

A LIFE OR DEATH CHOICE (Hebrews 12:18-24)

1.Mt. Sinai (Hebrews 12:18-21).

- a.What our writer does is remind these brethren that they are no longer in a place of fear.
- b.Notice the words that are used to describe the place where the law of Moses was originally given:
 - i.Burned with fire;
 - ii.Darkness and tempest;
 - iii.Terrible was the sight.
- c.The setting for these comments is found in Exodus 19.
 - i.The people of Israel had been led by God to Mt. Sinai.
 - ii.It was here that God was going to make a covenant with them and reveal it to Moses so he could instruct the people.
- d.It was a physical place, but one of fear to the Israelites.
 - i.It was so scary to them that they asked that Moses speak to God for them because they could not bear to hear God.
 - ii.They were told not to touch the mount or allow an animal to touch it or else they or the animal were to die.
- e.But notice verse 21:
 - i.It was terrifying to Moses as well.
 - ii.We don't have a record of this being said by Moses anywhere else.
 - iii.It was revealed by inspiration to the author of Hebrews.
- f.What is he saying here?
 - i.Remember that he has been encouraging them to remain faithful in the midst of storms.
 - ii.Now he says remain faithful, choose life, for, or because, you haven't come to a physical, scary place like Sinai.
- g.He, by inspiration is comparing the physical, lesser, nature of the Old Law to the spiritual, greater, nature of the new covenant brought in by Christ.
 - i.He is letting them know the weakness of that to which they are headed.
 - ii.It is a place of death and fear.

2.Mt. Zion (Hebrews 12:22-24).

- a.Our writer now reminds the backsliding brethren of that which to which they had come.
- b.First, notice the place itself.
 - i.It is the city of the living God.
 - (1)Remember that death was threatened to those Israelites.
 - (2)Here, God is seen as the living God.
 - (3)This also gives a sense of being able to approach God, whereas the people were afraid and sent Moses at Mt. Sinai.
 - ii.It is a spiritual place, the heavenly Jerusalem.
 - (1)Everything was physical under the Old Law.
 - (2)They knew that they had not entered into a heavenly city, but by faith, it was theirs.
 - (3)Their forefathers had looked for that city, but they had come unto it.

- (4) If they had come to it, they needed to act like citizens of it.
- c. Second, notice the population.
- i. There is an innumerable number of angels.
- (1) There are so many that the writer could not put a number on it.
 - (2) Our Lord had said he could call legions of angels.
 - (3) Other passages picture a host of angels that is amazing to behold.
 - (4) Then there is something that does not come across well in the KJV.
 - (5) The phrase general assembly in verse 23 seems to point to the church, but in the Greek, it is an extension of what is said about this innumerable number of angels.
 - (a) It is the only place in the New Testament where this phrase is used.
 - (b) It literally means a festal gathering.
 - (c) In the secular Greek writing, Thayer tells us that it was used for a festal gathering of the whole people to celebrate public games or other solemnities.
 - (d) He also says this is connected to what the angels are doing right now.
 - (e) They are gathered in heaven celebrating and praising God, which is pictured in other passages in the New Testament.
 - (6) The NIV renders it this way: "You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly".
 - (7) The ESV this way: "and to innumerable angels in festal gathering".
- ii. There is the church of the firstborn.
- (1) The firstborn is a reference to Jesus being the firstborn from the dead, having died and been raised to never die again.
 - (2) Being a part of this church, or assembly, shows that Christians are going to be raised one day to never again die.
 - (3) It also shows that we are not alone.
 - (4) One of the great privileges of being a Christian is having family all over the world.
 - (5) Ashley mentioned this numerous times last week.
 - (6) We are a family of brothers and sisters in this church.
 - (7) Notice what Barnes wrote about this: "The Christian is united in feeling, in honor, and in destiny, with the excellent of all the earth, and of all times."
 - (8) These peoples names are written in heaven.
 - (a) Several passages teach us of the book of life.
 - (b) We are to want our names written in that book.
 - (c) Michael Phelps is an amazing athlete and his name is written in a book of records that is amazing.
 - (d) I read this week that he broke a record that had stood for over 2,000 years when he won his 13th individual gold medal.
 - (e) Having his name written in that book of records pales in

- comparison to having one's name written in heaven.
- iii. God, the Judge of all, is part of the population.
 - (1) Christians have come to this city and are able to be in the presence of God.
 - (2) Our writer has spoken of this in previous passages.
 - (3) We need to go through no priest to get to God because we are priests who can approach His throne.
- iv. Jesus is there.
 - (1) The Mediator of the New Covenant is waiting there to come take us home.
 - (2) We will be in His presence, able to worship and glorify Him for all eternity.
- v. Think of who all is waiting for us in that great city that is ours.
- d. Third, notice the perfection there.
 - i. The spirits of just men made perfect.
 - (1) This refers to those who died before the death of Christ that were in a right relationship with God.
 - (2) They were made perfect, or complete with the shed blood of Jesus because they had lived by faith.
 - (3) This would include all those who were written about in chapter 11.
 - (4) This is that great cloud of witnesses at the beginning of the chapter.
 - ii. We are made complete spiritually in Christ.
 - iii. If you notice, the words that of are in italics in verse 24.
 - iv. These were added by the translator and cannot be found in the original text.
 - v. They don't need to be there because the writer is not comparing the blood of Jesus to that of Abel.
 - vi. Instead, he is comparing the sacrifice of Jesus to that of Abel.
 - (1) Abel offered an animal.
 - (a) Animal blood cannot make a man perfect.
 - (b) It only rolled forward the sins of man.
 - (2) The blood of Jesus speaks better things because it brings perfection.
- e. Mt. Zion offers so much more than Mt. Sinai.