

The section which begins in verse 18 runs through the end of the chapter (verse 29) and constitutes a summary of the distinctions between Judaism and Christianity which the author has been setting forth throughout this entire letter by comparing and contrasting the two systems.

- The Priesthood of Aaron contrasted with The Priesthood of Christ (5:1-10; 7:1 – 8:6)
- The Old Covenant contrasted with The New Covenant (8:7-13)
- The Earthly Tabernacle contrasted with the Heavenly Tabernacle (9:1 – 10:18)
- Mount Sinai contrasted with Mount Zion (12:18 – 29)

The objective of these comparisons is to demonstrate the excellency and superiority of the Gospel:

*“The principal argument which the apostle had urged unto their constancy in Christianity, was the superlative excellency, glory, and benefit of the Gospel-state into which the Hebrews had been called. This he has accomplished and proved by setting forth the person and office of its Author, His priesthood and sacrifice, with all the spiritual worship and privileges belonging thereto. Each of these he compared and contrasted with the things that corresponded unto the same during the O.T. dispensation. Thereby he set over against each other the type and the antitype, the shadow and the substance, and by so doing made it unmistakably evident that the new economy was immeasurably superior to the old, that all the ordinances and institutions of the law were but prefigurations of those spiritual realities which are now revealed by the Gospel.” A. W. Pink*

## The Mount That Might Be Touched (compare Exodus 24)

Reconciling Hebrews 12:18 with Exodus 19:12-13

- Hebrews 12:18 says “the mount that may be touched”
- Exodus 19:12-13 says “go not up into the mount or touch the border”

Hebrews 12:18 points out that Mount Sinai is material and visible, something experienced by the physical senses of sight, smell, and touch; whereas the gospel (Mount Zion) is experienced not by the physical senses, but by faith.

“Mount Sinai was a material thing, exposed to the outward senses, and was an emblem of the entire order of things connected with Judaism. As such, it was in complete contrast from that order of things brought in by Christ, which is wholly spiritually, invisible, and celestial.” Pink

The commencement of Israel's covenant relationship with God is at Mount Sinai: “It was there that Jehovah revealed himself with all the insignia of his awe-inspiring majesty.” Pink

Mount Sinai – and what happened there – was “the foundational glory of Judaism,” and here in our text (12:18 – 24) the author seeks to undermine the confidence of his readers in that glory and demonstrate that it has been supplanted by the greater glory of the gospel.

His first main point is that the events which occurred at Mount Sinai instilled fear and dread:  
**Exodus 19:16 – 19 and 20:18 – 21**

- “burned with fire” – denotes Jehovah as the law-giving Judge (Deut 33:2; Rev 1:12-15; Daniel 10:5-6)
- “blackness and darkness” – portending despair (compare Deut 5:22-23)
- “tempest” – portending anxiety: the lightnings, thunderings, and earthquake
- “the sound of a trumpet” – the impending approach of God and the call to come before him
- “the voice of words” – the voice of God himself giving the ten commandments (Deut 4:11-13)

*"The mount that might be touched"* instills fear, not peace and hope:

*"Which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them anymore"* (v. 19b)

Compare Exodus 20:19

*"They could not endure that which was commanded"* (v. 20)

*"...a view of God as a Judge, represented in fire and blackness, will fill the souls of convicted sinners with dread and terror. No matter how boldly and blatantly they have carried themselves, when the Spirit brings a transgressor to that Mount, the stoutest heart will quake."* A. W. Pink

When a sinner is confronted with the law – out in the open with no place to hide from the terror of the Lord – he is paralyzed with fear, which is one of the reasons the law was "weak and unprofitable" and "made nothing perfect" (Hebrews 7:18-19).

What is needed is *"a better hope"* (Hebrews 7:19).

*"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."* Romans 8:3 – 4

Our great high priest, the Lord Jesus, has entered in once into the holy place – not made with hands (not material, not visible like Mount Sinai) – but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 10:11, 24).

*The terrors of law and of God  
With me can have nothing to do;  
My Savior's obedience and blood  
Hide all my transgressions from view.*

*"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."* Hebrews 2:17-18

**NEXT WEEK:** Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:22 – 24)