

Types and Shadows

8

Two Mountains

One of the recurring themes within Scripture is the contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. So far in our studies, we've seen that:

- ➔ There is an old way of the written code and there is a new way of the Spirit – the first bears fruit for death and the second bears fruit for God (**Romans 7:4-6**)
- ➔ The old covenant brought condemnation and death, whereas the new covenant brings righteousness and life (**2 Corinthians 3:6-9**)
- ➔ Jesus became the guarantee of a better covenant (**Hebrews 7:22**) with better sacrifices (**Hebrews 9:23**), founded on better promises (**Hebrews 8:6**) and a better hope (**Hebrews 7:19**).

In this lesson, we will be looking at one of the major metaphors used in the New Testament to contrast the two covenants. In this metaphor we will seek to increase our understanding of the significant differences between the two covenants and what this means for us as believers in Christ.

A Tapestry of Types

The Tabernacle of Moses

The Tabernacle of David

The Sacrificial System

The Restoration of the Temple

The Gates of Jerusalem

The Feasts of Israel

▶ **Two Mountains** ◀

The High Priest

The Torn Veil

Sinai and Zion

Read Galatians 4:21-26

In his letter to the Galatian church, Paul is seeking to convince his readers that the old way of the written code is not only an invalid choice for them, but also a foolish one. In order to bring his point home, he draws on a familiar illustration from the Old Testament and paints a vivid picture showing the contrast between the covenant of law and the covenant of grace using a number of Old Testament types set in contrast. These contrasting metaphors are:

- Isaac (the son of promise) versus Ishmael (the son of bondage)
- Sarah (the mother of promise) versus Hagar (the mother of bondage)

Paul's main point is that the promise of God never comes through law but through faith. But then he makes an interesting statement:

“These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.”

The Message kneads Paul's original meaning into modern prose:

“This illustrates the very thing we are dealing with now. The two births represent two ways of being in relationship with God. One is from Mount Sinai in Arabia. It corresponds with what is now going on in Jerusalem – a slave life, producing slaves as offspring. This is the way of Hagar. In contrast to that, there is an invisible Jerusalem, a free Jerusalem, and she is our mother—this is the way of Sarah.”

We see this comparison between the Old Covenant (typified in Hagar, Ishmael and Sinai) and the New Covenant (typified in Sarah, Isaac and “the Jerusalem that is above,” also called Zion) constantly alluded to in the New Testament. Let's look at another passage of Scripture that draws the same parallel.

Read Hebrews 12:18-24

The writer declares that you have not come to one mountain but you have come to another mountain! The first mountain, Sinai, was “a mountain that can be touched* and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them...”

The second mountain, however, is of an entirely different order. On Zion, there are no major pyrotechnics or acoustic effects. Yet the same “living God” is presented there. Although angels are associated with Sinai (**Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 68:17; Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2**), it is on Zion that they are gathered “in joyful assembly.”

As Albert Barnes explains:

“The [Greek] word rendered ‘general assembly’...refers properly to an ‘assembly, or convocation of the whole people in order to celebrate any public festival or solemnity, as the public games or sacrifices’...The writer intends, doubtless, to contrast that joyful assemblage of the angels in heaven with those who appeared in the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.”¹

* What the writer is referring to by the phrase “that can be touched” is the fact that the first mountain was a physical mountain – a mountain *able* to be touched. God had in fact commanded that no person or animal be allowed to touch the mountain, on pain of death (**Exodus 19:12**). The writer to the Hebrews, however, is comparing the *physical* mountain, Sinai, to the *spiritual* mountain, Zion.

Let's pull out the magnifying glass, then, and take a closer look at what these two mountains typify in the Christian experience.

Mount Sinai

Read Exodus 19:16-25

After God delivered Israel out of slavery in Egypt, he made a covenant with them. He promised to bless them and give them life if they would keep his commandments.

Read Leviticus 18:4-5

Read Romans 10:5

The covenant that God made with the people of Israel was the Covenant of Law. Even though God came down on Mount Sinai in the midst of a dense cloud, the revelation of his glory at the time of the giving of the Law was so awesome the people were filled with fear.

Read Exodus 20:18-19

Even Moses, the man of God, was overwhelmed to the point where he admitted: "I am trembling with fear" (**Deuteronomy 9:19; Hebrews 12:21**). As Albert Barnes, in his book *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*, explains:

"...every circumstance that occurred [on Sinai] was suited to fill the soul with terror. Everything accompanying the giving of the Law, the setting of bounds around the mountain which they might not pass, and the darkness and tempest on the mountain itself, was adopted to overawe the soul."²

In one sense, Sinai embodies the very essence of the legalistic lifestyle. Its motivation is awe and terror, based on a knowledge of the consequences of violating the legal requirements of the covenant. In fact the entire understanding of the Sinai covenant can be summed up in one phrase, quoted by **Hebrews 12:29**:

"...for our 'God is a consuming fire.'"

Read Exodus 24:16-17

Read Deuteronomy 5:1-27

The revelation of God's glory, which is radiant light and resplendent beauty to the righteous, always appears to sinful man as a blazing fire that will consume him. The Law, holy and righteous as it was, had no ability to change people (note **Romans 7:7-23**). It was a covenant of outward commands and its major effect was to expose sin for what it is (**Romans 7:7-23**). Thus, under the Law, the revelation of God's glory was greatly feared and this fear was the primary motivation for keeping the Covenant of Law. In Moses' words, recorded in **Deuteronomy 31:12**, we see the essence of the Sinai covenant:

"Assemble the people...so they can listen and learn *to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law.*"

Mount Zion

Read Psalm 132:13-16

In both the Old and New Testaments, Zion stands in stark contrast to Sinai. Unlike Sinai, which is only used to represent a covenant, Zion is used to represent the actual *people* of God. Many Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament are in fact prophecies about Zion.

Read Joel 2:28-32 → Acts 2:17-21

Read Isaiah 28:16 → 1 Peter 2:6

Read Isaiah 8:13-15 → Romans 9:33

Read Isaiah 8:16-18 → Hebrews 2:10-13

The name Zion runs throughout the Bible, like a thread binding together the purposes of God. Zion itself was a literal place – a small fortress hill jutting out from the south of Jerusalem. Yet the concept of Zion was in the mind of God long before the natural hill of Zion was even created. Even before the creation of the world, the cherub Lucifer defied God with five statements of intent in **Isaiah 14:13** (KJV), one of which was:

“...I will also sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.”

Psalm 48:1-2 (KJV) defines exact what this “mount of the congregation” was that Satan coveted so much:

“...beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King”

It is everything that is represented by Mount Zion – “the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north” – that Lucifer coveted and envied. And it is this Mount Zion that we have now come to! (**Hebrews 12:22**).

The description “on the sides of the north” is unusual, for Zion was on the south side of Jerusalem and was not north of any outstanding geographical feature. The Hebrew word for “north” here is *zaphon* (used for “north” in most parts of the Old Testament), but it has a root meaning of “hidden, to esteem, to keep secretly.” The word *Zaphon* also had the ancient meaning of “a sacred mountain,” and so the NIV’s rendition of “on the heights of Zaphon” is probably the most correct. Zaphon most likely refers to “the holy mount of God” (**Ezekiel 28:14**) – the heavenly original of which the natural Mount Zion was an earthly shadow.

The History of Zion

Read Psalm 132:13-16

The name Zion itself means “the ridge of a mountain” or “citadel,” and its parallel name, Ophel, means “fortress.”³ But why did God desire it “for his dwelling”? Why did he designate Zion as his resting place, the location of his throne on the earth? A quick look at the history of Zion will help us understand what Zion came to represent in the minds of the people of Israel and in the heart of God.

Melchizedek

The first mention of Jerusalem and Zion is found in **Genesis 14:17-20**, where Melchizedek, “the priest of the most high God,” blesses Abraham. Melchizedek is king of Salem, the old name for Jerusalem, which is also used interchangeably with Zion (**Psalm 76:2**). Though only mentioned once historically, Melchizedek made a great impact in Scripture as a fore-shadow of Christ himself.

Read Hebrews 7:1-17

Mount Moriah

Read Genesis 22:1-2

God commanded that Abraham offer his son up as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah, which would later become the site for the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (**2 Samuel 24:16-25**) and the location of the Temple (**1 Chronicles 3:1**). Mount Zion was a jutting extension of Mount Moriah.

David's City

When the Israelites conquered Canaan, they took Jerusalem, but failed to take Zion (**Judges 1:8,21**). David, a native of Bethlehem, six miles to the south of Jerusalem, obviously loved Zion, not only for its position, but also for its history.

Read 2 Samuel 5:4-10

The first thing David did when he became king of all Israel was to take Zion. From then on, Zion was called “the City of David” (**1 Kings 8:1; 1 Chronicles 15:1**).

Zion as a Symbol

Read Psalm 87

The psalmist describes how God “loves the gates of Zion.” God doesn’t love physical gates, but rather what those gates represent (**Isaiah 60:18**). Throughout Scripture, Zion has been used as a symbol to represent:

- Unity (**Psalm 133:1-3**)
- God’s presence (**Joel 3:21; Psalm 9:11**)
- God’s majesty (**Psalm 99:1-3**)
- The Spring of Living Water (**Isaiah 8:6; Psalm 46:4**)
- Righteousness (**Isaiah 62:1-2; 33:5**)
- Victory (**Psalm 2:1-6; 125:2**)
- Rest (**Psalm 132:14**)
- Praise (**Psalm 9:14; 65:1**)
- Perfection (**Psalm 50:1-2**)
- Glory (**Psalm 102:16**)

In the New Testament, Zion represents the Church. Everything that Zion represented symbolically in the Old Testament is now fulfilled today in the Body of Christ. It is we as believers who have “now come to Mount Zion.”

The Desolation of Zion

Read Isaiah 64:10-12

In this passage, the Lord describes Zion as “a desert” and “a desolation.” This was a description of both the spiritual desert that Zion *had* become and the physical desolation that it *would* become because of the judgment of God.

The ideal of Zion that was conceived in the mind of God never changed, but the people of Zion marred and distorted that image (see **Isaiah 3:16; Jeremiah 18:1-21**). Zion came to represent the exact opposite of God’s original ideal, and so the hand of God moved in judgment against the people of Zion. Such was the desolation that overtook Zion, Jeremiah was later to mourn over “the Daughter of Zion” (**Lamentations 2:5-15**).

Read Psalm 137:1-6

In the same way, the Church, as the fulfillment of the Zion ideal, also came to represent the opposite of that ideal. And the Church too became a place of spiritual desolation, “the haunt of jackals” (**Isaiah 34:13; Revelation 18:2**). But the promise of restoration to natural Zion (in **Isaiah 51:3,11**) also held true for the restoration of the Church:

“The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing...The ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads.”

The Restoration of Zion

Read Psalm 126

God promised to “rebuild Zion and appear in his glory” (**Psalm 102:16**). The ideal that God had in his mind from before the creation of the world will be expressed in his Church in these last days. We, however, as God’s people, must rise to God’s ideal. This is the work of his Spirit in our lives, moving us together toward the goal that he has set for us as the fulfillment of Zion. This goal is:

- To be filled with righteousness and justice (**Isaiah 33:5-6**)
- To be a Way of Holiness (**Isaiah 35:8-10**)
- To be a place of protection (**Isaiah 4:5-6**)
- To be a focus for those who seek after God (**Isaiah 2:1-3**)

Zion Gives Birth

Read Isaiah 66:8

Spiritual Zion brings to birth a people who have a heart after God. This now also includes you, for “you have come to Mount Zion” (**Hebrews 12:22**). In **Psalm**

87:5-7, we find the amazing words:

“Indeed, of Zion it will be said, ‘This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her.’ The Lord will write in the register of the peoples: ‘This one was born in Zion’...As they make music they will sing, ‘All my fountains are in you.’”

Read Isaiah 8:18

As with many prophecies in Scripture, this prophecy has a dual fulfillment – a fulfillment for natural Israel in the time of Isaiah and a fulfillment for the Church.

Read Hebrews 2:13

The writer to the Hebrews takes Isaiah’s prophecy as a sign and symbol applied now to Christ and his Church – the spiritual Zion.

Read Isaiah 49:14-22

The Unshakeable Mountain

Read Judges 5:5

One of the characteristics of the Sinai experience was a quaking mountain. **Exodus 19:18** tells us:

New International Version: “...the whole mountain trembled violently.”

New King James Version: “...the whole mountain quaked greatly.”

New American Standard Bible: “...the whole mountain quaked violently.”

God’s Word: “...the whole mountain shook violently.”

New Century Version: “...the whole mountain shook wildly.”

New Living Translation: “...the whole mountain shook with a violent earthquake.”

Young’s Literal Translation: “...the whole mount trembleth exceedingly.”

The writer to the Hebrews describes Zion in strong contrast to this “shaking” experience on Sinai. In fact in **Hebrews 12:26-27** he states specifically:

“At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’ The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken – that is, created things – *so that what cannot be shaken may remain.*”

The writer is referring to the Sinai experience, where God’s voice “shook the earth” and then draws on God’s promise that he will shake not only the earth but also the heavens “so that what cannot be shaken may remain.”

So what is it that cannot be shaken? **Psalms 125:1** tells us:

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.”

God has a shaking agenda. His agenda is to shake everything in this world’s system that can be shaken, so that which cannot be shaken – Zion – will remain! For it is Zion that the Lord is seeking after – a Zion purified and refined to be everything he has planned her to be (**2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 1:7**).

Read Hebrews 12:28-29

The Fire of Zion

We stated early in this study that Sinai was characterized by fire. In fact, **Exodus 24:17** tells us:

“To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.”

It is this “consuming fire” that the writer alludes to in **Hebrews 12:29**. But if you read through the passage of **Hebrews 12:18-29** you will note something interesting. While the differences between the two mountains are clear – fear is the characteristic of Sinai while joy is the characteristic of Zion – you will note that one thing does *not* change – God is *still* a consuming fire!

Read Isaiah 31:9

The Lord is described as a God “whose fire is in Zion”! In fact, **Psalms 50:2-3** describes this fire in greater detail:

“From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth. Our God comes and will not be silent; a fire devours before him, and around him a tempest rages.”

The God of Zion is exactly the same God of Sinai. He is still a holy God, still a “consuming fire.” The fear of God is not absent under the New Covenant (note **Acts 9:31; 2 Corinthians 5:11; Philippians 2:12; 1 Peter 1:17**). The citizens of spiritual Zion are still called to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (**Hebrews 12:29**, NKJV). And why do we serve him in “godly fear”? Because “our God is a consuming fire.”

Yet there is a major difference between Sinai and Zion in the dynamics of how God’s consuming fire touches our lives. This consuming fire acts in two ways:

- It purges godlessness from Zion (**Isaiah 33:14-16**)
- It shines forth as a revelation of God’s glory to the world (**Psalms 50:2; 102:16**)

On Mount Zion, the glory of God’s holiness is now a “consuming fire” that is contained, experienced and survived! Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (see **Daniel 3:25**), we are able to live in the fire when the Son of God walks with us in the midst of the flame!

Awake! Awake!

Read Isaiah 52:1-2

Like a spiritual Sleeping Beauty, Zion has been in slumber. The drowsy tune of this world has lulled her into stupor, anesthetizing her to the glory that God has called her to, but now the voice of God is stirring his Church with the wake-up call of **Isaiah 60:1-2**:

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.”

Read Ephesians 5:14-18

All across the world, the Church is beginning to stir. The light of Christ is shining into the shadowy recesses of a Church still rising from slumber of the Dark Ages. According to **Isaiah 52:1-2**, this waking from slumber is being expressed in five ways:

- **Verse 2** – We are shaking off the dust of worldliness (**Ephesians 4:22,25**)
- **Verse 2** – We are freeing ourselves from the chains of sin and legalism around our neck (**Psalms 107:10-16; Romans 7:6; Galatians 5:1; Hebrews 12:1**)
- **Verse 1** – We are clothing ourselves with strength of the Lord (**Romans 13:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-9**)
- **Verse 1** – We are putting on our garments of splendor (**Isaiah 61:3,10; Zechariah 3:3-5; Revelation 19:8**)
- **Verse 2** – We are rising to sit upon the throne reserved for us in Christ (**Ephesians 2:6; Revelation 3:21**)

No wonder the writer to the Hebrews says with unbridled excitement: “But you have come to Mount Zion”! You have become a part of the plan God had for Zion from before the creation of the world! You are one of the ones of which it is said: “This one was born in Zion!” (**Psalms 87:6**). And you have entered into the prophetic heritage of **Psalms 132:13-16**:

“For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling: “This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it – I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor will I satisfy with food. I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints will ever sing for joy.”

It is perhaps fitting that **Psalms 48**, which describes Zion so passionately, should end with these words:

“Walk about in Zion, go around her, count her towers, consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.”

In this study we have taken only the briefest tour of Zion. But we encourage you to walk about her as you study God's Word – "count her towers, consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation." And what is it that you tell the next generation?

Read Isaiah 52:7

¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, Hebrews 12:22, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, Hebrews 12:18, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

³ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

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