

**Read: Hebrews 12:18-24**

## The Two Mountains

### **Hebrews 12:22-24**

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Imagine this: There are two mountains in front of you. On the left is a mountain full of danger and no clear path to the top. To make matters worse, no one has ever made it successfully and survived. On the right is a majestic mountain with an automatic chairlift to bring you safely to the peak of the mountain. There is nothing you need to do but sit back and enjoy the beautiful scenery on the way up. Which mountain would you choose to go up?

The writer of Hebrews paints a picture of two mountains in our reading for today. He wants us to imagine what it would be like to climb them. The first is Mount Sinai where God gave Moses and the Israelites the Ten Commandments. That experience was terrifying, and the writer urges us not to go back to that mountain. "Don't try to get to heaven by keeping the commandments," he says. He encourages us not to think that we can earn eternal life in heaven by what we do or by being good enough. That will never work because by nature we are sinful, and we sin every day. We can never obtain the perfection God demands. Our effort to gain eternal life in heaven on our own will only lead to eternal death in hell. As the saying goes, Jesus + something (our works) = nothing. Don't go there!

But there's another and better mountain—Mount Zion. It's located in Jerusalem where Jesus went to the temple as little baby, a 12-year-old boy, and to suffer and die. That's the place today's Bible reading is talking about. But now the writer is referring to Mount Zion in the future as heaven. As God's children we can successfully ascend this mountain, not because of anything we have done, but because of all that Jesus has done for us. He came down from heaven to earth as a little baby and lived a perfect life. He suffered and died on the cross to win for us the forgiveness of sins through the shedding of his own blood. Three days later he rose from the dead to win for us victory over sin, death, and the devil. He ascended into heaven 40 days later where he now acts on our behalf so that we can one day join him and all believers of all time in heaven forever.

As Christians we can be confident our names are written in heaven because our confidence lies completely in Jesus and not in ourselves. As the saying continues, Jesus + nothing = everything.

“You have come to Mount Zion.” Go there. And stay there!

*The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.*

### **Questions for the Younger Children**

- What were the names of the two mountains?
- Which mountain is better?

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- Why could we never save ourselves or earn eternal life in heaven on our own?
- What does Mount Sinai represent in our reading for today? What does Mount Zion represent?

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- What does it mean that Jesus + something = nothing? What does it mean that Jesus + nothing = everything?
- How do those truths bring us comfort when we mess up and fail to obey God's commandments as we should?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Dear Savior, forgive us for the times we think we play even a small part in our salvation. We thank you for doing everything necessary for us to receive eternal life in heaven and help us hold confidently to that truth. Amen.