

Heb 12:18-24 The Kingdom of Christ (part 2)

Mt. Zion: The Glorious Gospel of Christ

Our text today says, “**You have come to Mt. Zion.**” The language here is clear. To come to Mt. Zion is to come NOW to Christ who is the fulfillment of all that Mt. Zion pictures. Those Hebrew Christians had come to Christ by faith. And, today, WE have come to Christ by faith. This is now! However, we still wait for the new heavens and the new earth and the consummation of all things. And as Heb. 13:14 says, “**We wait for a city yet to come.**” There is a more glorious TIME and a more glorious PLACE coming in the future that goes beyond what we can think or imagine. But, this text is about here and now, a current reality for God’s people. With this in mind, I want think more about Mt. Zion and what it means to come to Mt. Zion.

Let me ask, “*How many churches are named Mt. Zion in the English language?*” There are way too many to count for the purpose of this sermon. But, everywhere we look, there is some kind of church called “Mt. Zion.” Why? . . . This is what I want to explore for a few minutes this morning. In the context of the Book of Hebrews, and the rest of the NT, there is nothing MORE GLORIOUS than MT. Zion and the great work of God on that mountain. Yet, our author describes Mt. Zion as the place and the reality of all God’s promises fulfilled in Christ. The glory God gives to Zion is NOW described as what we have in Christ in the new covenant. (See John Owen and his commentary on this subject.) I have 6 truths. But before looking at those truths, we must consider the history of the “physical” Zion for just a few minutes.

Zion is mentioned 154 times in the OT and 7 in the NT. It is mentioned first in 2 Sam. 5:6-7. David was the King of Israel (7 years already). But, the kingdom was not yet united under his rule. And he came from Hebron to Jerusalem to establish a united kingdom. But, there was an area in southwest Jerusalem, the highest part of the city. It was a stronghold held by the Jebusites (original inhabitants). It was situated on an area with two hills, thought to be impenetrable. However, King David defeats the Jebusites and establishes this area of town called Mt. Zion. It is called the “stronghold of David” and also the “city of David.”

At that time, Israel and their system of worship under Mosaic Law was at a low point. For many years they had been defeated by their enemies. They had a king (Saul) who was proud and disobedient, and even consulted a medium. The priesthood had all but collapsed and the ark of God had recently been captured by the Philistines. And then, suddenly, at the right time, God raised up King David to establish his kingdom. And He was a man after God’s own heart. So, the capturing of Zion was a grand and glorious moment in the history of Israel. When Zion was captured it was as if the people knew God had established his kingdom in Jerusalem.

Eventually, David built his house on one of the hills. Later, on the other hill (Mt. Moriah), Solomon’s temple would be built and become the most valuable and precious land on earth, right in the middle of the Land of Canaan, the promised land. Listen to some words that speak of Zion. Ps. 48:2-3: “**beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King. Within her citadels God has made himself known as a fortress.**” Ps. 50:2: “**Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.**” Ps. 133:3: “**It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has**

**commanded the blessing, life forevermore.**” As non-Jews it is hard for us to understand the importance of Zion. It is the pearl of great price for real estate. (It is easy for us to see why Jews, Muslims, and even Christians have fought over this land.) And now, our verse says that as Christians, by faith, WE have come to this place. In the gospel of Christ, All the blessings spoken about Zion are ours! ALL the privileges, ALL the blessings of Zion are ours! With this in mind, I have six truths (brief) about Zion that find their fulfillment in the glorious gospel of Christ.

1. Zion is the place where God dwells. In the same verse Zion is called “the city of the living God.” The temple of Solomon was built on Mt. Moriah, one of the hills in Zion. And in 1 Kings 8, after it was built the priests bring the Ark of the Covenant into the temple. And THERE, the glory of the Lord, the “cloud of glory” filled the place so the priests could not remain there (1 Kings 8:11). And then, Solomon gives a long prayer as he commands the people to ALWAYS look and to ALWAYS pray toward this temple. He speaks of the sins Israel will commit, the famines, the natural disasters, the defeats in battle, etc. saying, “when these things happen, LOOK TO THIS PLACE. PRAY TO THIS PLACE. AND GOD WILL HEAR!” (See 1 Kings 8)

Ps. 9:11: “**Sing praises to the LORD, who sits enthroned in Zion! Tell among the peoples his deeds!**” Ps. 76:2: “**His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.**” (This is so interesting! As we’ve already seen from Hebrews, Melchizedek was the King of “Salem,” during the time of Abraham, which is now Jerusalem, the city of “peace.”) Joel 3:17, speaking of judgment to come upon the enemies of God, we read: “**So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain.**”

And I must note that the text says that God dwells in Zion FOREVER. This means there was no disaster, no situation in life, no sin too great, for the repentant heart that looks to Zion by faith, in which God will not answer and give his favor. ALWAYS. Today, as Christians, WE HAVE COME to Mt. Zion. This is the glorious gospel of Christ! In the NT, Jesus does not say, “*Go to the temple to find the presence of God, to find forgiveness of sins.*” He says, “***Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.***” He is either a lunatic or He is God in the flesh!

2. Zion is the place where God reigns. Remember the context of Zion. It was a stronghold, a place that was thought to be impenetrable. But, what happened with King David? He defeated the Jebusites and established his house. And there he ruled for another 33 years. Eventually, Solomon would build the temple and further establish the kingdom.

Ps. 9:11: “**Sing praises to the LORD, who sits enthroned in Zion! Tell among the peoples his deeds!**” Ps. 99:2: “**The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples.**” Ps. 146:10: “**The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!**” Now, when we come to the Book of Hebrews, what does he do with these prophecies of God reigning and ruling from Zion. Look over at 1:8: “**But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.’**” And v. 13: “**And to which of the angels has he ever said, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’**” These are prophecies taken from his favorite Psalm . . . 110, which says in v. 2: “**The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the**

midst of your enemies!” And I am sure he has in mind Ps. 2:6, which says, “**As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.**” Brothers and sisters, what God says about Zion is fulfilled in the Son. Today, our Lord sits where? Does he sit upon the temple of Zion in the physical land of Israel which has been destroyed two times, and is not standing today. In fact, there we find the Dome of the Rock, which the Muslims have built. And even if the temple is rebuilt and Judaism flourishes again in Zion, that place is only a picture of the REAL King who sits WHERE . . . IN HEAVEN, in the “city of the living God.” And how do we know! We know because He died as a sacrifice for our sins. But, now, HE IS RISEN. He has conquered death! And He is ruling . . . until all his enemies are made his footstool. And this is forever.

3. Zion is the object of innumerable divine promises. Throughout the history of Israel in the OT, the prophets proclaim the promises of God to bless Zion. Ps. 69:35-36: “**For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and people shall dwell there and possess it; the offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it.**” In Isaiah 1:26-27 we find a beautiful prophecy of promise: “**And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness.” In Is. 59:20-21 we read: “**And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,**” declares the LORD. “**And as for me, this is my covenant with them,**” says the LORD: “**My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,**” says the LORD, “**from this time forth and forevermore.**”**

Brothers and sisters, these promises (all promises) find their fulfillment, not in an earthly city in Canaan, but in Christ! “Salvation,” “building up,” “dwelling,” “restoration,” “place of righteousness,” “redemption by justice,” “repentance,” etc. All these things we have in the glorious gospel of Christ!

4. Zion is the object of God’s special love. The OT speaks greatly about God “loving Zion” and its people. I will just read part of Ps. 87: “**On the holy mount stands the city he founded; the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God. Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon; behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Cush— “This one was born there,” they say. And of Zion it shall be said, “This one and that one were born in her”; for the Most High himself will establish her.**”

Today, the love of God flows down through Christ. All the things the Bible speaks of Zion, finds its fulfillment in the Son. Eph. 1:3-6 says: “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.**” Today, if you are in Christ, you have come to Zion. And you are the recipient of All the special love of God.

5. Zion is the joy of the entire earth. God established Zion in the time of David and Solomon. And there, he began to establish that earthly kingdom. And this brought great joy to Israel. But, there are many passages that speak of the nations that will one day come to Zion. And the same joy that came to Israel will also come to the nations. Listen to some verses. AS we've already read, Ps. 48:2: **"beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King."** Is. 35:10: **"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away . . ."** Micah 4:2: **"Micah 4:2: and many nations shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."** Is. 51:11: **"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."**

Brothers and sisters, all the passages that speak about Zion being a joy to the earth find their fulfillment in Christ. Here we sit today. Is there any greater source joy than what you have in Christ? And could we be any further physically than Jerusalem and Mt. Moriah? In Christ, the gospel is going to the nations.

6. Zion is the source of salvation and all blessings. Zion was the place of All Israel's blessings and to be outside of Zion, to not have access to Zion, is to be apart from salvation and all blessings. Do you remember when Israel was carried away to Babylon into captivity (away from Zion)? Do you remember what their captors made them do? They made them sing songs about Zion. Ps. 137:3 says: **"For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'"** Oh, how they longed to return to Zion. There was the city of David, the stronghold, found in the city of Jerusalem, and the great temple, and the walls that protect. This is why the same things that are spoken of Zion are also spoken of Jerusalem. Zion is the source of salvation and ALL blessings.

Ps. 14:7: **"Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad."** Is. 46:13: **"I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off, and my salvation will not delay; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory."** Is. 52:7: **"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'" Ps. 110, especially v. 2: "The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!"** This is salvation! This is deliverance from God almighty. And when He rules and brings salvation, blessings follow.

Today, where is salvation found? Where are ALL the blessings of God to be found? Are they found in the physical stronghold of Zion? Are they found on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem? Are they found in that great city? What does our text say? Verse 22: **"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God."** Do you remember Jesus' words from last week to the woman at the well. **"Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father"** (John 4:21). When this woman asked about worship

and salvation, why didn't Jesus tell her to go to Zion and worship on Mt. Moriah? Because ALL the blessings spoken of Zion find their fulfillment in the Messiah. He said to her, "If you drink this water, you will thirst again. But, if you drink the water I give, you will never thirst again and the water I will give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). Let me ask, "Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus?" Because he elevated himself to the position that only God can have. He said, "**Something greater than the temple is here . . . Something greater than Solomon is here**" (Matt. 12:6, 42).

What does Acts 4:12 say? "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. **Brothers and sisters, salvation and ALL blessings are found in Christ. And everything the Bible says about Zion is true about Jesus! Zion was given to Israel so that when He were to come, they would know that He is the fulfillment of Zion. This is why the writer to the Hebrews says to those Christians, "You have come to Mt. Zion, the city of the living God."**

Today, I am not focusing my attention on the physical city of Jerusalem and its future establishment (I'll leave things to God in his providence.) Today, and forevermore, what the Bible says about Zion, you have in Christ. 1) By faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit, God dwells with you. 2) In Christ, you are seated with Him in the heavenly places, where he now rules until all his enemies are made his footstool. 3) In Christ ALL God's promises are fulfilled and all of them will eventually be realized. 4) In Christ you are the object of the special love of God. 5) In Christ, you are a part of the nations that have come to Zion. 6) In Christ you have found salvation and ALL God's blessings.

Brothers and sisters, we should NEVER speak of Zion lightly. And with this understanding, we should also rejoice in Zion, knowing that Christ is the King, the ruler, the fulfillment, the giver of all the blessings of God. If this is true, is there anything more important than Zion, which finds its fulfillment in Christ. This means when we read about Zion in the OT our hearts leap with joy unspeakable because of ALL the blessings spoken of Zion are found in the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. To God be the glory!