

Hebrews

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish
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Hebrews 12:18-24



Vss. 18-21

- Here the preacher is contrasting the life of the old Israel with the life of his congregation, the people of the new Israel. He takes us back to Mt. Sinai and the old covenant that was given to Moses and then brings us to the new covenant which is given to us in the blood of Jesus.
- Deuteronomy 4:11-12 says, "You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud, and thick gloom. Then the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire, you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form, only a voice". God came to them as a frightening and terrible power, as a disembodied voice. So terrifying was the presence of God that Exodus 19:12-13 says, "You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through. Whether beast of man, he shall not live...' ". Deuteronomy 5: 23-27 tells of how the people had become frightened of God that they no longer wanted to hear His voice for themselves and asked Moses to go to God alone and bring back His message. "If we hear the voice of Lord our God any longer then we will die!" (Deuteronomy 5:25).
- The three things the preacher stresses about the events around the giving of the old covenant are 1) the terrifying majesty of God 2) the absolute unapproachability of God 3) the sheer terror of the presence of God. Here is a God where love is hard to find, where anyone who would even come close to Him is in a danger of a quick death, where one is too afraid to look upon or even listen to God. The preacher reminds us of Deuteronomy 9:19 where even Moses says, "I am full of fear and trembling".

Vss. 22-24

- But now as we journey through life with Christ, we are not camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai, but rather Mt. Zion. Here at the top of this mountain we find not uninhabitable fire and brimstone, but the City of God. Jesus came preaching and teaching that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and so it is, here in the New Jerusalem.
- Here God is not found in a terrifying wasteland but in a magnificent city populated by “myriads of angels” and the “firstborn who are enrolled in heaven”. The old, with all its uncertainties, fears, and darkness is swept away by the brilliant pure light of the City and the new life with God the Father that is everlasting.
- The NASB does not fully express the festive, joyous atmosphere the angels create. It is a City in continuous celebration. Waiting for us are all the saints who have gone before us. These are the “first born” who have inherited all from their Father.
- And of course God is there. He is still awesome as He sits a Judge. It is a glorious setting, but we must not forget to be in fear and reverence before the Judge of all.
- The preacher earlier referred to “the great cloud of witnesses” who watch us as we take our stand with Christ. Here is the City we join that cloud as we are enrolled with “the spirits of the righteous made perfect”.
- Finally, of course, there is Jesus. It is Jesus who initiated the new covenant and made it possible by the shedding of His blood, thereby making this new relationship with God possible. No longer is God terrifying and unapproachable, but is the embodiment of Love and can be known to us as Father.
- When Abel was slain, his blood on the ground cried out for vengeance. When the blood of Jesus was spilled on the ground, His blood opened The Way for reconciliation with God. No longer is God distant, detached, and terrifying, but He is our constant companion and His love is with us always.