

Hebrews: Lesson #72 – You Have Come to Mt. Zion
Notes for Parents to Study With Their Children
For Wednesday, Feb. 4th

Read Heb. 12:15 – 29 (a simplified explanation of the text will be supplied at the end of these notes).

Memory Verse: Heb. 12:22 “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels.”

Don't Be Bitter

- Going through bad times and hard things can make people unhappy. That's not too unusual. But some people let bad things make them bitter. The Bible uses the word bitter like we do. If you taste something that is very bitter, you make a yucky, sour face. When someone goes through something in life that makes them bitter, their whole attitude about life changes and they get very negative and resentful.
- God understands that we go through trials, but He never wants us to become bitter.
- If you get bitter you don't appreciate the other good things that God has done for you.
- You get so discouraged that you might turn against God's ways and start acting in an immoral way.

The Story of Esau

- We remember studying the story about Esau and Jacob in the Old Testament. They were twins, but Esau was the firstborn and would have inherited his father's greatest blessings (his birthright). Esau had been out hunting and had gotten very, very hungry. When he came in Jacob was making bean soup. Jacob wanted to have the blessings of the firstborn, so he offered to give Esau the soup in exchange for the birthright. Jacob thought he would die from hunger, so he sold Jacob the birthright.
- The Hebrew writer uses the story of Esau as a lesson for Christians. It's sad that Esau would sell his father's greatest blessings for something so little as a bowl of soup. Like him, Christians may be tempted to sell out the greatest blessings of their heavenly Father, for temporary pleasures or so they wouldn't have to go through trials.
- Hebrews reminds us that later on Esau wished he could have that blessing, but it was too late. Christians that give up their blessings will face eternal punishment thinking about what they gave up.

The Children of Israel at Mt. Sinai

- The Israelites came to a real mountain that could be touched. They saw dramatic things happening: blazing fire, dark clouds, earthquakes and a whirlwind. Trumpet sounds blasted into the air. A voice spoke that was so loud that the people begged for it to stop.
- The children of Israel were also told that the mountain could not be approached, that if even a beast touched it, it would be stoned. Even Moses said that he was afraid.

Christians Have Come to Mt. Zion

- The Israelites had come to Mt. Sinai with some impressive sights that made them afraid, but look at what Christians have come to. “But you have come to Mt. Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem.” He is talking about heaven. Remember Hebrews said earlier that we can come before God’s throne in prayer.
- Scripture says our citizenship is in heaven. And Jesus said that one day He will take us to his Father’s house. Remember in our lesson that talked about all the great Bible characters that had faith, that it said people like Abraham were looking for a city, a heavenly city, and that God would give them that city. If you become a Christian and stay faithful to God, He will give you that city.
- The Israelites might have been impressed with the sights at Mt. Sinai, but imagine what it will be like to see God and Jesus and countless angels and all the Christians who ever lived (like Paul, Peter, John), and all the people from all ages who served God (like Noah, Abraham, Gideon, David, or Jeremiah). If you go to heaven, you will meet all of these.
- When we come to church to worship, it would be good to think about these things. Wouldn’t worship be more exciting if God was watching and if Jesus was there and if angels were there? Of course they aren’t there in a way that we can see them, but by faith we can know that they are with us when we worship.

Our Kingdom Cannot Be Shaken

- We don’t have many earthquakes in Texas, but we have seen them on TV. When an earthquake happens it shakes the whole ground. If it’s a strong earthquake, houses and buildings can fall down.
- God shakes the earth sometimes, but not just by earthquakes. He can shake up the world and cause things to happen. Hebrews says that God was about to shake the world up again.
- When God shook things up, some things wouldn’t last. So many Jews back then worshipped in Jerusalem. They thought of that as the most important place on earth. They offered their sacrifices there. The priests served there. The Temple was there. Many Jews had rejected being Christians because they thought those earthly things were so important. But did you know that just about 5 years after Hebrews was written, that Jerusalem, the Temple, the priests, and the sacrifices were all destroyed in a terrible war. The Romans invaded their city, and it was destroyed. And since that time there has never been another Temple or priesthood.
- Christians are members of the church of Christ, but another way of saying that is that they are citizens of Christ’s kingdom. He is our King and we obey Him. Hebrews tells us that His kingdom could not be shaken, it would not fall, but would survive. Just think, Hebrews was written almost 2,000 years ago. They were serving Christ and worshipping God, and here we are today doing the same thing.
- One day the whole world will end, but Christ’s kingdom will survive in heaven. I hope you’ll be part of His kingdom.

Simplified Explanation of the Text

Don't Be Bitter Over Your Trials – It Could Cause You to Sell Out

15 Make sure that your trials don't make you bitter. Bitterness is like a root that can start growing in your heart. In time it can sprout up and cause you trouble – many people's lives get stained by it.

16 Make sure that such an attitude doesn't lead you to give up what is important. When people get discouraged in the faith, sometimes they stop seeing the value of what they have. They start becoming immoral, or they may even come to a point where they don't care about God anymore.

It's like the story about Esau: His distress over a lack of food caused him to sell his own birthright for nothing more than a single meal.

17 And you remember how later on, he realized how badly he wanted to inherit his father's blessing, but he did not receive it. And even though he cried bitterly for it, he never got his birthright back. It was too late for a change of mind and there was no room for another opportunity. Don't make that same mistake by selling out what you have in the Lord just so that you don't have to go through difficulties.

They Came to Mt. Sinai, You Have Come to Mt. Zion

18 If you are being tempted to give up being a Christian and return back to practicing Judaism, then you need to think carefully about the contrast.

You have not come to the same mountain that the Jews did. They came to a mountain that could be touched. They came to a scene of blazing fire, darkness, gloom and whirlwind.

19 The sound of the trumpet and the voice that spoke were so loud that they begged that nothing more be said.

20 God's solemn command, "If even a beast touches the mountain it shall be stoned" was unbearable to them.

21 Even Moses was so terrified by the sight that he said, "I am filled with fear and trembling."

22-23 But you have come to Mt. Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless angels, to the whole assembly and church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven, to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous people who have now been made perfect.

24 You have come to Jesus, the Mediator of a New Covenant. You have come to the sprinkled blood which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

Don't Turn Away From the One Speaking From Heaven

25 The Lord is speaking through His Son. Watch carefully about your attitude making certain that you aren't refusing to hear what He speaks and asks of you. If the people under the first covenant could not escape when they refused to listen to God's earthly spokesman, Moses, then how could we hope to escape if we turn away from God's Son who is warning us from Heaven.

A Kingdom that Cannot Be Shaken

26 For His voice shook the earth back then at Mt. Sinai, but look at what He promised in Scripture, "Yet once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth,

the sea also and the dry land.” (Hag. 2:6). He will not just be shaking the earth this time, but the heavens as well.

27 The phrase “yet once more” makes it plain that He is removing the things that can be shaken, things that are made, so that the things which cannot be shaken can remain.

28 Because we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let’s have grace and be grateful. This will let us offer service to God that truly pleases Him with respect, caution and reverence.

29 Remember that our God is a consuming fire.