

# The Pursuit of Holiness (Part 13)

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Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] All right, I'm going to go ahead and, well, you see on your notes there, this is the third and final point, under this particular heading, to which mountain have you run?

What Hebrews 12 says about running to the wrong mountain, that wrong mountain being Mount Sinai, running to Mount Sinai is the same as trusting in your own works of righteousness for salvation, and those works fail every time.

And then we looked at the way that frees us, and we kind of got started with this last week, and we'll be finishing that up here tonight. And that is, of course, tantamount to running to Mount Zion, as opposed to Mount Sinai, and not trusting in your own works of righteousness, but rather trusting in the finished work of Christ.

It's the way of grace rather than the way of works. And so we got into that last time, and now we're going to get more into the specifics of that part of the text, which will take us all the way to the end of chapter 12.

And so let me go ahead and read it, verse 22, and I'm just going to read down to verse 24, and then we'll, a little bit later, we'll take the rest of the verses.

[1:34] But you have come to Mount Sinai. That's how we know there's a clear distinction, a parallel made here.

You have not come, but you have come. You have not come where? To Mount Sinai. You have come to Mount Zion. And by the way, I would just point out to you that in this, and the New King James brings this out pretty clearly, He says, you have come.

Now, that's important because in the Greek language, the verb there is in the perfect, the perfect tense. And so the idea is that this is a permanent thing that's happened here.

It's a permanent relationship that you have now with God, having come to Mount Zion. It's done. It's permanent.

It's perfect. You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable, or myriads, I think it might have in some translations, innumerable company of angels.

[2:58] How many is innumerable? More than you can number? Is that what that word means?

Yeah, I think so. Thousands upon thousands. It would be a literal translation. Thousands upon thousands upon thousands, innumerable. Myriads of myriads.

And in fact, the word myriad is the Greek word that represents the highest numeric number that they have in the language. And so myriads of myriads.

Innumerable. And this is where we've come. Mount Zion to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and the church of the firstborn, who are registered in heaven or recorded in heaven.

And 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.

[4:07] Now, there's a whole bunch of stuff there. You start trying to take all that in, and a lot of the things that are mentioned here are kind of parallel thoughts.

It's not this, and then also this, and then also this. He's really equating things. For example, the city of the living God is the same thing as the heavenly Jerusalem.

And what we have there are innumerable and myriads and myriads of angels and so forth. And it just kind of, you know, piles it on here. One right after the other.

Paul mentions some of the blessed realities for those who have come to Mount Zion. And he just adds one right after the other.

And that's what you have on your outline there. Number one, we've come to a better citizenship. That's why I pointed out a moment ago that those two words have come to Mount Zion.

[5:10] You have come. It's perfect. That is, we now enjoy. I mean, not someday we'll enjoy. But we now have as our permanent reality certain things.

And one of those things is a better citizenship. And where is that citizenship? It's in heaven. It's in heaven. Now, we're citizens of this great nation, the United States of America.

And I'm proud to be a citizen of this nation. And even with all of our faults and all of our problems of late, I wouldn't want to live anywhere else in this world. And pray for this great nation.

And would love to see some great things happen in this nation. And I want us to be prosperous and so forth. But in a supreme sense and in a sense that really counts, is that my citizenship is now in another place.

It's in heaven. And that, by the way, as we have seen in our study of 1 Peter, is the reason why we're persecuted.

[6:24] Because we're aliens here. Now, I love this nation, but the nation doesn't always love me. And I mean me in the sense that I represent a born-again Christian who has a biblical worldview.

And a nation that is primarily godless, in a sense, is always going to react negatively to those who have a biblical worldview.

So, the reason why we have struggles here as Christians, and we're going to see more of that, I really believe, is because our citizenship is in heaven.

And right now, we're strangers here, sojourners, aliens. We're refugees. We don't belong to this world. But the point here is that we have a better, much better citizenship.

And where is that? The city of the living God, Paul says here. City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Now, when did that happen?

[7:32] Does that happen? The moment we're saved. At that very moment, heaven then becomes our home. And we've not realized all of what's going to be there, and what God has for us there.

All the benefits of that, and all the wonders and glories of that. We haven't realized it in the sense that we see it now. But it's just as real, and just as much ours right now, as it will be when one day we step on over in to that wondrous place.

It's the city of the living God. It's the heavenly Jerusalem. Heaven is our home. Galatians, matter of fact, I might just read this passage.

I don't think I jotted that on your notes, or put that on your notes. But in Galatians chapter 4, verse 21, the Bible says, Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman, and the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman, and he of the free woman, through promise, which things are symbolic.

[8:49] For these are the two covenants. Here's another representation of these very same covenants. In fact, Paul is saying something similar here. These are two covenants.

The one from Mount Sinai, which gives birth to bondage. That's the law. Which is Hagar. Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

But the Jerusalem above, where's that? That's heaven. Is free. Which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear.

Bear forth, or break forth and shout, you who are not in labor. For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband.

And I could go on. But here's the same comparison between the two. And now we have, you know, we're not in bondage. We're not citizens in bondage. We are citizens that are free.

[9:52] And because our citizenship is in heaven. The city of the living God. The heavenly Jerusalem. Number two. Excuse me. We have a better community.

Better community. That is the people who will be there. And in a sense, we already enjoy a kind of a foretaste of it now.

We're enjoying it right here tonight. We have a better community. The people of faith. How does he describe it? Or he names several here. First, we have this innumerable company of angels.

Can you imagine? Imagine that. Thousands upon thousands and thousands of angels. And by the way, the Bible indicates that they are celebrating. Even right now.

Celebrating. They're celebrating angels. And then there's the church of the firstborn. I just put this community together. This new citizenship we have.

[10:59] This new home that we have. That we know some of now. And enjoy some of now. And one day we'll enjoy the fullness of all the holy angels. Not any of us have ever seen an angel.

You think you have. I'd like to talk with you afterward. But can you imagine what that would be like? And then we have the church of the firstborn. Which are written or registered or enrolled.

Whatever word you have used there. Where? In heaven. Enrolled in heaven. Who are these people? They're the New Testament saints. You know.

Right here. In this room. We represent that community. That part of the community. We are the church of the firstborn. The assembly.

Of the ecclesia. Of the firstborn. Jesus being the firstborn. We are in him the firstborn. From the dead.

[12:01] And that's our community. And one day. You know. We'll get to heaven. And not only will we all be there. In wondrous fellowship.

But we'll get to visit with Paul. And Peter. And you know. Some of the other Bible characters. In the New Testament. That we've read about.

And we'd love to sit down and talk to. And you know. I'd like to. First thing I'd like to know is. I'm just going to ask Paul.

Did you write Hebrews? And he's going to say yes. Yes. Don. You got that right. And Tom will be over there next to me.

He'll go. But then. You know. He will know as he is known. Then. Anyway. All right.

[12:57] So. So. Innumerable company of angels. The church of the firstborn. Which are written in heaven. That's all the New Testament saints. And then also. The spirits of just men made perfect.

And I believe. Though not all agree. But I believe we're talking about. The Old Testament saints there. Seems to be a distinction. In the way that it's written.

That we're talking about. You know. Angels. The church. Righteous. The righteous. Made perfect. That is. I believe.

The Old Testament saints. And that makes up. You know. The community. That we're going to be living with. For eternity. And eternity.

And what we're going to be doing. I don't know. But. You know. Just like I'd like to sit down. And pick Paul's brain. I'd like to sit down with David. And you know.

[13:53] And say. You know. I love Psalm 23. Would you sing it for me? You know. In the original tune. As it was originally written. You know. And surely he'll have a harp.

Because everybody knows. When you go to heaven. You get harps. And. But anyway. He'll. He'll play that. And. Wouldn't it be wonderful? You know. And I know that Jesus is going to be.

Our supreme focus. And desire. He's our desire now. But we have no idea. What kind of desire. We shall have for him. When we get to heaven.

And all sin. And selfishness. And all that is removed. And we. Can worship him. And commune with him. Perfectly. Just as Adam and Eve did. Before they fell.

Before they sinned. So he's going to be. Our supreme desire. But that doesn't mean. That. Part of our. Joy. Of heaven. Is going to be.

[14:47] The fellowship we have. With not only New Testament saints. But even Old Testament. Saints. Alright. So a better. Better. Community. Number three.

A better. Celebration. A better celebration. The. General. Assembly. He. Says here. And I know I'm kind of skipping. I think I.

Skipped over that. I want to come back. To it. And go back. To the text here. To verse 23. The general. Assembly. And church. Of the first born. And so forth.

The general assembly. What is that? Well. The Greek word there. And I'm not going to. Say the word itself. Because I don't remember. What it was. But it means.

A gathering. For a public festival. That is the. Kind of expanded. Definition. Of the word. Just one word. This. Where we have. Several words.

[15:41] In the English text. Here. The general assembly. It's one word. In the Greek. And it's talking about. A. A. A. A. A festival. A. A.

A party. If you will. A. A. A celebration. And. And that's what it's going to be like when we get to heaven. There's going to be a great celebration.

And the celebration really has already begun if we believe Scripture where the Bible says there's more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. And just think of that celebration. So a better celebration. Number four, a better commendation. To the judge, to God the judge of all. A better commendation. Now, here is the wonder, how glorious it is to run to the right mountain. [16:43] And in the comparison here, how it's unfolded for us here, not only in Hebrews chapter 12, when we go back to Exodus, how it's unfolded for us, what it was like at Mount Sinai, and how fearful that is.

And then the application of that being, what a fearful thing it is to run to the wrong mountain, and to trust in your own righteousness.

And there's only fear there and condemnation. But by contrast, in glorious contrast, run to Zion, and there be forgiveness and freeness and celebration and all these things that we're naming here. Because we're coming through Mount Zion. We're coming through Christ. We're coming to the God who's the judge of all. But we don't need to fear. To come into God's presence at Sinai meant death.

But to come into God's presence at Zion means life and acceptance. You know, the way into God's presence is, if you run to the right mountain, it's forever open for us.

[18:05] And it's the way of the cross. It's the way of grace. This is the passage I was thinking about earlier. Revelation 21.3 And 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. This is our ultimate experience. Having run to Mount Zion.

The way of grace. There was none of this at Sinai. God was aloof. He was distant. He was unapproachable. And if you tried to approach Him even to touch the bottom of the mountain, you'd be dead.

But through Zion, He dwells with us. Sets up His tent. He dwells with us. And we dwell with Him.

So, a better commendation. Then, number five, a better covenant. A better covenant. This is kind of the climax of it all. He says there, We have come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

[19:32] What does that mean? We're not talking about Abel's blood. We're talking about the sacrifice he made of that spotless lamb that had been prescribed by God.

He first taught Adam and Eve. And Adam and Eve taught their sons the proper sacrifice that would atone for sin. And Abel brought that sacrifice and it was accepted.

But, as you know, that was just the beginning. And every year, they had to continually bring that blood. That blood had to be brought every year, year after year, year after year.

And so, though the blood sacrifice was acceptable to God and it did make atonement for their sin, it was not permanent. It was partial, or we might say temporary.

We could even say, in a sense, it's a limited atonement. But, Jesus, His blood, His sacrifice, full atonement, once and for all.

[20:37] And, so, there you have, then, what Paul describes there for us. For those, the blessings of running to the right mountain, Mount Zion.

And then he ends this chapter with a warning. And it's a pretty, pretty strong warning. And that's why this third point, why I've named it the word that forewarns us.

Because now there's a warning here. Verse 25 and following. See that you do not refuse, as you do not ignore, him who speaks.

For if they did not escape, who refused him who spoke on earth, that is, when God spoke at Sinai, and if they did not live, did not make it, because they refused him there, then how much shall, much more shall we not escape, if we turn away from him who speaks from heaven.

Alright, so you see, he's bringing both of these together again. And so, if Israel did not listen, they did not listen, and what happened to them?

[21:56] They didn't make it into the promised land. If today, those who do not listen, will not make it into the promised land either. Not an earthly promised land, but salvation.

Heaven. And that is, the idea here is, not obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not responding in faith to God's provision of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Christ. And God spoke from a mountain one day, and the people did not listen. And they did not go into the promised land. It's symbolic of those today who God has spoken from heaven.

And those who do not listen will not enter into the promised land. There will be no salvation. So it's a stark warning. But let's go on. Much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth.

And it certainly did. But now He has promised, saying, yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.

[23:10] And one day He will. He'll shake this entire earth. In fact, we could look back at... Let me just skip that. We're running out of time. You can jot down Haggai 2.6.

And then there are references in Revelation 2 and the darkness and the destruction. Now this, yet once more, He says, verse 27, indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, that is, the physical things, as of things that are made, the physical things, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

One of these days, all the physical creation is going to be shaken and destroyed. And it's going to be remade. But all the physical things will be shaken and only the spiritual will remain.

That's what He's saying here. The things that are eternal. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, what kingdom is that, by the way?

It's the kingdom of God. And something that is here now in a partial sense, that is, in this sense, that the kingdom of God resides in the church, resides in the hearts of God's born-again children who have residing in them God Himself and the person of the Holy Spirit.

[24:46] So His kingdom has come. It was inaugurated when Jesus came and died and was resurrected and the church was birthed. But ultimately, the kingdom will be realized in its fullness in heaven and that day is coming.

And it cannot be shaken. Let us have grace, or that is, let us worship by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

And not just in the future, but right now. We need to be serving Him now, worshiping Him now. But in the future, that's going to be what we'll be doing for eternity.

Worshiping Him and serving Him in a place that can never end, that can never be violated, can never be even shaken, that's permanent, the kingdom of God, where God will be dwelling with men and men with God and in absolute perfection.

And then He ends with this very serious description of God. For our God is a consuming fire.

[26:00] A consuming fire. fire. What a serious way to end a discussion or the revelation on the mountains, the two mountains that men can run to.

To Sinai or to Zion. The idea here is if you run to Sinai, then that's a place of fear and one day you will be consumed because our God is a consuming fire.

This is the ultimate, final judgment. But I think because He tags this on at the end after His discussion about Mount Zion, that the idea here is that there is a greater judgment for those who know about Zion but have rejected that way and have run to Sinai.

Those who have maybe even been immersed in the teachings of the church and yet were not born again but know God and know about Jesus and have embraced some of the facts of the gospel and the truth of God's word and then at some point reject all of that and turn to Sinai.

Our God is a consuming fire. So to which mountain have you run?