

## Hebrews 12 (18-29) – When Jesus Worships, pt.2

In our last message, we began to examine Hebrews 12:18-29, and what it says about our worship as a local church body. When we worship together, as a local body, it is called corporate worship. And in this passage, we discovered that when we gather together to worship, even though we are physically on Earth, we are spiritually brought up into Heaven.

This is what the Tabernacle of Moses and Solomon's Temple were all about, copying the design of Heaven. God gave Moses and Solomon detailed instructions about how the worship was to be performed and regulated. How the facilities were to be built, crafted, and designed. How the furniture was to be arranged. And how the people were to be involved. But it was only a shadow, and we are brought up into the substance. Our New Testament reality far surpasses the Old Testament pictures.

Transcendent worship is very clear in the book of Hebrews. And understanding this teaches you to move forward, instead of romanticizing the past. The point of the book of Hebrews is to demonstrate that Christ is superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-6), the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13), and New Testament worship is superior to Old Testament worship (Hebrews 12:18-29). Amen.

We are examining Hebrews 12:18-29 like an investigative journalist, using the time-honored method of asking the questions, who, what, when, where, why, and how. Last time, we asked who, what, and when. Who is involved? All of God's kingdom. What is going on? Worship. When is this taking place? Anytime God's people on Earth gather for worship, they become part of that gathered assembly in Heaven. When we gather for corporate worship, we are physically on Earth, but spiritually in Heaven.

So that is who, what, and when. If you haven't yet heard that message, make sure you do, because it will help clarify and bring depth to this message. And today, and next time, we will ask where, why, and how.

Where is this taking place? Look at vs.22. This is in Heaven – *Mount Zion... the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*. And the Apostle Paul contrasts Mount Sinai (present Jerusalem) with the heavenly Jerusalem in Galatians 4:21-31. When we gather for corporate worship, we enter into the Holy City, and into God's Temple, and inside the Holy Place, and in audience with God's very presence. This has tremendous implications for our worship.

One thing that many don't understand, but it is critical that you do understand, is this: We aren't looking to recreate the worship of the Tabernacle. We aren't wanting to return to the Temple. And we aren't trying to repeat the book of Acts. We have come to Zion! We aren't looking back, we're moving forward, marching onward, upward, to eternity.

Coming to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, means coming to the place where God lives. On Earth, God's dwelling place was only a shadow of what was to come. Speaking of the Tabernacle, Hebrews 8:5 says – *They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."*

The Tabernacle and the Temple were patterned after Heaven. And now they are no more. But our access to the heavenly city, which those old believers longed for, is now a reality. All the fathers and heroes of the faith are now there. And when we gather in corporate worship, we are there, too. And all of us await that day when we shall be made fully complete, in both body and soul. The heavenly Jerusalem is what the fathers and heroes of the faith, and all those saints of old, were looking forward to.

Hebrews 11:8-10 says – *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. Abraham knew he was just passing through. And so are we.*

Hebrews 11:14-16 says – *These all died in faith (Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob), not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. And this city is prepared for us, too (cf. John 14:1-3).*

Hebrews 13:14 says – *For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.* Those old saints have found the heavenly city. And when we gather for corporate worship, we find it, too.

Indeed, all believers are citizens of this holy city. And we belong in that holy temple, that holy house. Christians are a vital part of that holy house. And in fact, Christians *are* that holy house. Listen to Ephesians 2:19-22, which says – *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

Notice how Paul speaks of Christians, Jew and Gentile, all believers, as part of God's household. But then, led by the Holy Spirit, Paul writes something remarkable. He adds to this picture of us as part of the house, to us becoming the house itself. Incredible! We are in that transcendent worship as part of the household of God. And all God's children are becoming God's house itself. God's house is still being built, it is continuing to grow, as more and more are becoming part of that house. Listen to what the Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 2:5-6 – *you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."* This isn't a matter of feeling; it is a matter of faith. A matter of fact.

We are not yet fully there. We all, whether we are passed away, or here today, or yet to come, await our new, glorious, perfected bodies, to join with our perfected spirits. Philippians 3:20 says – *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.* When Jesus returns, this is the promise of 1 Corinthians 15:52-54 – *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

But even though we don't have our glorified bodies yet, when we gather for corporate worship, by faith, we are in Zion. And we have the right of entry, the right to God's very presence. As a congregation, we draw near to God. Jesus our worship leader is our Great High Priest. And he doesn't enter into the Holy Place once a year. He lives there! And we don't have to be afraid to enter in. Hebrews 7:19 says – *(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.*

We come into the presence of God in our prayers: Hebrews 4:16 says – *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* And we enter into the heavenly realm of God by faith. Hebrews 10:19-22 says – *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.* This is transcendent worship!

Because of Jesus our worship leader, when we gather together to worship, we enter into the Holy City, and into the Holy Temple, and inside the Holy Place, and in audience with our Holy God. That's where we are.

So, we have answered the who, what, when, and where. The question now is, why?