sup> And it is this blood—the blood of Jesus—that alone “has silenced Sinai’s terrors and ushered us into his Father’s favor.”<sup>29</sup> How fitting it is, then, that it should be the climax of the list of descriptions attached to Mt. Zion. This is our Mountain. The Mountain of the “*new covenant*” (12:24), and more than that, a “*better*” covenant (8:6).

Oh, there is more that I want to say about all of this! But our time for today has expired, so it will have to wait until next week (Lord willing). We’re not done yet with this text. But I hope that this passage in God’s Word has filled you, brothers and sisters, with a great sense of gratitude for what Jesus has accomplished for you. This is the Sunday after Thanksgiving after all. And we, as Christians, have so much to be thankful for, don’t we? For “*you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel*” (Heb. 12:22-24).

“To this you have come, says our text, if you are a Christian. You have come to this mountain and this city. Look upon it, he says, with the eyes of faith. All that is there is yours, all the blessings of God and even God himself.”<sup>30</sup>

And all God’s people said? “Amen!”

To be continued...Let’s pray...

<sup>1</sup> R. Albert Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews* (CCE; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 207.

<sup>2</sup> Richard D. Phillips, *Hebrews* (REC; Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2006), 566.

<sup>3</sup> B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Macmillan, 1903), 412. Also cited in Phillips, 566.

<sup>4</sup> This is not obvious from Exodus 19, but may very well be implied. Some wonder the Sinai experience in mind also includes the aftermath of the golden calf incident. Moses recalls his experience in Deuteronomy 9:18-19, “*I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger. <sup>19</sup> For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the Lord bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you.*”

<sup>5</sup> Dennis E. Johnson, “Hebrews,” in *Hebrews-Revelation* (ESCEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 195.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Keller, “You Have Come to Mount Zion,” *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (PW; Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993), 189.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> See Justin Taylor, “Run, John, Run!”, accessed online as of the date of this sermon at the following website: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/run-john-run/>. The first half of this saying is also mentioned in Hughes, 189.

<sup>11</sup> Johnson, 196. He continues, “Likewise, one of John’s visions on Patmos identified the earthly Jerusalem with the ‘great city’ that rejected God’s witness, in which ‘their Lord was crucified’ (Rev.11:8). Another vision portrayed the ‘holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God’ (Rev. 21:2).” Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Mohler, 209.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> “The promise to rebuild Zion (Ps 102:16) is fulfilled ultimately in the heavenly Zion, for we find in Ps 110:2 (the favorite psalm of the author) that the Lord and his Messiah reign from Zion. Zion will not be shaken or destroyed but will endure forever (Ps 125:1; cf. Isa 24:23).” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews* (BTCF; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 398-399.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 398.

<sup>16</sup> David B. McWilliams, *Hebrews* (LCECS; Powder Springs: Tolle Lege Press, 2015), 668.

<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, Paul, just like the author Hebrews, moves from this matter of heavenly citizenship to a call to “*stand firm in the Lord*” (4:1; cf. Heb. 12:25ff).

<sup>18</sup> Mohler, 210. And, it should be noted, this is not the first time the author of Hebrews has conveyed truth in this “already/not yet” dimension (e.g., 2:8).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 33:2; Daniel 7:10; Psalm 68:17.

<sup>20</sup> Johnson, 199.

<sup>21</sup> Mohler, 211.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:3, 6-8; Luke 23:43; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 6:9-11; 20:4. See also <https://www.gty.org/library/questions/QA098/do-christians-receive-glorified-bodies-immediately-after-they-die> and <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/do-we-receive-our-resurrection-bodies-when-we-die-or-at-the-end-of-the-age>.

<sup>23</sup> Phillips, 573-574.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, 197.

<sup>25</sup> McWilliams, 371.

<sup>26</sup> Phillips, 571. Cf. Romans 8:31-34.

<sup>27</sup> Johnson, 198.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>30</sup> Phillips, 569.