

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

HARRY BOWERS, EDITOR

7844 GRIMSBY CIRCLE HARRISBURG N.C.

MAY 2021

ZION

When David became king the ark of the covenant (signifying the presence and glory of God) had been missing for nearly a hundred years. The Philistines had taken it, then it sat in a farm house in Baal Judah for 20 years. The first thing David did was bring the ark back to Israel (II Samuel 6). The significant thing about this was the tabernacle, the priesthood, the sacrifices had been for generations in Gibeah (I Chron. 21:29) and they remained there until the building of Solomon's temple. When David returned the ark, he did not place it in the tabernacle at Gibeah, rather brought the ark to Zion (Jerusalem) and "set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it" (II Sam. 6:17). This action by David was a drastic and unparallel break from all that had gone before. The priests, the tabernacle and sacrifices continued in Gibeah, but the symbol of His Divine presence was at Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. No wonder David danced and worshipped as he did (II Sam. 6). This was symbolic of the entrance of the Lord of glory to take His place in the center of the nation. The worship that began in Zion was nothing like the worship being performed in Gibeah. In contrast with the ritual of sacrifice and priestly functions in the tabernacle at Gibeah, the hill of Zion was filled with the presence of the glory of God because his presence was in their midst. The prophets summed it up in these words: "Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 12:6), and "Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph O Israel, the Lord your God is in your midst" (Zeph. 3:14, 17). Then the temple was built and the ark again was enclosed behind the veil and seen only once a year by the high priest (II Chron. 5:2). Zion as a place where the ark of God reflected the glory of His presence, passed away, but the experience of the ark being in David's tent on Zion was a prophecy of the day when the glory of God would be revealed and men would live in that glory. Zechariah speaks of the day in these words: "In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, 'HOLY TO THE LORD' and the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the bowls before the alter, and every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the Lord of host, and all who sacrifice will come and take them and boil in them" (Zech. 14: 20, 21). The expression "holy to the Lord" was the inscription on the miter of the High Priest, who stand in the glory of the Lord before the ark. Zechariah is saying there is a day coming when the people of God, at business, driving through the streets, cooking in the kitchen and going about their daily tasks, would be inscribed (or described) as those who live within the veil, in the very presence of the glory of God and the secular and spiritual division will be gone and all will be spiritual. So when the Hebrew writer says we "have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" he isn't speaking of something far off in the future of eternity, but the glory of God that His people know and experience now. So many churches are living in Gibeah, with the ritual and empty worship of the tabernacle and missing the opportunity of Mt.

Zion and experience the presence of the glory of God that is available to all.

Continuing from last month Hebrews 12:22-24: "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel." Mt. Zion is the city of the living God. It is the heavenly, spiritual Jerusalem. It is the fulfillment of all that God has been doing from the book of Genesis to the book of Acts. Mt. Zion represents the whole plan and purpose of God, which was started in the garden when He said to Satan, "I will put enmity between your seed and the seed of the woman. You will bruise his heel, but he will bruise your head." This is the first prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah and the coming kingdom. Mt. Zion is the fulfillment of all that happened from that time until the day of Pentecost. The writer describes it as not only being the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, but he said, "You have come to myriads of angels in festal array." In the Old Testament angels were instruments of judgment when they brought the wrath of God upon the enemy but in the New Testament it is stated that they are our servants. Heb.2:14: "They are sent forth to minister to those who inherit salvation." We "have come to the church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven." This is reference to the fulfillment of God's sovereign choice and election His people. He knows who they are. He has called them and has chosen them. They are a part of His plan and purpose. You "have come to God, the judge of all." The emphasis here is upon the "all." This says God is dealing with all people, both Jew and Gentile. Mount Zion is not dealing with one people, He is judge of both Jew and Gentile. "You have come to the spirits of righteous men made perfect." In Hebrews 11 it is stated that all mentioned in that chapter "died in faith, without having received what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." They as well as us have not yet received the promised body described in I Corinthians 15. At the resurrection we, along with the Old Testament saints, will be made perfect. This is our hope described in Romans 8:18-25, which we will discuss later in this article. Zion in contrast with Sinai is spiritual. God has justified us in Spirit. Our inner man, our spiritual man, has been born again. We are righteous in spirit. The flesh is not yet perfected. The flesh is destined to die, and God is going to give this righteous spirit a new body. So Zion speaks of that which is spiritual, and not that which is physical. We are justified and made righteous in spirit. We have come to Jesus, "the mediator of the new covenant." Zion represents the New Covenant. The covenant that God promised Abraham and brought to pass in Christ. Our life is based upon covenant and not ceremony. And Christ Jesus is the mediator of this covenant.

He is the one that makes it happen. It doesn't depend on us and our keeping a law, or ritual of sacrifices. It depends upon Christ as mediator. We have come to the blood which speaks better than the blood of Abel. Abel's blood spoke of vengeance. The blood of Christ speaks of grace and forgiveness. Now again, the writer has to tell these Christian people that they have come to all this. He has to remind them they have not come to Mount Sinai, they are not a part of the old system. He has to remind them they have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God and to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:2, 3, gives this commentary on the heavenly Jerusalem: "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a voice from the throne, saying 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people and God Himself shall be among them.'" In verses 9-22:6 John is giving the details of these verses 2 and 3. Nowhere in this chapter does it say this is heaven, a city in the sky. Note verse 9: "and one of the seven angels come and spoke to me saying, 'Come here and I shall show you the bride, the wife of the lamb.'" The angel did not say "I will show you heaven." Rather, "I will show you the *bride*, the wife of the Lamb." No one can doubt or dispute the fact that the bride of the Lamb is the church (Eph. 5:27, 32). Note verse 21:10: "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." He does not say we go "up" to dwell with God, rather He comes "down" to dwell with us. This is the community of the redeemed in fellowship with God. "Coming down from heaven" says it is always a work of God's sovereign grace. The symbolism of the rest of the chapter describes the church as it should be. It reflects the glory of God in a world of darkness (ver. 11). Christ, the lamb, the true light drives away the darkness of ignorance, misery, guilt and moral pollution. In and through him the glory of God becomes manifest in the church. The holy city needs no natural or artificial light (ver. 23). The word is God's light (Psalm 119:105) which is the message of the church and has no need to use gimmicks to reach people for Christ. It has walls great and high (ver. 12-20). Walls represent salvation (Isa. 26:1, 60:18). The wall also divides between the holy and profane (Ezek. 42:20). The church is a holy people, separated from the world. The twelve foundations are the teaching of the Apostles which they received from Christ, the corner stone (Eph. 2:20). This means the foundation of the church is Christ (I Cor. 3:11). The twelve gates (ver. 13) are for entrance. Jesus first entered heaven itself (Heb. 9:12, 13) and made it possible for us to enter into the very presence of God, the prerogative of the church (Heb. 9:19, 20). Contrary to modern thought, there is only one street in the city (ver. 21, 22:2) and only one way to God and this is only through Christ Jesus (John 14:6). There is no temple in the city (ver. 22). No temple is needed for the fellowship of believers with God is direct and immediate. "The Lord God and the Lamb are its temple." Both God and Christ dwell in the believer through the Spirit (John 14:23), therefore, they become the sanctuary of the church. Nations will walk in the light of the church and kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it (ver. 24). This is an astonishing statement. Yet Isaiah 60, which is a prophesy of "the city of the Lord" (ver. 14) or the church, states "the nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising" (ver. 3) and the wealth of the nations will come to you" (ver. 6). Further "the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish" (ver. 12). This is a "prolepsis" (that is, God declares something to

be true when it has not yet happened). We do not yet see this happening (as the Hebrew writer said) "but we do not yet see all things subjected to him, but we see him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely Jesus" (Heb. 2:8,9), and what he has done and who he is. This aspect of the church will someday be fulfilled.

No wonder the modern church is so materialistic. It has a materialistic hope in a materialistic heaven, and whether or not we believe we have come to the city, the new Jerusalem, determines the Christian hope. We have been told by prophecy preachers that this is some kind of literal city somewhere in the atmosphere, or somewhere beyond our galaxy, and they tell us that is where we're going when we die or when Jesus returns. But John said, "I'm going to show you the bride, the wife of the lamb." He then showed him the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven to the earth. He then describes it. Jesus said, "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). If this abundant life is not ours now, then the grave becomes our idol, and we only have abundant life somewhere when we die. So the grave, and not Christ, becomes the giver of life. No wonder there is so little victory for the church now. This is why prophesy preachers and their best selling books are so popular today. Most Christians believe we are living in "the late, great planet earth," and things are so bad that God is going to "rapture" His people out of the world and then destroy it. God didn't create the earth to give it to Satan, or to destroy it, or take the believers out of it in a rapture. He wants to get us into the world, not out of it. These lies (and there are more) hold believers in bondage by the belief they will not have victory until they die. That is ironic. The Scripture says death is an enemy and yet it is believed death is when we will see victory. Pompous preachers stand at funerals and tell grieving families death is not real, that death is their friend, that the dead person has passed over to victory, and death has given them victory over the sufferings of this life. Christ gives us victory before we die. Death is our enemy. That for which the Christian is eagerly awaiting is not to "go to heaven", a phrase not found in Scripture, but "the redemption of our body, for in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (Rom. 8:23-25). God has "granted to us *everything* pertaining to life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:3); and "has blessed us with *every* spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). The only thing God has not given us is our new bodies which will be given at our resurrection at the appearing of Christ (I Cor. 15:51-57). This is when we will receive "the redemption of our bodies" and this is our hope (Rom. 8:23-25). Our bodily redemption is what "groaning" Christians are waiting for. The Epistles of Paul speaks many times of our redemption (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rom. 3:24; I Cor: 1:30), but we are awaiting the appearing of Christ and the resurrection when "the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead...will give life to your mortal bodies" (Rom. 8:10, 11). Romans 8:23 shows that redemption applies to the whole person including the body. The work of redemption does not mean merely the salvation of the soul or spirit; it includes the redemption of the body. Romans 8:23 shows that redemption applies to the whole person including the body. The scripture never speaks of glorified saints apart from the body. "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Our final word verse 25: "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking" (Heb. 12:25).