

*O LORD. We join together in asking that truth would be free
to make her sorties upon us all, which way You please.
Guide our minds for your designs. We ask that,
nothing smothers truth's golden beams. (Spurgeon)*

A Wikipedia search of the nine greatest mountains of the world reveals, Denali in Alaska, Aconcagua (Aw-kun-kaw-gua) in Argentina, Vinson in Antarctica, Blanc on the French Italian border, Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Elbrus in Russia, Everest in Nepal, Puncak Jaya in Indonesia, and Kosciuszko (kos-choos-ko) in Australia.

By climbing these mountains, the climbers are answering an insatiable urge to go higher and higher, even at the risk of death in order to attain the summit. Just this year countless climbers have lost their lives in this quest. Mountains have had a profound effect upon the citizens of the world. They have stirred the minds and emotions of humanity for years. One pilot of an excursion helicopter, as he flew over the snowcap of Mont Blanc, being deeply affected exclaimed, "Every time I fly over this mountain it makes me proud to be French."

Some cultures, even today, continue the practice of worshipping mountains. It wasn't too long ago that some sacrificed members of their tribe by tossing them into a boiling caldron. The recently exposed tombs of Mayan kings reveal that they built their tombs on top of the preceding king in an effort to get higher and higher, in their quest to reach Heaven in the afterlife.

It was a same driving force behind Babel.

Even the Jews showed this tendency in their worship. In order to obtain some sort of euphoria, they mimicked the Canaanites by building high places. In Japan, even to this day, many Shinto shrines can only be reached by climbing a long and steep flight of stairs. At the heart of such high places is not so much the expected euphoria at the top that drives the pilgrim upward, as it is an *urge* driven by an *instinctive need*; an *instinctive need* to reach the top through *personal effort* or *works*.

Man was first created with an *instinctive need* AND the *instinctive ability* to be in unobstructed fellowship with God. But when he fell, he lost his *instinctive ability*, but wasn't freed from this *instinctive need*, which continues even to this day.

It is such a compelling force that it exposes itself in the form of an *insatiable urge*. It was and continues to be an urge to "climb back;" to get back what has been lost. It is so compelling, that it has spawned all the false religions of this world, which are nothing more than a feeble attempt to get back to God. It is the *urge* to find God. Without a driving *urge* the mountaineer would never risk life and limb in an attempt to scale a dangerous mountain.

It is the same in the spiritual world. Because of the fall, man could not lose his *instinctive need*, nor the *urge* to satisfy that need. He continues to be a slave to this need and urge. And when this urge is not sanctified and guided by the Holy Spirit, it becomes at the least, an effort in futility and, at worst, an effort resulting in eternal death.

While the awe-inspiring peaks of the world are numerous, with their pictures often adorning our living rooms, offices and bedrooms, I would suggest to you that there are two greater mountains for the believer that we would be well-advised to study and acquaint ourselves with; ones by which we should be deeply affected. They are the two great systems of the world. One is named *Mt. Killer: aka Executioner*, and one is named *Mt. Giver of Life*.

The setting takes place in the valley between these two great mountains. Let's look at them and compare them through the eyes of 10 men standing in the heart of this valley. Though both mountains were clearly visible, only 9 out of the 10 could see only one mountain. And, only 1 of the 9 could see both.

Mt. Sinai - Mt. Killer & Executioner

To learn about what mountain the 9 men could only see, and its characteristics, let's turn to:

Heb 12.18-21: For you have not come to what may be touched¹, a blazing fire² and darkness³ and gloom⁴ and a tempest⁵

¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet⁶ and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them⁷.

²⁰ For they could not endure the order⁸ that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."

²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."⁹

Q As the eyes of the 10 panned this mountain from top to bottom, what was burned into their memories?

1 This *Mt. Killer*, in a very practical sense was subject to the natural 5 senses.

2 *Mt. Killer* was ablaze.

- 3 At the same time Mt. Killer was where darkness and fire met, neither losing their properties.
- 4 An air of gloom marched up its approaches.
- 5 The storm of all storms, the likes of which the world has never seen, tear at its slopes with death fingers.
- 6 An ear-splitting trumpet draws attention to the hard of hearing.
- 7 A voice so indescribably fearful strikes terror in the heart of the listener, causing them to beg for stoppage.
- 8 A Voice spoke an order that no man could endure
- 9 The sight was so terrifying that they heard their Man Moses exclaim, "I tremble with fear."

Now let your eyes drift to very base of the mountain. What is the first thing that comes into view? Do you see the fence and the sign attached to it? The 9 approach it, and in unsanctified zeal, rip the sign off, break it to pieces and proceed to jump fence, all in an attempt to satisfy their *unsanctified instinctive need*. They viewed Mt. Killer as something to be climbed.

What other reason, other than the obvious site, filling their eyes, would God have given for warning against approaching *Mt. Killer: aka Mt. Sinai* too closely? It's the same reason *He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life*. Without the angel with the flaming sword graciously guarding the gate of certain death, though by all appearances it led to life, Adam and Eve would surely have responded to an *instinctive need* in unsanctified zeal to gain back what they had lost. But God's *Way* of return was different and led through a different mountain.

Remember! Just like the nine, the world carries the sensed *instinctive need* to climb back to God, but their *urge* in all its sweat, is unsanctified and ends in certain death.

Perhaps these 9 and their kind can be best understood in their similarity to the exposed foolish promise of the Jews in *Exo 19.8. All that the LORD has spoken we will do*. Scarcely had God's words, spoken by Moses, left his mouth, and already as one, they were beginning to "climb Mt. Sinai", solely on their own strength. *All that the LORD has spoken we will do*. What a "wonderful" vow! They didn't lack in zeal, because they figured it was tool enough to kick down the warning sign, "Death lies beyond." They were oblivious to their inability. They forgot the curse of Babel. On the backs of their t-shirts was even printed "Getting back to God. I can do it."

To their doom they chose to reject God's gracious warning, that death

lies on the other side of the warning track. These 9 faced Mt Sinai as something to be conquered, rather than something to be avoided.

In their haste and distraction, their unsanctified zeal blinded them to the mountain that graciously loomed directly behind. The epitaph on their gravestones at the base of the fence posts reads *"If thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it."*

But the 1 man dares not approach the fence, but rather mortifies each instinctive urge to do so. He sees it as a gracious boundary; a warning; a "Danger! Keep Out" sign. So what does this sign above this boundary graciously read? *'Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death (Exo 19.12).*

Mt. Zion – Mt. Giver of Life

Let's consider two important questions.

- Q1 What was this mountain called which one of the nine could see but not the rest?
- Q2 What was so special about him?

Note. These two mountains are placed here in Hebrews directly in contrast with each other. In my perception there should be a natural Christian tendency within us which demands that these two mountains be continuously compared against each other during our desert journey.

- A1 For the answer to the first question, let's continue in ... *Heb 12.22-24*: But you have come to Mount Zion¹ and to the city of the living God², the heavenly Jerusalem³, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering⁴,
²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven⁵, and to God, the judge of all⁶, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect⁷,
²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant⁸, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel⁹.

Unlike *Mt. Killer Sinai*, the heavenly braes of Mt. Zion's are green, meadows lush, and watered by grace. Its streams are cool and ever flowing from the throne of the Lamb. Its slopes are embraced by perpetual spring, and it knows no night. While *Mt. Sinai* is a *preventing* mountain, *Mt. Zion* is an *inviting* mountain.

 Analogy: Mt Zion is not unlike a tradition that we Americans have. As a little boy I remember visiting many homes for the first time for the first time while on furlough with my parents. The lady of the house was quick to take us on a tour of each room of the house. So unlike Mt. Sinai, we are beckoned to freely enter this Mt. Zion and invited to freely walk its halls

 Dear child of Zion, cup your hand to your ear, and above the rumbling and blasting of *Mt. Sinai*, listen to the sweet music of your Savior “where no notes can be detected.” He graciously hums in your ear, *“By my irresistible grace, you have avoided that fearful Mt. Killer across the valley yet still in sight, and instead have come to the Giver of Life. Watch and listen as the Divine Host, the Holy Spirit takes you by the hand, inviting you in. ”*

- 1 *But you have come to Mount Zion* - Its name is Mt. Zion
- 2 *and to the city of the living God* - Unlike Mt. Sinai, **IT** is where the living God resides.
- 3 *the heavenly Jerusalem* - Unlike Mt. Sinai, **IT** is what is truly heavenly.

 Moving slowly to the interior, in contrast to Mt. Sinai, with that 1 out of the 10...:

- 4 ... we hear the inviting sounds of *innumerable angels in festive song* of praise emanating from its slopes.
- 5 ... we see *the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven*. A quick glance at the guestbook shows their names, and next to each the date, *from the foundation of the world*.
- 6 As we move further into the interior we see *God as Judge of all*
- 7 We then are guided to *the spirits of the righteous made perfect*.
- 8 Further in to the interior we see *Jesus mediating a new and better covenant on our behalf*.
- 9 Finally now our tour ends in the Holy of Holies *to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel*.

A2 So what distinguished the one man from the other nine? Why could he see and enter Mt. Zion, and not the others? It is called **distinguishing grace** taken up in the second message of this series called **Divine Hoverer-Antidote For Nicodemus Dilemma**. Just as the other nine, he too was born with an instinctive need. But God graciously prevented Him from climbing *Mt. Killer Sinai* in order to satisfy his need, instead, tenderly yet **irresistibly guiding** him into the halls of Mt. Zion. And so we too confess:

*All our knowledge, sense, and sight
Lie in deepest darkness shrouded
Till thy Spirit breaks our night
With the beams of truth unclouded.
Thou alone to God canst win us;
Thou must work all good within us.*
Trinity Hymnal (blue) #220

 A period cannot be added to today’s thoughts without the warning of v. 25 *See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.*

 Now that we have graciously learned to turn our backs on Mt. Sinai, with a new fixed *look unto Jesus*, our Mt. Zion, **Two Indispensable Attendants for The Journey** remain. Join us as we cross the *wilderness of Sin*. Lord willing, tomorrow morning, we will become fast friends with these two.