

[2 Corinthians 5:21:] God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1. 2 Corinthians 5:21 is such a great summary of God's plan of salvation because it answers the basic questions of *who* (the sinless One: Jesus for us), *what* (Jesus takes our sin and gives us His righteousness), *when* (implied: when Christ was here), *why* (so that we are counted as righteous, even though we're not), and *how* (God did this). But what about the *where*? *Where* is the only basic question not answered directly or indirectly by that beautifully comprehensive and concise passage.
2. This is a sermon about *where*. That's because God doesn't leave us in the dark about the *where* of our salvation. He gave us another beautiful section through the writer to the Hebrews. On a Christian education Sunday, the importance of *where* is underscored. Real stuff happened in real places, done by a real God. We learn Biblical geography for a reason. We are learning the facts of our salvation. And connected with those places, we learn about the God of our salvation as well.
3. The first place our reading talks about is Mount Sinai. We know it is a real place since God speaks of it as a real place. Sadly (but, by God's providence) we don't know where it is. We do have a couple of ideas based on the clues the text gives us. And if you go to the Holy Land, you can certainly find a tour that will take your money to bring you to one of the potential sites. But Mount Sinai's exact location is a mystery. Does the fact that we can't find it now mean that we're in trouble out of the gate when it comes to the reason for learning Biblical geography? Not at all!
4. First of all, we trust the history in the Bible as true. There are many historical items that we did not witness that are recorded for us by God, including many places. For example, just because we don't know where Eden was doesn't mean it didn't exist. Please recognize that it takes a Biblical worldview to accept the Bible as truth. While we can "prove" a lot of what the Scriptures say to critics, we will never prove the faith we hold because that comes from God. But regardless of whether a person has faith in God or not, what we learn about God and religion on Mount Sinai is experienced by all. {Read verses 18-21.}
5. God gave Moses the Law (as summarized by the Ten Commandments) on Mount Sinai. From this experience we learn what all religions have figured out. There is right and wrong. There is a Being to Whom we are accountable. This Being is powerful. People who reject this Being face death. This is scary!
6. If all we know of God is what we know of Him from Mount Sinai, then we fall into self-righteousness or despair. There is right and wrong: and we either think we're good enough or we think there's no way to measure up. There is a just reckoning: and we either think God has to accept me for who I am or that I'll never be good enough. There is no stopping God: and we either try to manipulate Him or ignore Him. There is no stopping death: and we either put it out of mind or it paralyzes us. No wonder this is scary! This is natural religion from the works of Islam and the enlightenment of Buddhism to the resignation of Atheism and Animism. Self-righteousness and despair leave us uneasy.

7. We need to go to another place—another mountain—to hear more about the true God. There is more geography in our lesson. There is more to learn about God than just His justice, shown directly on Mount Sinai and shown indirectly in the creation at large and the hearts that fill it. We need to learn where Mount Zion is! We need to learn of God's grace! {Read verses 22-24.}
8. On our own, we would never find Mount Zion. Yes, we could find it physically. Contrasted with Mount Sinai, Mount Zion *is* the mountain we know with geographical certainty. We say of Mount Zion, "I know *where* that is!" It's in Jerusalem. It's where Jesus died. But finding Mount Zion's meaning is more than just knowing where it is. Christian education takes us up that mountain and gives us the worldview to see God not only as a God of justice, *but also* a God characterized by grace. Christian education takes the geography and connects it to life and salvation connected to the events that took place there.
9. The living God is alive even though Jesus died. He rose from the dead. And the reason there is so much joy on Mount Zion is because of what Jesus gave us there. Those firstborn [ones], whose names are written in heaven are you and me who get to join with the angels to praise God. We praise God because our names are written in heaven. Replacing the self-righteousness of our works, we have the *actual* righteousness of the Son of God credited to us. Replacing our despair to appear alone before a righteous God, we have the blood of Jesus that was shed for us as He took upon Himself all of our sin. And *where* did that happen? It happened on the cross! It happened at Mount Zion. It happened. Period.
10. We know the *who, what, when, WHERE, why, and how* of our salvation! Real things happened in real places. If you doubt it, just think about what gets you down in life. *Something* happened ... *somewhere*. Now what? Where do we go when our ego is shattered? Where do we go when there is no hope? What a blessing that Mount Sinai is hidden from us at that moment! We learn Biblical geography for a reason. To Mount Zion we go, the mountain we never would have found on our own unless God revealed it to us. We go to Jesus, Who gives us true righteousness. We go to the cross, where we see God's grace on full display as He drowns our self-absorption in His blood. We learn Biblical geography because God gives it to us so that the faith He gives us has yet another thing to hold onto. Amen.