

Faith: The Better Way ~ Part 6

Messianic Jews 12:18-29

Letter to the Messianic Jews

In my last post, we continued on our topic of the **Trust and the Believer** by looking at **Exhortation to Endurance** in **Messianic Jews 12:12-17**. In this post, we wrap up with the topic of the **Trust and the Believer** in **Messianic Jews 12** by exploring a **Final Warning Against Apostasy** in **Messianic Jews 12: 18-29**.

¹⁸ For you have not come to a tangible mountain, to an ignited fire, to darkness, to murk, to a whirlwind, ¹⁹ to the sound of a shofar, and to a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further message be given to them - ²⁰ for they couldn't bear what was being commanded them, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it is to be stoned to death"; ²¹ and so terrifying was the sight that Moshe said, "I am quaking with dread." ²² On the contrary, you have come to Mount Tziyon, that is, the city of the living God, heavenly Yerushalayim; to myriads of angels in festive assembly; ²³ to a community of the firstborn whose names have been recorded in heaven; to a Judge who is God of everyone; to spirits of righteous people who have been brought to the goal; ²⁴ to the mediator of a new covenant, Yeshua; and to the sprinkled blood that speaks better things than that of Hevel.

²⁵ See that you don't reject the One speaking! For if those did not escape who rejected Him when He gave divine warning on earth, think how much less we will escape if we turn away from Him when He warns from heaven. ²⁶ Even then, His voice shook the earth; but now, He has made this promise: "One more time I will shake not only the earth but heaven too!" ²⁷ And this phrase, "one more time," makes clear that the things shaken are removed since they are created things, so that the things not shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we have received an unshakeable Kingdom, let us have grace, through which we may offer service that will please God, with reverence and fear. ²⁹ For indeed,

"Our God is a consuming fire!" ~Messianic Jews 12:18-29 (CJB)

This passage is a contrast between the old and the new. It is a contrast between the giving of the law on Mount Sinai and the new covenant of which **Yeshua** is the mediator. Through **Messianic Jews 12:21** the story echoes that of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. See Exodus 19:16-20, 20:15-18(18-21); Deuteronomy 4:10-13.

In the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, three things are stressed.

- The sheer majesty of God,
- The absolute unapproachability of God, and
- The sheer terror of God.

Then in **Messianic Jews 12:22** comes the difference. The first section deals with all that man can expect under the old covenant, a God of lonely majesty, complete separation from humanity, and prostrating fear. But to the Believer, we have a new covenant and a new relationship with God. **Messianic Jews** makes a kind of list of the new glories that await the Believer.

A theophany (an appearance of God to mankind) was often accompanied by **fire** (Exodus 13:21, Judges 13:20, 1 Kings 18:38), **darkness** (Genesis 15:12; Exodus 10:21-22, 14:20; 1 Kings 8:12; Joel 3:4(2:31); Amos 5:18) and a **whirlwind** (Nahum 1:3; Job 37:9, 38:1; Zechariah 9:14).

The sound of a shofar will be heard at the end of days at the final manifestation of God (Isaiah 27:13, Zechariah 9:14), identified more specifically in the **Brit Hadashah** as the **Messiah's** second coming (Matthew 24:31, 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

When God gave the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:6-18), called the **Ten Words** in the **Torah** (Deuteronomy 4:13), all the people of Israel heard His **voice**, and those **words made the hearers beg that no further message be given to them**, but only to Moshe as their representative. This is described in Deuteronomy

4:10-13, 5:20-25 and 18:16-17 (which comes in the middle of Deuteronomy 18:15-19, where God promises to raise up a prophet like Moshe; according to Acts 3:22-23 **Yeshua** fulfills this prophecy).

Moshe said, "I am quaking with dread." Not only the people were frightened, but Moshe was as well. However, by quoting a remark which **Moshe** made not on Mount Sinai but upon returning and discovering the golden calf (Deuteronomy 9:14-19), the author of **Messianic Jews** shows us that as a result of Moshe's personal experience with God, he developed a healthy fear of God (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10) which lasted not only while he was receiving the **Torah**, but also afterwards - indeed throughout his life. And the author's point is that it should be so with all of us - those who begin well with **Yeshua** should not slack off later.

In verses 22-24, the author lists eight things to which **you have come**.

1. **Mount Tziyon** is where King David placed the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:2); in the **Brit Hadashah**, **Yochanan** sees **Yeshua**, the Lamb, "standing on Mount Tziyon" (Revelation 14:1). Already in the **Tanakh** Mount Zion is identified with the whole of **the city of the living God**.
2. But the identification transcends earthly **Yerushalayim** and applies to the even better **heavenly Yerushalayim** (Galatians 4:25-26, Revelation 21:2), about which the author has more to say at 11:10, 13-16; 13:14. The idea that what is seen as spiritual truth here on earth is but the shadow of the heavenly original pervades this letter.
3. **Myriads of holy angels**: God "**came from the myriads of holy ones**" in heaven to give the **Torah** on Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 33:2). From **Messianic Jews** 1:14, Daniel 7:10, Luke 2:13-15 and Revelation 5:11-12 we learn that their **festive assembly** consists in ministering to God and His people.
4. **A community of the firstborn** (which I have identified as the Kehilah or assembly of Believers) **whose names have been recorded in heaven** in the Book of Life (see Revelation 20:12b).
5. **A Judge who is God of everyone**. There is no escaping God "**the righteous Judge**" (2 Timothy 4:8); many **Brit Hadashah** and **Tanakh** passages attest to a final Day of Judgment for all.
6. **Spirits of righteous people** (11:4, 7, 33) **who have been brought to the goal** (7:11) along with us (11:39-40) by **Yeshua**, the Completer of our trusting.
7. **The mediator of a new covenant** is **Yeshua**. Compare **Messianic Jews** 7:22, 8:6-13.
8. **The sprinkled blood of Yeshua. That speaks better things than that of Hevel** (see 11:4). **Hevel** was the first to die (Genesis 4:3-10), **Yeshua** the last (since his death is timeless); **Yeshua's** blood brings life (Leviticus 17:11), **Hevel's** brought only death.

Since I have written at length on the issue of apostasy, I would refer you to my series on Eternal Security here.

Let us have grace. Let us accept God's gracious gift of His Son, whose sacrificial death graciously atones for our sin - rather than continue adherence to the now-defunct animal sacrifices for sin, or any other form of trying to persuade God to reward our works by considering us righteous. The animal sacrifices, though prescribed initially by God's grace, have become works righteousness now that **Yeshua's** sacrifice for sin has taken place since they no longer avail for anything.

Remember, "Our God is a consuming fire!"

In my next post, we begin to look at the final chapter of **Messianic Jews**. Chapter 13 presents us with two last topics: **Exhortations and Warnings** and **Personal References and Benedictions**.