

Sermon Series
The Superiority of Jesus Christ
September 11, 2022

Title: The Lord's City

Subject: Mount Sinai, Mount Zion, The Living God, Elect angels, faith, Abel, the righteous, Made perfect, Jesus Christ, Mediator, New Covenant, God the Judge, The City of God

Theme Text: Hebrews 12:22-24 (ESV) ²² 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,²³ 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,²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Theme Illustration: To the Saints, the firstborn of heaven, we come by faith to the throne of God, the Throne of His grace, spiritually, in anticipation of the fulfillment of this scene in the New Jerusalem, Mount Zion, the city of the Living God. The firstborn does not speak of birth order but of prominence as the inheritors of the Divine promises won for us on Calvary. We have been freed from Sinai, from the mountain of darkness, the mountain of judgment, to gather in the presence of the same God who came to Sinai in judgment. We come to Him not in fear of judgment, but to His throne of grace to partake in all the blessings promised to the inhabitants of Zion, **Psalm 9:11 (ESV) ¹¹ Sing praises to the LORD, who sits enthroned in Zion! Tell among the peoples his deeds!** Oh Zion that beautiful and eternal city we come, **Psalm 48:1-2 (ESV) ¹ Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, ² beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.** This is the city in which the redeemed saints are enrolled. There is no illegal immigration to Zion as indicated by

the man who was not wearing wedding clothes to the great wedding feast.
(Matt 22.11)

Read: Hebrews 12:22-24

Introduction: The contrast between cyanide and Zion couldn't be more pronounced. The former was a physical mountain, the other a spiritual city. The former was in a bleak foreboding desert; the other was positioned in a land flowing with milk and honey. The former was barren, the other Eden restored; one was enveloped in darkness, while Zion which means sunny, is full of light. God came down on Sinai only to deliver the law for a moment. However, He dwells in Zion forever. On Sinai, He appeared in all of His fearful Majesty. On Zion, He manifests Himself in grace and blessing. At Sinai, the covenant mediator, Moses, trembled with fear. On Zion Christ, the covenant mediator does so in honor and glory. Under the curse of the law, God's throne was a place of judgment. On Zion, His throne is the throne of grace. When we as born-again believers are brought to Christ, each believer comes to Zion spiritually by faith and is entitled to all of the good and glorious things promised in the Scriptures that go with Zion.

Transition: I want to develop certain aspects of what our text reveals about the city. We first see Zion as:

1. A Heavenly City: Hebrews 12:22 (ESV) ²² 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,

The earthly city of Jerusalem, the seat and center of worship of God, was the picture, the type of reality of a heavenly city. This city was envisioned by Abraham, **Hebrews 11:10 (ESV) ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.** Abraham realized that Canaan was but a figure of his everlasting inheritance. The eternal city is both a city and a country.

The mentions of the city are more than a few in the Old Testament. For example, **Psalm 46:4 (ESV) ⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.** That River is the life of the spirit and the streams are the streams of grace watering the city. We see in **Psalm 48:1 (ESV) ¹ Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God!** His holy mountain... we see that this city is the place where the Lord is great to be praised. The city of the living God speaks of the nearness of the saints to God personally. In the earthly Jerusalem, which was adjacent to Zion, the houses of the people were near the Lord's house. This figure we find in **Ephesians 2:19 (ESV) ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...**

A city is a permanent place of residence in contrast to living in tents in the wilderness. In those times, a city was a place of safety, surrounded by high and strong walls. So in Zion, we will be eternally secure from sin, Satan, and every enemy. A city should be a place of rest, safety, and honor. But the fall ruined the city. Man has been separated from its inhabitants. By faith, we as Christians lay claim to all of this city's benefits. We come to this city spiritually by faith until we come to this city by resurrection. We are its citizens. We approach the city as worshipers, spiritual worshipers. These are the kind of worshipers desired by God, **John 4:23-24 (ESV) ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."**

In this city, we have restored to us a great privilege, that is worshiping with the inhabitants of the city, God's elect angels. These angels are the worshipers of God and His Christ. They are the original citizens of heaven, **1 Timothy 5:21 (ESV) ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.** These angels, although not redeemed by the blood of Christ, were in all likelihood confirmed in their standing through Christ's incarnation.

Redeemed sinners are of one's spirit with all of the heavenly hosts. We have been brought into a state of friendship and are members of the same family, **Ephesians 3:15 (ESV) ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named**, and are reunited under the same head, **Colossians 2:10 (ESV) ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority**. With the inhabitants of the city, we are all spiritual relations. It is Christ who restored the breach caused by Adam's fall. Christ brought back together the upper and lower worlds, **Colossians 1:20 (ESV) ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross**.

Transition: This city is also:

2. A Worshipping City: Hebrews 12:23 (ESV) ²³ 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,

This text speaks of an assembly, a joint gathering of the firstborn. This takes in the totality of God's elect and redeemed people of all ages. This is the church of the living God of which are the redeemed of every age, Jews and Gentiles belong. These are the people to whom all of the promises belong. This is the church, built upon the rock of Christ, against which the gates of hell will not prevail. This is the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the anti-typical fulfilled temple of the living God, His home forever. This is the church which Christ loved and gave Himself for, washed in His blood through which he will sanctify the redeemed with the washing of the water by the word, **Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV) ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, she might be holy and without blemish.**

Israel was God's firstborn among the nations of the earth, **Exodus 4:22 (ESV) ²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son...but the church is His firstborn among the inhabitants of**

heaven. These inhabitants have been perfected through sanctification and the resurrection of the dead. These are those whose names are written in heaven, **Luke 10:20 (ESV)** ²⁰ **Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”** These are those whose names were written in the book of life, **Philippians 4:3 (ESV)** ³ **Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.** What is the book of life? It is the roll of God’s elect and His irreversible designation of them to which He determines to give grace and glory. In Judaism, the names are only written upon the synagogue scrolls.

The judge of all is the Father in His high office. It was at Sinai, He appeared as judge. Here it is not in fear but in admiration as it was this Judge who appointed Christ to lay down His life. It is to this Judge sinners are now reconciled and justified, Romans 5:1. We can now call upon His bench of justice or throne without fear. This is only possible by faith. The perfected saints here in this city have nothing to fear, **Romans 8:1 (ESV)** ¹ **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**

Transition: Finally, this city is:

3. The Lord’s City: Hebrews 12:24 (ESV) ²⁴ **and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.**

We need to notice that the Holy Spirit uses the personal name of Jesus. It is that name that means He saves His people from their sins. In coming to Zion by faith, we come to the Lord’s city and His eternal and personal presence. We, do you not see, by and through His office as the mediator of the New Covenant, we come. It is that covenant that forms the life and fellowship of Zion. This covenant was ratified by the sprinkling of His blood. We have been sprinkled with His blood.

Conclusion: The more we Christians exercise repentance toward God as our advocate, the more will experience the power of His blood in our conscience. The blood of Abel called for vengeance, Genesis 4:10. Whereas the blood of Christ calls forth a blessing upon those for whom it was shed. Abel's blood cried out to God from the ground while Christ's blood speaks in heaven for us.

We have seen the surpassing grace, blessing, and our future in Zion. Let us come to Zion when we gather spiritually by faith and to the joyous gathering with the whole family of God, His elect angels, and elect redeemed sinners saved by grace through faith in Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Merely physical worship cannot even touch this truth.

Are you one of those whose name is been enrolled in the city of the living God? Is your name written in the book of life? If not you will face the judge on your own merits. Why not face the judge based upon the merits of Christ his son? A person cannot possibly worship God in spirit if they are not born again. This city which we come to by faith in this life is our inheritance in the life to come. Imagine fellow shipping with angels. Imagine them even fellowshipping with us!