

THE TERROR OF THE OLD AND THE GLORY OF THE NEW

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Introduction: After the Israelites came out of the bondage of Egypt, about two months later, they gathered at Mount Sinai. Read **Exodus 19:1-25**. After the Ten Commandments, **20:18-21**.

Background: The author of Hebrews continues to encourage his readers to persevere under suffering. He shows the contrast between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion.

Barclay, in his commentary, entitles, "The terror of the old and the glory of the new."

A. THE TERROR OF THE OLD COVENANT

Hebrews 12:18, You have not come...

- ❖ **18,** For you have not come to what may be touched, **a blazing fire** and **darkness** and **gloom** and a **tempest** <violent thunder> **19 and the sound of a trumpet** [literal] [THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD WAS AWE-INSPIRING]
- ❖ and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. [THE VOICE OF GOD WAS FRIGHTENING]
- ❖ **20** For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." [THE PRESENCE OF GOD WAS UNAPPROACHABLE]
- ❖ **21** Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." [after burning bush and miraculous experiences]

Why did God reveal Himself in such a terrifying manner? Exodus 20:20, Moses said to the people, "**Do not fear,** for God has come to test you, **that the fear of him may be before you,** that you may not sin." [Unhealthy AND Healthy fear]

For you have not come to what may be touched: Point—tangible and restricted.

B. THE GLORY OF THE NEW COVENANT

22, But you have come...

The theological concept of "already but not yet": We already have it but not yet fully experience it. For example:

❖ **12:22, But you have come... to the city of God**

❖ **13:14, “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.”**

- We have come (**Already**), but the city is yet to come (**Not Yet**)

The condition of Hebrews: 10:32, But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. [THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS HARD]

The Scriptures tell us that in the Church, “you have come” (right now! in perfect tense) to these realities:

1. Mount Zion, To the City of the living God, The heavenly Jerusalem

- Different synonymous expressions, pointing to the kingdom of heaven.
- **Zion** is synonymous with Jerusalem in the Old Testament
- **City of God: 11:10**, For he [Abraham] was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.
- **Heavenly Jerusalem: Revelation 21:2**, And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

2. To innumerable angels in festal gathering

- **Revelation 5:11**, Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

3. To the assembly (ekklesia) of the firstborn [heirs of the kingdom] who are enrolled in heaven (fellow believers and saints)

- **F. F. Bruce puts it**, “All the people of Christ are the ‘firstborn’ children of God, through their union with Him who is The Firstborn par excellence; their birthright is not to be bartered (exchanged) away, as was Esau’s.”

- **If you are a true believer, you are enrolled in heaven (assurance of salvation):**
- ❖ **1 John 5:13**, I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.
- Esau, as a firstborn, sold his birthright; you don't give up your inheritance for earthly pleasures or pressures.

4. To God, the judge of all

- **Hebrews 4:13**, And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.
- **Hebrews 10:30**, For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." [31] It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
- **Steve Cole**, But you may wonder, "How is it a joy to come before an all-powerful Judge who knows your every thought and motive?" There are three answers to that question.
 - First, the author was writing to a persecuted church. They could rest in the fact that one day God will judge all their enemies who do not repent.
 - Second, we can rejoice that God will reward everything that we have done for the name of Christ. Even a cup of cold water given in His name will be rewarded (Matt. 10:42).
 - Third, we can rejoice that we have come to the Judge, who is God of all, because living with that awareness will cure us of the sin that damages us and others.

5. To the spirits of the righteous made perfect

- **10:14**, For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.
- Saints who died and are now in the Lord's presence.
- Spirits because they have not yet received the glorified bodies, which will happen when Christ comes.

6. To Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant,

- **10:15**, And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying [Jeremiah 31], [16] “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” [17] then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” [18] Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, and this is their experience: 12:20, For they could not endure the order 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.”

Henry Ironside: If even the lower creation (IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED), made subject to vanity because of man’s sin, would not be permitted to so much as touch the mount, and if Moses who might be considered the very best in all Israel, trembled at the thought of drawing nigh to God under such circumstances, what possible hope could there be of any ordinary man standing before Jehovah on the ground of legal righteousness?

When God manifested His awe-inspiring glory, it is written in **Exodus 20:21**, “The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.”

Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant through whom we can boldly draw near to God:

- ❖ **Hebrews 4:16**, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
- ❖ **Hebrews 7:25**, "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."
- ❖ **Hebrews 10:19**, Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

7. **to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel** (the sacrificial blood of Christ on the cross for people's sins).

- **Genesis 4:10** And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. [11] And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.
- Abel's blood cried for vengeance and condemnation.
- Christ's blood gives forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed [wounded side],
Be of sin the double cure,
Save me from its guilt and power.

Two applications: [believers and unbelievers]

Unbelievers: Have you come to partake in these gospel privileges?

Believers: Do you focus on and rejoice in the gospel privileges you have in Christ?

To what earthly accomplishments do you compare these privileges in Christ?

12:22, But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

D L Moody: "SOME day you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody, of East Northfield, is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all; gone out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal, a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body like unto His own glorious body. I was born of the flesh in 1837. I was born of the Spirit in 1856. That which is born of the flesh may die. That which is born of the Spirit will live forever."