

Better Hebrews 12:18-24

Intro

When I was a child the Clements side of our family would gather every year for Christmas at my grandparents house. When would visit during the year we never went into their den except to go to the bathroom, they didn't have a hallway so you had to walk through a room to get to other rooms. It was generally understood you didn't touch anything in that room unless you wanted to die by my grandmother's hand. In particular there was a white couch that my grandmother had purchased with money from her job as a nurse. We didn't sit on it, look at it or think about looking at it, except at Christmas. At Christmas we would sit in the room to open gifts. The rest of the year we feared my grandmother if we touched that couch.

Transition

Today there is so much fear about life. We live our lives afraid of failure, afraid that something bad might happen, something might not go the way we planend, that we might be rejected. If you pay to much attention to the news you fear that we are all going to die and the world is going to end at any moment for fill in the blank reason. We can easily become afraid of the world around us. We cannot live a life defined by fear but rather a life defined by hope! Today we will see that **Jesus Is Better than our fear, He brings us Hope!**

Sticky Statement: Jesus is better than our fear, He brings us HOPE!

Passage

18 For you have not come to what could be touched, to a blazing fire, to darkness, gloom, and storm, 19 to the blast of a trumpet, and the sound of words. Those who heard it begged that not another word be spoken to them, 20 for they could not bear what was commanded: **If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.** 21 The appearance was so terrifying that Moses said, **I am trembling with fear.**

Hebrews 12:18-21

What is fear?

Webster dictionary defines fear this way: **an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger**

First the imagery used here is terrifying.

Truthfully it sounds like one is walking up to an impending volcanic eruption.

But what is happening in these verses, why is it being described this way?

I'm so glad you asked.

The author is taking us back to when the ten commandments were given to the Israelites.

We can read of Israel's experience at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19.

It was a fearful sight.

They power and holiness of God descended onto the mountain.

Only those invited onto the mountain could approach and live.

Before attempting to enter or even gaze upon the cloud the people had to be consecrated, made clean.

The nation feared his holiness and power.

Moses writes this about it in Exodus 19:

16 On the third day, when morning came, there was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud on the mountain, and a very loud blast from a ram's horn, so that all the people in the camp shuddered. 17 Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was completely enveloped in smoke because the Lord came down on it in fire. Its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently. 19 As the sound of the ram's horn grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him in the thunder.

Exodus 19:16-19

In our human attempt to explain this we immediately want to say well they were at the foot of an active volcano.

The mountain traditionally believed to be Mount Sinai is and has never been volcanic.

It is a granite mountain.

Not filled with flow tubes or open former lava chambers, solid.

This leaves us with one conclusion, God's presence rested on the mountain in order to communion with His people.

It had to have been terrifying.

Hebrews original audience would have been very familiar with this chapter in Exodus.

In verse 18-21 of Hebrews 12 we are re-introduced to the power of God's presence.

We are reminded that there was once a time where fear consumed the follower.

There was a fear of approaching an unapproachable God.

God's power is so great and He is so holy that we, in our sin, cannot approach Him lest we die.

Even Moses who was invited onto the mountain was not able to see God in all His glory.

Moses ask to see God's face and God says all you can handle is a glimpse of me after I have already passed by you.

The author gives this reminder because he is directing the reader towards something amazing.

He is helping his audience to see that we no longer have to live in fear.

God is still unapproachable for those that are unforgiven but for the redeemed we can walk directly to His feet and worship.

Jesus is better than our fear, He brings us HOPE!

The next few verses provide a contrast to the previous verses.

Look with me picking up in verse 22:

22 Instead, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God (the heavenly Jerusalem), to myriads of angels, a festive gathering, 23 to the assembly of the firstborn whose names have been written in heaven, to a Judge, who is God of all, to the spirits of righteous people made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which says better things than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 12:22-24

Christians live in a **already-not yet** tension.

We are already citizens of the Kingdom of God, but we have not yet seen the Kingdom fully established.

We have not yet seen the new Jerusalem established but it is a certain reality that is coming.

The end of verse 24 calls all the way back to Genesis 4 where Cain murders his brother Abel.

God speaking to Cain about the murder says this:

10 Then he said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!"
Genesis 4:10

The blood of Abel was calling to God for justice to be done.

The author is helping us to see that the blood of Christ speaks louder and better things to the Father.

It speaks of mercy and forgiveness for the follower.

The picture in these verses is in contrast to the one of fear in the previous verses.

Here we see hope and celebration as a result of our faith becoming sight!

The city described here isn't just any old city.

This is the city where the living God reigns, His capital city.

We are joining in the jubilation of His glory fully revealed.

We are partying with all the Saints that have come before us and...and all the heavenly creatures we have read about in scripture.

It is an amazing image and one that cannot fully be described.

Application

Jesus is better than our fear, He brings us HOPE!

One day all that have called on His name to be forgiven will join the party in Heaven.

One day we will see His full glory.

The hope that the blood of Christ has brought to us cannot be overcome.

Even when life looks bleak, there is always light shining from Christ.

The darkness cannot and will never overcome His light.

Jesus is our hope, all we have to do is believe Him.

Challenge

Do you live in fear or has He brought you hope?

Commentaries Used in Preparation

Christ Center Exposition: Exalting Christ in Hebrews

The Gospel Coalition Commentary on Hebrew by Dennis Johnson