

## WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

“But ye are come unto mount Zion, 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. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb 12:22-29)

Lesson 1 of 16

## INTRODUCTION

An unspeakable advantage of believers – those in Christ Jesus – is found in knowing WHERE they are come. The only way Israel could identify the presence of God was through their fleshly senses. That awareness actually drove them away because it was in sharp conflict with their natures. Thus the desert offended them, the manna they received during their sojourn offended them, and the leader God had appointed over them offended them – all because of what they comprehended through their natural senses, and how they reasoned upon it.

## A CHANGE HAS TAKEN PLACE

However, it is not so with those in Christ Jesus. A transformation has taken place within them that enables them to enter "heavenly places" (Eph 2:6). They can enter into fellowship with God's own Son (1 Cor 1:9), and draw near to the throne of grace (Heb 4:16). They can “walk in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7), and perceptibly enjoy “the communion of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor 13:14). That ability, however, cannot be put into use apart from an awareness of WHERE they are.

If I do not know where grace has brought me, I will not avail myself of its privileges. Therefore, the Spirit now reasons with us concerning the effectiveness of God's "great salvation." The design of this section is to provoke us to avail ourselves of Divinely appointed covenantal benefits. The necessity for this passage is simply this: **OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE BLESSING DEPENDS UPON US AVAILING OURSELVES OF DIVINE PROVISION.**

The New Covenant is one of closeness. In it, provision is made to draw near to God (Heb 10:22), coming “boldly to the throne of all grace” (Heb 4:15). The appropriation of "grace to help in the time of need" can only take place when we are NEAR to our Redeemer – not unconsciously near, but knowingly near.

## THE OUTER COURT

The outer court will yield no eternal benefits! There is an “outer court” associated with life in Christ. It is the area where “coming” takes place, but fellowship is not realized there. It is to spiritual life what the “outer court” was to the Tabernacle (Ex 40:8). There was a lot of necessary work that took place in that court: washings (Ex 30:18-19; 40:30), and sacrificial offerings (Ex 20:24; 40:10). However, there was no atonement made in the outer court, neither was intercession made there. That was all accomplished within the Tabernacle, and in the holy of holies.

When John was given a vision of the tabernacle of God’s people, he was given a reed with which to measure – examining the acceptability of the people. He was told, “Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein” (Rev 11:1) – the place of activity (the temple of God), the means of atonement (the altar), and the worshipers (them that worship therein). All of them had to stand up to the measure, being what God had appointed them to be.

Then, however, it was added, “But the court which is without the temple leave out, and MEASURE IT NOT; for it is given unto the Gentiles” (Rev 11:2). This has to do with the approach to God. The “Gentiles,” in this instance are those who “know not God” (1 Thess 4:5).

Today, all of the doctrinal corruptions have been developed in the “outer court,” and they have been developed apart from fellowship with God. This outer court is not the place where Divine acceptance is comprehended, or conformity to the Divine image takes place. Those who emphasize baptism do not see this. Baptism is necessary – just as the washing and sacrificing in the outer court were necessary. But unless there is a walking, or living, “in the newness of life,” of itself baptism will not make the individual acceptable. Baptism is intended to be a beginning, and if something recognized by God is not commenced at that time, Divine acceptance cannot be known.

Now, the Spirit announces where salvation has placed us. In this text, He is NOT going to focus on what we have done, but where we have been placed, or where we “are come.”

This is where we ARE in Christ Jesus. Mind you, it is not where we HAVE come (as in the past), nor where we OUGHT to come (as in duty), but where we "ARE COME" (where we are currently residing). This is not an historical occurrence, but a present reality. It is not an occasion we look back to, but one which we presently enjoy. We will not take advantage of this blessed place, however, until our hearts are convinced of its reality.

## WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

Lesson 2 of 16

## WHAT WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE

“But ye are come unto . . .” (Heb 12:22-29)

It is vitally important that the people of God know who they are, and where they have come.

#### WHO THEY ARE DECLARED TO BE

1. “The temple of God” (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16).
2. “The body of Christ, and members in particular”(1 Cor 12:27).
3. “God’s husbandry” and “God’s building” (1 Cor 3:9).
4. They are “Christ’s,” belonging to Him (1 Cor 3:23).
5. “Washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” (1 Cor 6:11).
6. “Bought with a price” (1 Cor 7:23).
7. “The epistle of Christ” (2 Cor 3:3).
8. “The children of God by faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal 3:26).
9. “Sons” (Gal 4:6).
10. “Quickened together with Christ” (Eph 2:5).
11. “Fellowcitizens with the saints” (Eph 2:19)
12. “Complete in Him”: [Christ Jesus] (Col 2:10).
13. “Dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3).
14. “The children of light” (1 Thess 5:5).
15. “A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people” (1 Pet 2:9).

The above are not objectives, or what we are to strive to be! They are present realities. This is what we have been made in Christ – made by creation (Eph 2:10), and regeneration (Tit 3:5). Where we “are come” is owing to the accomplishment of the above. In the new birth, or regeneration, we are made suitable to occupy the place affirmed in our text.

#### HOLY PLACEMENT

God has not only re-created us, He has placed, or positioned us, in a specific environment. Where we are is the result of what God has done, and this must be seen. We should not have to explain why mortal man cannot position us in an eternal environment, or place us in a spiritual position.

#### PUT INTO CHRIST

“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). Other versions read, “God has given you a place in Christ Jesus” (BBE), “It is due to Him that you are in Christ Jesus” (NAB), “It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus” (NIV), “God has united you with Christ Jesus” (NLT).

If you are “in Christ,” God Himself has put you there. You were obedient, being “baptized into Christ” (Gal 3:27), but your obedience itself did not put you into Christ – God did!

#### MADE TO SIT IN HEAVENLY PLACES

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath QUICKENED US together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); and hath

RAISED US up together, and MADE US SIT TOGETHER in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:4-6).

All of these effects – quickening or being made alive, being raised up, and being made to sit together in heavenly places, were all the work of God. If He did not do these things, they could not possibly have taken place. Before you can appreciate where you are come, these things must be comprehended.

#### PUT INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST

“But now hath GOD SET the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him” (1 Cor 12:18).

Being part of Christ’s body, which is the church (Col 1:18) is not something that happens independently of God Himself. It is not something that happens by some law of automation. Every member is not only placed in the body by God, they are placed where God wants them – to function in Christ’s body in a particular way.

#### AN EXCEEDINGLY LARGE ROOM

“And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: Thou hast set my feet in a large room” (Psa 31:8).

This Psalm perfectly expresses the environment into which God has placed us. It is exceedingly large in regard to its provisions – “all spiritual blessings” (Eph 1:4), and “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:4). It is “large” in the sense of liberty – with the saints being able to move about freely in the marvelous provisions found in Christ Jesus. We are not fenced off from the presence of God as Israel was (Ex 19:12). Now we can “draw nigh unto God” (Heb 7:19; James 4:8), come to the Lord by means of a “new and living way” (Heb 10:22), having free access to “the throne of all grace” (Heb 4:15-16). We can say to even a greater degree what David said, “How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee” (Psa 139:17-18).

O, how precious is the place where we have been brought in Christ Jesus – and God Himself has wrought in us the things that qualify us to occupy that blessed realm!

#### WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

Lesson 3 of 16

#### WE ARE COME TO MOUNT ZION

“But ye are come unto mount Zion . . .” (Verse 22, Heb 12:22-29)

Thank God, we have NOT come to Mount Sinai (Heb 12:18-21)! That was a frightening occasion when “mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly” (Ex 19:18-19). “So terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake” (Heb 12:21). The people were commanded to stand back, aloof from the mountain, and not coming near to it. Moses was told to “set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death. There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live” (Ex 19:12-13).

There was such a moral and spiritual gap between the people and God, that to be in His proximity meant sure death. Solemnly the Psalmist writes, “The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel” (Psa 68:8). Paul taught that the covenant originated at Mount Sinai “gendereth to bondage,” or “bears [children destined] for slavery” (Gal 4:24, Amplified).

But this is NOT where those in Christ are come! We “are come to Mount Zion! – a spiritual mountain, for which redemption has suited us. "Mount Zion" is identified with the Lord's dwelling place, while Sinai was an earthly location. Scripture often speaks of "Mount Zion," developing associations in our minds that are requisite to finishing the race. This is a place of spiritual elevation that, in contrast to Sinai, is "beautiful." As it is written, "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion . . ." (Psa 48:2). This is a realm "Which cannot be moved, but abides forever" (Psa 125:1). It is the place where God dwells (as compared with visitation), and where provision is made for the dwelling of His people. As it is written, “And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense” (Isa 4:5; 8:18). This is the place where God dwells, as compared with coming down upon Mount Sinai: “the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion” (Isa 8:18). JESUS CAME WHERE MEN WERE. NOW THOSE WHO ARE IN HIM COME WHERE GOD IS!

Here is the place of blessing, where God "commanded the blessing; Life forevermore." How precious are the words: “As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore: (Psa 133:3). How glorious the "situation" in which the redeemed find themselves: “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psa 48:2). This is a place of advantage, blessing, and benefit. Here Divine fellowship is experienced within the environment of peace and joy. Unlike Israel, we are not told to stand back, and not come near, but to “Draw nigh unto God” (James 4:8), coming in the motivating power of a “better hope” (Heb 7:19). Now, instead of a barrier being raised between men and God, there is a “new and living way, which He has consecrated” for those in Christ – a way that leads into the very presence of God (Heb 10:19-22).

Keep in mind, the Spirit is here contrasting where we have come with where Israel came. He is drawing a comparison between the realm we occupy and the one inhabited by Israel at their peak. The superiority of the environment in which the saints are privileged to live is here declared.

Those who take advantage of this blessed status, deliberately choosing to live in the lively awareness of the Lord, will find debilitating manners falling off of them. They will experience cleanness, like the lepers whom Jesus cleansed, and full mobility like the impotent people Jesus healed. They, like Lazarus, will find themselves fully able to exit from the moral tombs that had held them. Let all of the worldly counselors, self-help advocates, and recovery specialists know, God “has provided some better thing for us!” (Heb 11:40). All of their plans and procedures are at the foot of Mount Sinai, and enlightened souls refuse to live there. We “are come to Mount Zion,” and we intend to stay there.

## WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

Lesson 4 of 16

## TO THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD

“But ye are come . . . unto the city of the Living God . . .” (Verse 22, Heb 12:22-29)

This is the "city" God has prepared for His people – a municipality that will never end or be relocated. As it is written, “For here have we no continuing city, but WE SEEK ONE TO COME” (Heb 13:14). It is, as David put it, "the city of the Great King" (Psa 48:2). Here God resides, and here the Divine repository of all blessing and eternal benefit is found. Those who are aware of its glories have joined the chorus of the centuries, "Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!" (Psa 87:3). It is depicted apocalyptically, or in foreshadowing language, as having “a river, the streams whereof shall make glad THE CITY OF GOD, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High” (Psa 46:4). This marvelous “river” ensures there will never be so much as a fleeting moment in which the inhabitants of this city will experience “death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:4).

Now, while we are in “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), we can endure all manner of hardship, pain, and sorrow in the prospect of our coming home. There is, Jesus affirmed, a “world to come” in which every form of difficulty and hardship will be absent (Mk 10:30; Lk 18:20; Heb 2:5). In fact, there is presently such a thing as “the powers of the world to come,” which can be “tasted,” or experienced (Heb 6:5).

Now, in salvation, we “ARE COME . . . to the city of the Living God,” which is located in “the world to come.” We come to this city by faith, which is the hand of the soul taking hold of realities that cannot be seen or in any way experienced by our earthly senses. What is more, faith brings the substance of these realities to the soul – realities that are filled with “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit,” characteristics of the Kingdom of God (Rom 14:17).

The resources that are resident in “the city of the Living God” are measured out to believers to the degree their faith can take hold of them. These are what enable the believing ones to live above the world, abstaining from fleshly lusts (1 Pet 2:11), resisting the devil (James 4:7), and casting down aberrant thoughts (2 Cor 10:1-3). This is not a fictitious city, or a parabolic one, or

a symbolic one. God does not dwell in fictitious places, or parables, or hyperboles.

The preeminent awareness of this "city" is God Himself – “the city OF THE LIVING GOD.” Those who, by faith, dwell within its realms are not distracted by the affairs of this world, which is not their “city.” The saints live in this world, but they are not of this world (John 17:16). Their citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20), where their names are written (Heb 12:23).

This city is God's city – "the city of the Living God." Sinai was called "the mount of God" (Ex 4:27; 18:5; 24:13; 1 Kgs 19:8). It was a place of restricted, limited revelation, tumult, and fear. God came down there (Ex 19:20), but He did not dwell there. When God was there on that mountain, it caused fear to dominate the people. There was nothing about His presence that comforted or consoled them. It did not remove their wayward character, change their perspective of life, make them thankful, or produce joy within them.

But it is not so with "the city of the Living God." What we possess in Christ is as superior to the Law as a city is to a mountain! It is a place of heavenly commerce, teeming activity, safety, and provision.

At Sinai, only Moses spoke "face to face" with God (Ex 33:4; Deut 34:10). He was a solitary figure in a restricted place, bounded by a fence and Divine prohibition. But it is not so in the "city of the Living God." Here is a dwelling place for multitudes, with abundant provision and access to the King. Sinai was in the wilderness, solitary and desolate. But the "city of the Living God" is in the midst of abundance, with the glory of God filling it. The people are not gathered around it, but within it. The saved do not journey to this city seasonally (Deut 16:16), but remain within it's blessed environ. Now they do it by faith, but they are scheduled to dwell there fully, with no veil upon their faces.

At Sinai, God came down to the earth in a covering of smoke, tempest, and earthquake. As it is written, “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 entreated 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”) (Heb 12:18-21).

It is not so where we have come. Rather than God coming to us, invading the temporal environment with awesome disruption, we have been "raised up together, and made"to "sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). Sinai is where God came. "The city of the Living God" is where we have come! Praise His holy name!

WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

TO THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

“But ye are come unto . . . the heavenly Jerusalem . . .” (Verse 22, Heb 12:22-29)

## Lesson 5 of 16

This glorious "city" – a “heavenly” city – was typified by earthly Jerusalem, where God placed His name (1 Kgs 11:36; Jer 3:17). That city was also called "the city of God" (Psa 46:4). It was where God "placed" His name – the city with which He identified Himself, and with which the people identified with Him (1 Kgs 8:29; Neh 1:9; 1 Kgs 11:36). The temple of God was here (2 Kgs 23:4; Mark 11:11).

“Jerusalem” is mentioned in Moses and the Prophets 667 times. Ten times it is presented as related to “worship.” In the minds of devout Hebrews, redemption was associated with Jerusalem (Lk 2:38). Remember, this was the city where God placed His name (1 Kgs 11:36; 14:21; 2 Chron 12:13). Following His resurrection, when Jesus commissioned His disciples, He said, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM” (Lk 24:46-47).

### THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM IS SUPERIOR

However, "the heavenly Jerusalem" is vastly superior to earthly Jerusalem. That city was destroyed by its enemies, according to the word of Christ (Matt 23:37-38). In olden times, it was besieged by Pekon (2 Kgs 16:5), the Philistines (2 Chron 21:16-17), Sennacherib (2 Kgs 18:13), and Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24:10). God judged this city, sparing only those who feared Him and sighed because of the abominations found in it (Ezek 9:1-11). Such sieglements have never taken place against "the city of the Living God." This city is not accessible to our enemies. The devil, with his motley band of angels, has been cast from the environ of this city, and cannot enter its realms in any sense or at any time (Rev 12:9; Luke 10:18). This is "the Jerusalem which is above," and is the "mother of us all" (Gal 4:26). Freedom is experienced here, and there is no form of bondage to the lower elements (Gal 4:26).

This is a place of spiritual commerce, where "the things of the Spirit of God" (Rom 8:5; 1 Cor 2:14) are dispensed and enjoyed. The qualification for citizenry in this city is not to be found in the flesh, but in approximation to the Son of God. This is the location of "all spiritual blessings," made accessible to all of its inhabitants (Eph 1:6). No dweller in this city is alone. There are no juniper trees under which discouraged men weep (1 Kgs 19:4). There are no agonizing Gethsemanes, from which "strong cryings and tears" may be heard (Mark 14:32-34; Heb 5:7). In a typical way, it was true of earthly Jerusalem, but much more of the "heavenly Jerusalem," "this is the city that can truthfully be called, The perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth" (Lam 2:15). Here is where we are come!

Because our Savior is seated in heaven, and “all spiritual blessings” are resident there, “the heavenly Jerusalem” is appropriately said to be “the mother of us all” – “But Jerusalem which is above IS FREE, which is THE MOTHER OF US ALL” (Gal 4:26). Paul then provides this explanation: “For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband” (Gal 4:27). The heavenly Jerusalem is likened to a barren and desolate woman – like Sarah. Yet the “heavenly Jerusalem” has mothered multitudes of children – many more than the fleshly

offspring of Abraham and Sarah.

While men are prone to associate converted, or born again, people with “evangelism” (a non-Biblical word), human methodologies, and the likes, here conversion is specifically related to heavenly influences. And the same is true of spiritual maturity. These influences are also referred to as “the powers of the world to come.” When it comes to spiritual resources, they are specifically said to be “all spiritual blessings IN HEAVENLY PLACES in Christ,” who Himself is in heaven (Eph 1:3).

The “heavenly Jerusalem” is intended to connote the locus of our life and all of the resources that support it.

## WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

Lesson 6 of 16

### TO AN INNUMERABLE COMPANY OF ANGELS

“But ye are come . . . to an innumerable company of angels” (Verse 22, Heb 12:22-29)

Angels were present at Mount Sinai. It is written of God's descent upon that holy mount, “And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints. . .” (Deut 33:2). Again, catch the magnitude of that occasion, when a fiery law went forth to Israel. “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, Even thousands of thousands; The Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place” (Psa 68:17). Stephen affirmed that ancient Israel had “received the law by the disposition of angels” (Acts 7:53). Paul wrote that the Law was “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Gal 3:19). The epistle to Hebrew believers reminds us that the Law was spoken by angels: “For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward” (Heb 2:2). But that awesome assembly of lofty beings is not to be compared with the blessed place where “we are come.”

At Sinai the angels were uncountable. Where we are come, they are “innumerable.” At Sinai, the angels spoke the Law, and the people were frightened (Heb 2:2). These angels are joyful because of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Lk 2:10). They have witnessed the reconciling of the world to God (2 Cor 5:18-21). At Sinai, there were fear and dread in the presence of the holy angels. But now, where we have come, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God” (Luke 15:10). Some versions, accentuating this reality, translate this verse as follows. “But you have come to . . . innumerable angels in festal gathering” (RSV), and “You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly” (NIV). Although they are unseen, they are in the assembly of the saints, and believers are admonished to conduct themselves properly “because of the angels” (1 Cor 11:10).

Mind you, we are in the company of these angels, though we cannot see them. They are behind the scenes, inaccessible to human senses, “sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation” (Heb 1:14). In Christ Jesus, they are our friends, not our foes. They are for us, not

against us. They are doubtless involved in the “good days” you enjoy (1 Pet 3:10). One of their number struck king Herod dead because he heaped glory to himself – like the devil did (Acts 12:23). Jesus said concerning “little ones,” or infants, “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven THEIR ANGELS do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven” (Matt 18:10). What must these holy angels think when parents do not teach their children the ways of the Lord, and are content to allow them to grow up ignorant of Jesus? Today, we have a massive generation of young people who have been despised from their youth by their parents. They learn early to sin extensively, and do not have a proper attitude toward the world, or to God their Maker. The angels know!

The Gospel we preach intrigues them. As it is written. Concerning the Gospel Peter writes, “the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into” (1 Pet 1:12, NKJV). What must angels think of people who prefer brief exposure to the Scriptures, and songs that contain little food for the soul? What do they think of those who remain ignorant of the Gospel which is intended for them?

The angels saw Christ Jesus for Who He was, when the world knew Him not: “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, SEEN OF ANGELS” (1 Tim 3:16). These are "elect angels" before whom we live and are summoned into Kingdom activities (1 Tim 5:21).

Let your mind ponder where you are come in Christ Jesus! You “are come” to this August assembly of holy angels!

WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

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TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN

“But ye are come unto . . . the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven . . .” (Verse 23, Heb 12:22-29)

Spiritual Babylon (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2-21) has taught believers to think in terms of a sect or denomination. We are asked, "What church do you belong to?", or a similar question. The Lord, however, does not encourage us to think with such a limited perspective. God is "great" (Job 26:26), and His salvation is also "great" (Heb 2:3). We have NOT been called into an earthly society, but a heavenly one. There are no sects or divisions in heaven, but perfect unity. What is more, the only valid registry of God-approved people is in heaven. Whatever “church” you are affiliated with here must be harmonious with the unseen “general assembly” with which all believers are affiliated. The real purpose for “the churches” (Rev 2:11,17,23,28; 3:6,13,22; 22:16) is to prepare us for glory. Those who leave this world unprepared, will really have no place in heaven – with the Savior and the sanctified ones.

When we come into Christ, we become identified with every individual recognized and approved by God. We also become part of the gathering, or household, over which Jesus Christ,

the "Firstborn," presides, and to which He ministers. The term "Firstborn" does not insinuate that our Savior is a created being, as some sophists affirm. It is rather a spiritual perspective. He is the "Firstborn from the dead," or the First to be raised from the dead as Conqueror and exalted One (Rev 1:6). He is the example of what we shall be – the "Firstborn," or first Man of a new order.

Jesus is also the "Firstborn" in the sense of being the First of a new order – a new family, as it were. Scripture puts it this way, He is "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29). By this, the Spirit means the exalted Christ is the One to Whom the saved are being conformed; the example of what they will be in character. As it is written, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

The society to which we "are come" are those being conformed to the image of God's Son. These are "the elect" (Col 3:12) whom heaven has recognized. The grand amalgamation of personalities is a family "in heaven and earth" which is named after Christ (Eph 3:15). These are the ones God has received, those to whom Jesus ministers, and who are at home in the presence of the Lord. It is recognition enough to be identified with this "general assembly."

By saying "general," the universality of this gathering is accentuated. Blessed is the person who finds satisfaction in being identified with this assembly. They can "rejoice in this . . . because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). They are no less than heavenly alumni!

There is a sense in which "the whole family" meets together in the weekly assembly. The degree of the presence of those who have left this world is not known – but we "are come" to them. We know angelic hosts meet with us (1 Cor 11:10). We know that God is among those whom He has accepted (1 Cor 14:25). We know that Jesus Christ is among us, teaching us, and Shepherding us (1 Cor 5:4; Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20). The Holy Spirit is with us also (Rom 8:11; Eph 5:18). If Abraham, after he had departed from the earth, knew about the rich man's brothers (Lk 16:27-19), is it too difficult to believe that he knows about "the whole family?"

These, to whom we "are come," are the personalities "which are written in heaven." Some of these were martyrs for Jesus, "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God" (Rev 20:4). They knew enough about what was going on in the earth to know that God had not yet avenged their blood – and they asked about it: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev 6:10). They were told that "they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev 6:11). It should not stretch our thinking see there is some sense in which they are aware of their brethren that remain in the world. And there is some sense in which can be aware of them, recalling their tenure and faithfulness in this world, and striving to follow in their steps.

May God grant us all a godly sensitivity to be aware of the noble congregation to which we are come. From the ramparts of heaven, may they behold people who are fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12). They have finished their course, we are in the process of finishing ours.

## WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

Lesson 8 of 16

### TO GOD THE JUDGE OF ALL

“But ye are come unto . . . to God the Judge of all . . .” (Verse 23, Heb 12:22-29)

Herein is a marvelous thing, underscoring the magnitude of our salvation. Note that it does not say we have come to God in the capacity of a Savior, as in 1 Timothy 1:1. Nor, indeed, have we come to Him as our Redeemer, as in Psalm 78:35. Those, and other, expressions are precisely true, but they are not the point of this text. Our salvation is so thorough and extensive in Christ that it holds up under extensive Divine scrutiny. A salvation that leaves people unable to stand before “God the Judge of all,” is no salvation at all. If salvation does not change the individual in a very real sense, it will not escape the eyes of “God the Judge of all.” There is no such thing as a person, a condition, or an incident that God will not judge. Settle it in your mind, in Christ we “are come” to “God the Judge of all.” If you are a genuine product of the work of Christ, you will stand up under the most precise judgment of God Himself. Of course, if you are not really a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), “the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:10) – it will all be made known before “God the Judge.” If you have not been in the process of being “changed from to glory” by the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18), or have not lived in this world as a “stranger and a pilgrim” (1 Pet 2:11), or have not “abstained from fleshly lusts that war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11), standing before “God the Judge” will be a “fearful thing” (Heb 10:31).

There is a mindset of “Christianity” being perpetrated and cultured in our time that obscures “God the Judge.” The result is that there is a toleration by many professed churches of things that God has condemned. Men have engaged in extensive efforts to change human behavior from the outside – by regimentation and procedures. This, of course, is what the Law of Moses was designed to do. It was given largely to prove men, regardless of their professed wisdom and credentials, cannot change what people are – and that is precisely what will be made known when we at last stand before “God the Judge.” Any effort to teach an unregenerate person “how to live,” is an exercise in vanity.

Since Jesus Christ, salvation in no way causes an unregenerate person, one who has not been born again, to be acceptable to God. The prelude to Divine acceptance is washing, justification, and sanctification (1 Cor 6:11). A new creation, that results in old things passing away, and all things becoming new (2 Cor 5:17), prepares us for living before God now, and standing before Him in the day of judgment.

Christ's appointed role is to "bring us to God" (1 Pet 3:18). He will not bring us defiled and trembling before "the Judge of all the earth" (Gen 18:25). His ministry is not to set us before God as Israel stood before Him at Sinai! In the ultimate sense, He will "present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24-25). The final presentation will find us rejoicing with "exceeding joy," not trembling with exceeding greatness as did Moses (1 Pet 4:13). Of course, salvation – real salvation – is what leaves us in an acceptable state.

Even now, we "are come" to God in the capacity of "Judge of all." And what are we to expect from this confrontation? It will build our confidence if we can see this truth. Take, for example, the testimony of John. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Whenever we sin, we come before the Lord in confession. We face Him as a Judge. What does He do as we stand before Him, acknowledging our transgression without reservation? He passes judgment, but not to condemnation. "He is faithful and just to forgive us." That is an act of judgment! Because we are "in the Son," and are availing ourselves of the grace that is in Him, He judges us forgiven and cleansed! Praise His holy name! We do not shrink back from His judgment, but seek it because of Christ's vicarious atonement.

All of this is not a kind of creedal statement. God does not look at the unrighteous as though they were righteous. This ought to be clear, for it is revealed "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor 6:9). Salvation is not an arrangement by which God considers people to be righteous who are really unrighteous. There is no provision to paint "unrighteousness" making it "righteousness." As it is written, "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17), and that is all it ever can be. Those who are in Christ are being "made the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). This is necessary because Jesus is presently bringing us to God, who is "the Judge of all." The destiny of all men will be settled and announced when all created personalities stand before "God the Judge." The salvation of God readies us for that confrontation.

## WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

Lesson 9 of 16

## TO THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT

"But ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect . . ." (Verse 13, Heb 12:22-29)

Those in Christ are part of "the whole family in heaven and earth" (Eph 3:15). Contrary to the doctrine of the soul-sleepers, no part of this family is "asleep," for such a condition is not possible for those who are "absent from the body, and present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). Jesus depicted Abraham, Lazarus, and a rich man, all of whom had departed from the body, yet were certainly not in any sense "asleep." When Jesus was transfigured, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory, both of them "absent from the body." Not only were they not sleep, they had learned more fully about Christ's death AFTER they departed from the body – a matter neither of them mentioned when they were in the body. I mention these rather elementary things to buttress the fact that we have in no way "come to" a body of sleeping or inactive spirits.

The greater part of Christ's family is "in heaven," as opposed to "earth" (Eph 3:15). While we are surely identified with all the saints in earth, as our "brethren THAT ARE IN THE WORLD" (1 Pet 5:9), our fellowship is not confined to them. We identify with our suffering brethren as ourselves "IN THE BODY also" (Heb 13:3). But we must not forget those who have finished their race, are no longer in the body, and are in a conscious state – like the martyrs John saw on

the other side, who asked about their blood being avenged, and held dialog with the Lord – AFTER they had left the body (Rev 6:10). John saw “the souls of them that were beheaded for their witness of Jesus (Rev 20:4), and they were not sleep.

Notice that we "are come" to "the spirits of just men MADE PERFECT." These are the most noble of our race, spanning from “the beginning” of time, to the last person to have completed the course set before them! These are in an eternal state presently, awaiting the final gathering together of all things, "not only WHICH ARE IN HEAVEN, but also which are on earth" (Eph 1:10). These are not "in the body," but are "spirits." They are among that "great cloud of witnesses" that surround us, attesting to the faithfulness of God and the effectiveness of faith itself (Heb 12:1). These are all who have fought a "good fight," finished their "course," and "kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7). A voice from heaven told John of this glorious community. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord FROM NOW ON. 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them'" (Rev 14:13).

While some are overly concerned about organizational identity, let the saints of God rejoice in being identified with those who have departed the arena of warfare, and, being absent from the body, are present with the Lord. How good to be perceived as members of that group!

Some have interpreted “the spirits of just men made perfect” to refer to all of the saved, but this is not at all the case. These "spirits" have been perfected, a condition we enjoy in this world only in the first fruits sense (Heb 10:14; 1 John 2:5; 4:12). The best of those in the world confess, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended . . ." (Phil 3:12-13).

The word "spirits," whether used of angels (Heb 1:14), evil personalities (Matt 8:16; Acts 19:12), or those who have died (1 Pet 3:19), generally refers to those having no visible, or corporeal, body. The only exceptions to this accentuate the personality of humanity, as distinguished from their bodily frame—i.e. “And the SPIRITS of the prophets are subject to the prophets,” and “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of SPIRITS, and live” (1 Cor 14:32; Heb 12:9).

“The spirits of just men made perfect” refers to the children of God that are no longer subject to the encumbrances of the body. These are no longer living in the earth, and are not subject to temptation and the devices of the devil. They no longer require the “whole armor of God” (Eph 6:10-18), and are no longer required to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12). Of them it is said, “Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them” (Rev 14:13).

To what extent our fellowship with these perfected spirits is realized is not known. It is a spiritual brotherhood, as opposed to a cognitive one – yet it is very real. If the rich man knew of the activities of earth from hell (Luke 16:28), it is inconceivable that similar knowledge is not experienced by the godly in some way. In fact, from paradise, Abraham was also aware of the affairs of earth (Luke 16:29). The "souls under the altar," martyred because of their testimony,

were also conscious to some extent of the happenings of earth (Rev 6:9-10). The Lord Jesus, while yet in the world, enjoyed fellowship with two representatives of this number (Luke 9:30-31). When Jesus died, "many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many" (Matt 27:52-53). Let no one, therefore, doubt the existence of these spirits, or their capacity to have some form of fellowship with us. Only glory will tell the extent of the benefits realized by this mysterious society to which we "are come." It would be well for us to consider these perfected "spirits" in our speech and conduct.

## WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

Lesson 10 of 16

### TO JESUS THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT

"But ye are come . . . to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant . . ." (Verse 24a, Heb 12:22-29)

In the incarnation, Jesus came to us (John 1:14). When He left the earth, He went to heaven (Lk 24:51). In salvation, we come to Him! We do not come to Him as mere spectators, or as ones engaged in a formality, like that experienced under the Law. We do not come through an established routine, like those instituted under the Law. We "are come" to Him in His capacity of "Mediator of the New Covenant." Today, a human representation of salvation exists in which the New Covenant has little value, and hence the people have little interest in it. Jesus is rarely viewed as the Mediator of that Covenant, which is a pivotal consideration of the Holy Spirit, as established by the eighth, ninth, and twelve chapters of Hebrews. His Mediatorship is part of His High Priestly function, which is also a central consideration in the epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:1-5,10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1-3; 9:11; 10:21). Yet, this also is rarely addressed in contemporary "Christian" assemblies.

The "better promises" of that "better covenant" (Heb 8:6) are ministered to us by this "One Mediator" (1 Tim 2:5). He presently is "bringing many sons to glory" (Heb 2:10) by means of His mediatorial ministry. We come to Him as those requiring and desiring the provisions He is ministering. Those who live by faith want what Jesus is mediating. By comparison, Moses mediated to spare the people from being destroyed (Num 16:20-22; Psa 106:23). In contrast, Christ mediates to guarantee that the people are saved.

But Jesus is also bringing us and God together, as it were. "For through Him we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph 2:18). This is the work of the Mediator. Our salvation was not completed at the cross, as common as that perception may be. When Jesus cried, "It is finished," He did not mean His total work was completed, but that the vicarious atonement was completed – the work He had to do upon the earth (John 10:17-18). The Savior had concluded the work He had been given to complete in a "prepared" body (Heb 10:5-10). But there was more to do – much more – if we were to be glorified!

He had to take His life back again, according to the commandment given to Him by the Father (John 10:17-18). He still had to present "Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them [His disciples] during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). He still had to commission His disciples, and charge them to wait for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4). It was necessary for Him to be "received up into heaven, and sit down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19). His intercessory work must be aggressively waged, lest we could not be saved "to the uttermost" (Heb 7:25).

Simplistic views of salvation are damaging to man's spirit. They inhibit, if not stop altogether, spiritual growth. The phrase "finished work of Christ" is not in the Bible – in any version. It is true, Jesus affirmed, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4) – but that was said BEFORE He died. Although it may be said that Jesus said this in anticipation of His death, that does not appear to be the meaning of His words. In the next verse Jesus addresses the matter of His death, asking the Father to glorify His name. He states "the work" that He had "finished" in the following words. Although it is a lengthy passage, it will do us well to consider it.

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth" (John 17:6-19, NKJV)

As Jesus prepared Himself to lay down His life, He gave the disciples, as it were, back to the Father. He now concentrated totally upon His substitutionary death. I realize there have been songs written about Jesus having us on His mind when He died, but that is not an accurate appraisal of what was going on while Jesus was on the cross. He had delivered His disciple over to God the Father, and was now doing what was necessary to be "made a curse" (Gal 3:13), and "made to be sin" (2 Cor 5:21). He had lived a spotless life, thereby finishing His work. He had resisted all attacks of the devil, thereby finishing His work. He had kept the disciples, thereby finishing His work. He had communicated to them the Word given to Him, thereby finishing His work. He had completed the EARTHLY work given to Him, and now prepared to offer the only sacrifice for sin God would ever accept.

When Jesus cried, "It is finished," He did not mean all of His work was completed, but that what was necessary to atone for sin was being completed. The Savior had concluded the work He had been given to complete in a "prepared" body (Heb 10:5-10). But there was more to do if WE were to be glorified! We have come to Him as beneficiaries of those indispensable blessings. He has charge of the law being written upon our hearts (Heb 8:10; 10:16). He is in charge of the peace of God keeping our hearts and minds (Phil 4:7), and supplying all of our "need according to His riches in glory" (Phil 4:19). Until "the day of God" (2 Pet 3:12), the saints of God need to be perfected, established, strengthened, and settled (1 Pet 5:10). This is accomplished through "the Mediator of the New Covenant," to Whom we "are come."

## WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

Lesson 11 of 16

### TO THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING THAT SPEAKS BETTER THINGS

"But ye are come . . . to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."  
(Verse 24, Heb 12:22-29)

### THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING

"The blood of sprinkling" speaks of sanctification, as foreshadowed in Moses sprinkling the blood on the Book, and on the people (Heb 9:19, as well as the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry" (Heb 9:21). The blood of Christ sanctifies individuals (Heb 10:29), making them acceptable and usable to God Almighty. Jesus suffered and died in order that He might "sanctify the people with His own blood" (Heb 13:12). It is written that the Holy Spirit, "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," sanctifies people in order to "obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:2).

### THE SPEAKING BLOOD

this blood "speaketh . . ." Christ's blood is not the only speaking blood! Abel's blood spoke with a shout, as it were, to God. God said to Abel's murderer, Cain, "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand" (Gen 4:10-11). Abel's blood cried condemnation, bringing a curse upon the head of Cain. It stirred the indignation of God, so that Cain was rejected. Hidden from the face of God, Cain became a "fugitive and a vagabond" (Gen 4:14). That is what speaking blood can do!

The blood of Christ spoke condemnation to Judas who betrayed him (Matt 27:4), and to the Jews who rejected and crucified Him (Matt 27:25). It also will bring a curse upon the individual "who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, and counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing" (Heb 10:29). Those who treat this blood of the covenant casually, partaking of the cup of the Lord unworthily and with without due remembrance, "will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor 11:27). Make no mistake about this, the blood of

Christ does not speak "better things" for everyone!

For those within the covenant, however, whose lives are "hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3) – those who are living by faith (Heb 10:38) and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16) – the blood of Christ speaks "better things."

To those who have been "made accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6), the blood of Christ speaks forgiveness (Eph 1:7), redemption (Rev 5:9), peace (Col 1:20), and justification (Rom 5:9). Here, in the blood of Christ, the saints find a thorough cleansing from "all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7). It speaks to God in their behalf, making them acceptable. Through this blood, we have boldness to "enter the Holiest," the very presence of God (Heb 10:19). The "blood of Christ" has brought us nigh, who once were "far off" (Eph 2:13). This blood is the appointed means of purging "the conscience from dead works to serve the Living God" (Heb 9:14). The propitiation, or covering of our sins, is appropriated through "faith in His blood" (Rom 3:25). This is blood we can "drink," ingesting it into our spirits, and thereby obtaining eternal life (John 6:54).

By saying we "are come" to this blood, its accessibility is declared. These benefits are all within the reach of those who are believing! Faith obtains what God has provided. We can realize forgiveness, redemption, peace, and justification—i.e., we can know the reality of them. We can do more than talk about cleansing, we can appropriate it – we "are come" to the "blood of sprinkling" that sanctifies us, making us useable to God! If we "are come" to this blood, we can "enter" confidently into the very sanctuary of heaven! Everything accomplished by this blood is therefore on our behalf! Praise the Lord!

This is one of the great benefits of the Lord's Table, where by Christ's request, we remember Him. His blood is a primary factor in this remembrance (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24). At this Table we experience "the communion of the blood of Christ" (1 Cor 10:16) – or "a participation in the blood of Christ" (ERV), "sharing in the blood of Christ" (NLT), and "participate in and share a fellowship (a communion) in the blood of Christ" (1 Cor 10:16).

Woe to those who turn this "feast" (1 Cor 5:8) into a lifeless ceremony, and an obligation rather than a participation. And what of those who ignore this table and think that frequent observance there will produce commonness and mediocrity. Remembering the speaking blood cannot possibly produce dullness, lifelessness, and empty routine. Jesus is reproached by such nonsensical teachings. And what of those who imagine you can eat at those table too often – never more than once a week. Do such poor souls imagine that on the day of judgment they will be commended for remembering the Lord not more than once a week?

What I am underscoring is the Satan has been aggressive to perpetrate false notions about the blood of Christ, to which we "are come. Anything and everything that promotes a remembrance of the blood of Christ cannot possibly be wrong, harmful, or detrimental to faith. This is a speaking blood, and when we focus upon it, it will speak to us.

WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

## THE SPIRITUAL CONCLUSION

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.” (Verses 25-26, Heb 12:22-29)

The Holy Spirit now pleads with us to act upon the knowledge we have received. If, by faith, we do not act upon the truth, it will bring no benefit to us, but will bring judgment and a possible curse. The idea that we can realize the benefits of Christ's work and the privileges of the New Covenant independently of aggressive effort is an imagination.

## DO NOT REFUSE HIM

"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks." This is our personal responsibility. While it is "hard to kick against the goads" of the Holy Spirit, it is also true that He "will not always strive with man" (Acts 9:5; Gen 6:3). Notice, it is "Him" (the enthroned Son and Mediator) that is refused, not merely His word. An example of spurning the Lord is found in the parable of the great supper. Hear the parable. "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready. But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come'" (Luke 14:16-20). Each of "those who were invited" refused the man who gave a great supper and invited many. It certainly was no fault of the one giving the supper. The invitation was clear, honest, and personal. No further preparations were required – everything was ready. It was provided at no cost for all who were invited. The invited ones were "with one accord" in their responses. The KJV says they began to make excuse "with one consent." The RSV and NIV says they made excuse "all alike." Their excuses were not the same, but their attitude was identical. The truth of the matter was, they did not want what the "man" had prepared. They did not perceive his "great supper" as important or a blessed event.

So it is with those who "refuse Him" who "speaks from heaven." The Son of God, risen "with healing in His wings" (Mal 4:2) has prepared a "great supper." It has been supplied at great cost, and is replete with things essential for Divine acceptance and blessing. The supper itself has been adapted to the ones invited to attend it. It is what they need, and will be delightful to them. It is satisfying, invigorating, and strengthening. The prophet Isaiah spoke of this great supper of salvation. "And in this mountain The LORD of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees" (Isa 25:6, NKJV). Isaiah also spoke of the Divine invitation to this great feast. "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price" (Isa 55:1). These are prophecies of the "great salvation" that is now offered to the world. In the words of Scripture,

"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17). The invitation is an honest one, and everyone willing to come will be seated at the Master's table.

Partaking of this feast involves living in the Spirit (Gal 5:16,26), ingesting the Word of God (Lk 45:4), and setting your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth (Col 3:1-2). Energetic efforts are demanded in a good fight of faith and laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12). The King does not call us to the adoption of a theological stance or organizational affiliation. Rather, He calls us to enjoy the provisions His atonement has obtained for us. There is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:17). He offers intimacy with Himself, access to God, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:20; Eph 2:18; Acts 9:31). The Father and the Son will dwell in those who take advantage of this "great supper," and the Spirit will strengthen them within the inner man (John 14:21,23; Eph 3:16). The names of those accepting this invitation will be "written in heaven," and an inheritance will be reserved there for them (Luke 10:20; Heb 12:23; 1 Pet 1:4a). They themselves will be "kept by the power of God" (1 Pet 1:4b). This is a "great salvation," indeed!

Refusing Him that speaks is offering an excuse for NOT partaking of His bountiful feast of salvation. It is preferring the world, self-interests, and "other things" (Mark 4:19). Coming to the King's feast involves the abandonment of all competing interests. It requires self denial (Mk 8:34), the bearing of the cross daily (Lk 9:23), and the crucifixion of the flesh (Gal 5:24). Those refusing to do this "with one accord begin to make excuse." Such people are willing to settle for something less than a spiritual feast. They imagine that some snacks may be forwarded to their homes, so to speak, without them having to personally sit at the Master's table – but they are wrong, seriously wrong. There is no salvation without the unreserved acceptance of what has been prepared in Christ Jesus! Some have chosen a career over the "great supper" of salvation. Others have chosen pleasure, and some have even preferred domestic satisfaction to reconciliation to God. Some have elected to simply delay, not realizing the door to the supper will be closed at an undisclosed time. Those who delay to respond to the Lord's wooing do so to their own harm. Salvation makes no provision for slothfulness or disinterest – or delay!

The Spirit reasons with us on this matter. "For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven . . ." In the beginning of this book, the Spirit reasoned similarly. "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Heb 2:2-3). Think! When Israel came to the border of the Canaan, they were offered the land. God promised to drive out the inhabitants through their efforts, even giving them cities they did not build, and vineyards they did not plant. But Israel refused to enter in! They rejected the Divine invitation! They did not escape! Shall it go differently with those who refuse to enter into the courts of the Lord now? If Jesus has provided us access to God, will He accept any excuse for not taking advantage of it? Provision has been made for the forgiveness of sin and cleansing from all unrighteousness. Will those who refuse to appropriate these benefits be excused? Indeed not!

All about us are churches, religious leaders, elders, deacons, and church members who are spurning the Divine invitation. They are not feasting on the riches of God's grace, but attempting

to live on meager spiritual rations. They will not be excused. Christ has made no provision for small appetites, minuscule efforts, and half-hearted service. Those things are like the field, oxen, and wife that were offered as excuses to the man preparing the "great supper." I am alarmed that indifference is so common in our churches, that disinterest is so pervasive. The mediocre are too acceptable. The effort to mingle flesh and Spirit is altogether too common. Such things are all excuses for not participating in the Divine nature, a feast that Christ has prepared for all who will partake of it (2 Pet 1:4).

## WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

### Lesson 13 of 16

## HE HAS PROMISED

“ . . . but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” (Verses 26-27, Heb 12:22-29)

If the greatness of God’s provision will not convince us to live in the Spirit, a solemn warning is sounded from heaven. All of the things men choose in preference to this "great salvation" are going to pass away. Christ is offering eternal life to us WHILE we are in a temporal realm. He has been gracious enough to tell us plainly what is really apparent all about us—i.e. All of nature is in a state of demise! It makes little difference what segment of it you prefer, or how valuable it may appear, it is all going to pass away. Once God shook the Sinaitic peninsula at the giving of the Law. As it is written, "Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly" (Ex 19:18). Indeed, as the Psalmist declared, "Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs? Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob" (Psa 114:6). Of that time, Habakkuk wrote, "The mountains saw You and trembled . . . " (Hab 3:10). The occasion was so awesome that even Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling" (Heb 12:21, NKJV). That was but a mild introduction to what is coming!

The one speaking from heaven says, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven" (Heb 12:26b). This is everything created – everything that had a beginning, or a genesis. As Isaiah said, "Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger" (Isa 13:13). Joel also prophesied of this time. "The heavens and earth will shake" (Joel 3:16).

Haggai provides the specific prophecy referenced by our text. "For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land'" (Hag 2:6). In the context of Haggai, this prophecy had to do with the Word becoming flesh and accomplishing His death. "and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory," says the LORD of hosts" (Hag 2:7). The Messiah would bring

what honest and good hearts longed for. The temple He would build would be filled with the Lord's glory; i.e., the church, or body of the redeemed, would become the temple of God Himself – His dwelling place. That is what Habbakuk foretold. But in our text, the Spirit rises even higher, setting the prophesy in the context of "eternal purpose."

"Now this, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain" (verse 27). Note, the things to be shaken are things that were "created" or "made." Only eternal things, or "the things which CANNOT be shaken," will remain. And what of those poor souls whose total ambition is to gain and keep the things that are scheduled for absolute removal. What will they do in that unavoidable and non-delaying day?

The entirety of creation is like scaffolding that obscures the eternal kingdom. It has captured the attention of those who live in the flesh. They cannot see it is shakeable, and therefore embrace it as though it could not be moved. Those who refuse the Master's invitation attempt to stabilize what is passing away. They pour their hearts and souls into what cannot last. The tragedy is they are doing so at the expense of their soul. As the Lord Jesus said, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt 16:26). Those arresting words were spoken in precisely the same state of affairs as our text. The very next words read, "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matt 16:27). How will parents fare on the day of judgment who taught their children to prepare for this world, but not for the world to come? What will people do who sold their souls for a career, popularity, or fleeting riches?

Peter informs us this will occur when the Lord returns as a thief, to rob sinners of all their possessions. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Pet 3:10). This is nothing less than the removal of "things that are made." Everything people have chosen over salvation will be "removed!" Mind you, "salvation" is not limited to the remission of your sins and a new birth. Those are circumstances that BEGIN an association with the Almighty. In our text, "salvation" refers to "going on to perfection" (Heb 6:1), appropriating the provisions Jesus is presently ministering from the right hand of God. Those failing to do this, despite their profession, are refusing Him that speaks from heaven! They have refused Him because they preferred the realm that can, and will surely be, shaken.

There are whole churches that have invested more in this passing world, than they have in heaven. There are vast numbers of professing Christians who have no idea that Jesus is "speaking from heaven," and are abysmally and comfortably ignorant of this fact: "much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb 12:25). In all of the history of humanity, ultimately there will not be a single person who neglected the word of God who will "escape" –not one. Our text has serious implications, and must be heeded!

WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

## Lesson 14 of 16

### LET US HAVE GRACE

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, LET US HAVE GRACE, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (Verse 28, Heb 12:22-29)

There are some significant differences in various versions of this text. I prefer this one - "have grace." The RSV, NASB, and NIV translate "let us have grace" as "let us be grateful," "let us show gratitude," and "let us be thankful." The ESV reads "grateful," and the NLT reads "thankful." Robertson presents a technical definition which may be offered in justification for such a weak rendering of the text. "Let us have grace (ecwmen carin). Present active volitive subjunctive of ecw, "Let us keep on having grace" as in 4:16, though it CAN mean "Let us keep on having gratitude" as in Luke 17:9." In this text, as well as similar ones, sound doctrine trumps etymology.0

The passage is too weighty for "grateful" or "thankful" to be the meaning of the text. While thankfulness is imperative [and unthankfulness is a cause for cursing (Rom 1:21)], it is never represented as imparting power to "serve God acceptably." The grace which we here receive (as represented in this text), however, enables the believer to "serve God" in a way that is satisfactory to God Himself. It also induces "reverence and godly fear," or awe. That can, in my judgment, only be attributed to the grace of God, extended to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. It cannot be traced back to a thankful or grateful spirit, which are themselves effects, not causes. Let me be clear about what I am saying, namely that a grateful spirit is not empowering. It does not bring the ability to serve God acceptably – all etymology notwithstanding.

How often this grace has been mentioned in Hebrews. Jesus, by "the GRACE of God," tasted death for every man (2:9). We are invited to come to the "throne of all GRACE" to "obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need" (4:16). Because of His role in salvation, the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of GRACE" (10:29). We are admonished to look diligently "lest any man fail of the GRACE of God" (12:15). The heart is said to be established "by GRACE" (13:9). The book of Hebrews concludes with, "GRACE be with you all. Amen." (13:25). The word "thanks" in any form is found but once in this book. "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (13:15). The word translated "thanks" is a different Greek word {hom-ol-og-eh'-o}. This "thanks" is a response to God, and not a resource for believers.

To "HAVE grace" is to appropriate or "obtain" it, coming to the Throne where it is dispensed. It involves not insulting the "Spirit of grace" by hardening your heart against Him. It is not failing, or falling beyond, the reach of that grace. Here the effect of grace is equated with grace itself. Having grace to serve God acceptably is to serve Him in persuasion of faith – the believing that is "through grace" (Acts 18:27).

Do not fail to see the reason for having grace. It is that "we may serve God ACCEPTABLY with reverence and godly fear." This is a most sobering declaration. It means that no service, regardless of frequency or location, is acceptable to God if grace has not been obtained. If the

individual does not come to the "throne of all grace," all work for God is rendered unacceptable! If the wooing of the Spirit, His direction, and what He is saying, is despised by the professed believer, his service is rejected! To put it more plainly, those who live at a distance from God will not be received by Him. To reject what has been provided by Him is to place the stamp of "disapproval" on all of our works.

This has startling ramifications. It explains why Christ will reject the self-professed exceptional works of some in "that day." As it is written, "Many will say to Me IN THAT DAY, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matt 7:22-23, NKJV). And what made their impressive works "lawlessness" or "iniquity" (KJV)? They had NOT "obtained grace" to serve God "acceptably with reverence and godly fear." They had sought to serve God in the energy of the flesh, without Jesus, without the Spirit, and without grace. How lamentable that there is so much activity in this category in the professed church! Such service ministers to neither God nor man.

WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

Lesson 15 of 16

A CONSUMING FIRE

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: FOR OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE." (Verse 29, Heb 12:22-29)

In our text, the Lord has no interest in His people maintaining a sectarian stance, or the cherished traditions of men. He speaks in view of an unalterable future, when the real God and the real Christ will be confronted without any veil or mitigating circumstance. Death will have been abolished, everything temporal will have been destroyed, and the resurrection of the dead will have taken place. Every person that has ever been born will stand before God in the precise condition in which he left this world. At this point, no spiritual change will be possible.

Finally, the Spirit brings to our remembrance the time when God will be revealed. His nature is such that it devours everything and anyone unlike Himself. As it is written, "A fire goeth before him, and burneth up His enemies round about" (Psa 97:3). The Revelation reveals the impact of the full exposure of Deity upon nature: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them" (Rev 20:11). At this time, those who rejected God's great salvation are depicted in this manner: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev 6:15-17).

I realize that it is not fashionable these days to speak about this, but it must be shouted from the

housetops – and that without any discrimination. Tell it to the men and the women, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, those in good health, and those in bad health. Tell it to the educated and the uneducated, the entertainer and the athlete, the professional and the unprofessional. Tell it to those who live in luxury, and to the homeless as well. Tell it to the prisoners and those who are free. Tell it to the saints and the sinners. This world is the only place a warning is issued, and all men need to take heed to it.

This is the Divine characteristic that required the Word become flesh, and lay down His life "a ransom for many." In His mercy, God has created a buffer zone in Christ Jesus, where present safety, strength, and acceptance may be realized. But ultimately, He will be revealed in "fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries" (Heb 10:27). Salvation prepares us for that day, making us, so to speak, non-combustible. By conforming us to "the image of His Son," God is preparing us to gloriously survive that day.

On Sinai, in consideration of the people, God forbade them to come close. He descended "like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel" (Ex 24:17). In that case, their distance preserved them, for, He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live" (Ex 33:20). However, when the Lord comes again, "every eye shall see Him" (Rev 1:7). Then, the unsaved will seek to be at a distance from the Lord, but will not be able to hide (Rev 6:16). You see, we are now being prepared for that day. For those availing themselves of this "great salvation," that will be a time of blessing, glory, and exceeding joy. Then, their service for the Lord will be honored, and they will be rewarded. There, they will "dwell in the house of the Lord" forever, to "behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple" (Psa 27:4). For those who know their God, the future is bright with hope. We even now enjoy "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace."

#### WHERE WE ARE COME IN CHRIST

“But ye are come unto mount Zion, 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. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb 12:22-29)

Lesson 16 of 16

#### CONCLUSION

We have dealt with a very glorious passage. The absolute superiority of the New Covenant over

the Old Covenant has been declared. The First Covenant began with a regional shaking. The New Covenant will conclude with the shaking of all things. The Old Covenant produced a withdrawal from the presence of the Lord. The New Covenant brings perfect love which casts out fear, and ushers us into the most holy place. At the inauguration of the Old Covenant, 3,000 died (Ex 32:28). The commencement of the New Covenant was attended by 3,000 being brought to life in Christ (Acts 2:41). When the Old Covenant was given, the people asked that God speak to them no longer. The New Covenant brings a desire for God to speak: "Lord, evermore give us this bread" (John 6:34), "Then they that gladly received his word . . ." (Acts 2:41). WHEN THE Old Covenant was given, a consuming fire came upon Sinai (Ex 19:18). The announcement of the New Covenant was attended by fire that sanctified, and did not harm (Acts 2:3). At Sinai there was a frightening "tempest" (Heb 12:18). At Pentecost there was a "rushing mighty wind" that filled the house, but did not destroy it (Acts 2:2).

We now have a "better" Savior (Heb 1:4), a "better hope" (Heb 7:19), and a "better covenant" (Heb 7:22; 8:6). The sacrifice of purification is "better," having cleansed defiled humanity and readied heaven for us (Heb 9:23). Even now, those who embrace the New Covenant "have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb 10:34). We have a "better country" (Heb 11:16), look forward to a "better resurrection" (Heb 11:35), and have a "better thing" provided for us by God Himself (Heb 11:40). The "blood of sprinkling" to which we have come by grace, "speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb 12:24). How glorious is the New Covenant!

The intent of our text, however, is to persuade us that all of this means nothing if we do not appropriate what God has provided. If we choose to ignore these things, placing them in the back of our minds and hearts, they will soon "slip from us" (Heb 2:1). Now, see to it that you do not come short of this grace. Flee to Christ for refuge, and come to the throne of all grace. Everything has been provided for your safe arrival in heaven. A Mediator is at God's right hand to ensure you can obtain these provisions. The Holy Spirit has been given to strengthen, encourage, and illuminate you. A great cloud of witnesses surrounds you, attesting to the effectiveness of faith and the surety of Divine commitment. You have "come to" an amalgamation of spiritual benefits so great it staggers your imagination, yet so near you can have them for the asking. Run the race! Run it with endurance! Do not come short of the Grace of God. It will not be long, and we will be home!

Now, bring the text to your mind again. It is a glorious one, conducive to productive spiritual contemplation. Here it is from Darby's translation. "For ye have not come to {the mount} that might be touched and was all on fire, and to obscurity, and darkness, and tempest, and trumpet's sound, and voice of words; which they that heard, excusing themselves, declined {the} word being addressed to them any more: (for they were not able to bear what was enjoined: And if a beast should touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and, so fearful was the sight, Moses said, I am exceedingly afraid and full of trembling;) but ye have come to mount Zion; and to {the} city of {the} living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, the universal gathering; and to {the} assembly of the firstborn {who are} registered in heaven; and to God, judge of all; and to {the} spirits of just {men} made perfect; and to Jesus, Mediator of a new covenant; and to {the} blood of sprinkling, speaking better than Abel. See that ye refuse not Him that speaks. For if those did not escape who had refused him who uttered the oracles on earth, much more we who turn away from him {who does so} from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth; but

now he has promised, saying, Yet once will I shake not only the earth, but also the heaven. But this Yet once, signifies the removing of what is shaken, as being made, that what is not shaken may remain. Wherefore let us, receiving a kingdom not to be shaken, have grace, by which let us serve God acceptably with reverence and fear. For also our God {is} a consuming fire."

And now, may the Lord give you grace to apprehend the blessings on and benefits of Mount Zion, the city of the Living God!