

The Spirit paused in His urging us to the race, to encourage against loss of heart, especially when some were abandoning the race to undertake their own pursuits. Now He takes us to the mountain at the end of the race. Not Mount Sinai this time, though He acknowledges the sight they still carried with them of Sinai—Jehovah, though hidden in darkness, personally descending upon the mount in terrifying power to impose a strict and holy law upon their self-reliant ancestors. The frightful sounds and flashes cowed them but fear does not produce heart-felt obedience. Even Moses was intimidated, Deuteronomy 9:18,19, but he became a faithful minister and enforcer of the holy law given there.

But now the Spirit opens the curtains to reveal a glorious view of what was looked for so long. It is somewhat like toiling up a long, arduous and dangerous trail and coming over the brink of a rise to gasp at the marvelous panoramic view until now seen only in partial glimpses. But it is not a valley spread out before us but a mountain top, Mount Zion [Zion]. To the Hebrews this had special significance because Mount Zion was the site of David's palace in Jerusalem. The center of the world. The capitol of the earthly kingdom which the Lord Jesus Christ inherits upon His return. And surrounding the palace is the earthly city, Jerusalem. But now we realize the view here in chapter 12 is not earthly but heavenly. The palace is heavenly Zion. The city is heavenly Jerusalem, the city looked for by faith down through the centuries. Here it is revealed for faith—our faith (but soon to our sight).*

Then the Spirit points out more of this heavenly scene, for this is an all-inclusive view of the glory ahead. Surrounding the city is an innumerable company of angels. Some of these also had accompanied God to Sinai earlier, Deuteronomy 33:2, Psalm 68:17. As noted earlier in Hebrews they were a significant part of Israel's history. (Translations differ here whether the general assembly refers to the unnumbered angels, to the church of the living God, or to another otherwise undefined group.) The Greek for "general" implies a community gathering in the center of a town. Now in the city are two large groups of human beings. The first is the Church [Assembly] of the firstborn. This is the New Testament saints saved after Christ's resurrection till the Rapture. This is His Bride, though not mentioned here, and each is a member of the Body of Christ. These are particularly noted as who are written in heaven. The Lamb's book of Life records all who are His. These are safely with God the Judge of all who is mentioned next. In Revelation 4 and 5 they are seen arrayed around His throne in worship. With them is another group of humans, "spirits of just men made perfect," the Old Testament believers, including those just mentioned in chapter 11. They are noted there as having looked for a city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God. Here they are seen in that city, home at last.

Those whose names are not written in the book of life

are not even mentioned in Hebrews 12. But they will stand before God the Judge of all. We will stand beside Him. Note that with God nothing is done haphazardly without a plan, preparations and subsequent records documenting decisions and decisive events as it is carried out. Nothing and nobody goes unnoticed or unnoted. The books of records mentioned here and elsewhere in scripture, and the very comprehensive records and chronologies found in scripture, bear out this point about God.

Calling our attention next is Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant, ch. 8 and 9. The covenant indeed is specifically with future Israel, but we today benefit from it and the work on the cross that brought it into effect. The whole earth will benefit from it when He reigns.

Last but not least the blood of sprinkling is named. The covenant was sealed by blood, Christ's own blood. This blood spoke better things than that of Abel. Isn't it touching that some of the blood of the atonement was sprinkled before the Mercy Seat on the earth floor of the tabernacle, indicating the atonement was for the whole earth as well as for Israel, Leviticus 16:14,15. Abel's blood soaking into the ground called for revenge. Jesus' blood soaking into the ground signaled the prospect of final judgement of the earth but also offered hope of redemption for the earth and all in it that would repent.

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh!

Cain refused God's entreaty to repent and God banished him. Abel's blood yet speaks. Which will men choose, Abel's blood upon them or the blood of Abel's sacrifice? The blood of Jesus upon them or the blood of Jesus' sacrifice for them?

God will ultimately banish all who die in their sins, from the created universe and from His presence, to hell to be tormented alone in darkness forever. In the process all creation will be shaken, as the earth shook when the Law was given. God has patiently dealt with sinful mankind, indeed personally with sinful men and women, for six millennia and will at least for one more. He has shaken things many times and many ways signaling the temporary nature of what people feel is permanent. Now He has said Yet Once More! What will remain? Those who have been redeemed by faith in the blood of the Lamb. This and other scriptures clearly state that what is not of God will be removed and replaced with a kingdom that cannot be moved. We can look forward to heaven and to a universe having security, stability, righteousness, peace, blessings, grace, and joy forever with Him as King. How ought we to live now? "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." And there is a solemn reminder for us and for the religious unsaved: "For our God is a consuming fire."

By Ron Canner, May 27, 2009

* Indeed the heavenly Jerusalem will descend and hover over the earthly Jerusalem and angels and people will travel between them. Genesis 28:12 and Revelation 21:24-27