

58-12-05.wpd -- Living in the Presence of the Future
law, legalism, knowledge, Heaven, future, faith
Heb 12:18-24

Christians have come to a future destiny that is yet to come.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture reading)

--Christians live between two worlds, the present one and the world to come. That's why the **title**, because **HOM.idea**. Our **text** describes the tension between those two worlds in a special way.

--[In C. S. Lewis' *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the Beavers tell the children about Aslan, the Lion who represents Christ. Susan says, "Is he - quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." / "That you will, dearie, and no mistake," said Mrs Beaver; "if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly." / "Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy. "Safe?" said Mr Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."] God is good, but also a bit scary, because He is so *holy*, so *set apart*, so *separate* from us. He *dwells in light*, we *dabble in darkness*; He lives *in love*, we *pursue selfish whims and carnal passions*, He is *pure goodness*, but there's *some bad* even in the best of us.

--That's why we need a relationship with God, whether we know it or not, but when God reveals His holiness, we tremble in fear. [A singing group called *The 2nd Chapter of Acts*, made up songs for the book *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* and called their album, "**The Roar of Love**."] (We tremble at God's roar, until we realize His intention is not to devour us, but the hug us into His loving heart and make us into *lion-hearted saints*.)

I. The God Who Is Scary (re-read v.18-21)

A. These verses describe the awesome event of God giving the Law (from Mount Sinai, we hear God roaring...)

1. Why a mountain? --Isa 55:8-9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.")
2. Why a frightening display in giving the Law? God was serious about getting His people's attention... because...

B. We humans are caught up in legalism:

1. Ever since our race tasted "the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," we've lived with human moralities and man-made rules.

We're legalists, but our rules fall short of those of our Creator.

2. God got seriously loud at Mount Sinai: He wanted to wean us off of legalistic thinking by giving us His own standards. (It was *fearful*, because it revealed our real trouble: *legalism* could be humanly managed; but the Law would be impossible to keep--Rom 3:19-20 (NKJV), Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.
3. Mount Sinai's frightening display showed the full impact of feeding on the forbidden fruit. It showed legalistic humans what it means to try to live on the basis of "right and wrong". In Eden, eating that fruit meant death [Gen 2:17 (NKJV), "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."]; living off of it still means death [Prov 14:12, There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.]

TRANS: Mount Sinai was scary! It should have showed people that legalism doesn't work. But the Jews made more laws and refinements of the Law, to help keep them away from breaking it. They were still trying to live on the basis of the forbidden fruit, living legalistically, based on their own standards of "right and wrong". But fear and fright and an endless string of sacrificial animals was not the plan of...

II. The God Who Is Good

- A. Mount Sinai shook with a "*roar of love*," but that love was fully displayed on another mountain, Mount Zion, where Christ's death was the final answer to the sinner's relationship with a holy God.
- B. **We have come** to "*Mount Zion*," which represents both our present redemption and for our future residence-- (re-read v.22-24)

1. Christians take on a new citizenship (We "*have come...to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God*")-- Phil 3:20-21, But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (We don't yet live in our new bodies, but we are already the heavenly citizens that will inhabit them.)
2. We "*have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly*" (We have more in common now with angels rejoicing in God's

presence, than we do with fellow humans who rejoice in this world's passing fads and fancies.)

3. We have come "*to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven*" (All believers, both here and there, share a single standing before God, the privilege of the firstborn Son, because we are in that Son, and He is in us. There are no 2nd-class Christians! All are saints, and that's the basis for "the communion of saints.")

C. Most important, we "*have come to God, the judge of all men*"

1. In all God's dealings with us, He has remained unchanged in His majestic holiness. Humans rightfully tremble before Him, as we would before an unchained lion, the king of beasts! WHY?
 - a. Because He will judge by the same Law given on fiery Mount Zion all who trust in "the knowledge of good and evil" as their way to righteousness. (All will discover too late that legalistic thinking and legalistic living can never lead to eternal life.)
 - b. (We have come to, and joined ourselves to, "the spirits of righteous men made perfect") Those who live by faith in God's promises ultimately find the perfection their believing hearts seek, not in keeping a list of rules, but only in union with Christ.
2. **Christians have come to a future destiny that is yet to come.** (We find our promised future a present reality, because we have come "*to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*")

CONCLUSION:

--Abel's blood, *spilled on the soil*, cried out for *justice*, for *retribution*. *Legalism* still leads us to make that cry, too, each time we suffer wrong. But the blood that dripped to the ground from the Cross made a better cry, the cry of "*Father forgive them.*" And the earthquake that shook Mount Zion and the gloom that covered it was not the same as those of Mount Sinai. There it was God's frightening announcement of the Law. On Mount Zion, it was God's awesome work of nailing that Law to the Cross with His Son.

--Have done with Eden's false fruit: legalism, keeping *moral score pads*, "each man doing *what is right* in his own eyes." All of these blind us to our heavenly life in Christ to be lived out down here while we wait for its future fulfillment. The Old Covenant is past. We are people of the New Covenant in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Heb 12:18-24 (NIV) You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; {19} to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, {20} because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." {21} The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." {22} But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, {23} to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, {24} to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.