

Hebrews 12:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

Analysis

And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: This continues describing Sinai's terror. The 'trumpet' (salpingos, σάλπιγγος) grew louder and louder (Exodus 19:19), announcing divine presence. The 'voice of words' (phōnē rhēmatōn) was God speaking the Ten Commandments directly to Israel—the only time God's voice addressed the entire nation audibly. This privilege proved too overwhelming; they 'intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more' (parētēsanto mē prostethēnai autois logon), begging Moses to mediate instead (Exodus 20:19).

This reveals the Law's effect: convicting terror rather than comforting grace. Hearing God's holy demands drove Israel to recognize their sinfulness and inability to approach Him directly. They needed a mediator, prefiguring Christ. The Law's purpose was exposing sin, demonstrating human inability, and driving people to need grace (Galatians 3:19-25). Those who encountered God's holiness through Law fled in terror.

This contrasts sharply with New Covenant experience where believers don't flee God's voice but welcome it. Through Christ, God's Word becomes good news, not terrifying demands. We can approach boldly, hearing God's voice in Scripture with joy rather than dread. The difference isn't that God has changed but that Christ

has made access possible. His mediation transforms God's voice from condemning to comforting.

Historical Context

Exodus 19:16-20:21 describes Israel's terrified response to God's Sinai theophany. When God spoke the Ten Commandments audibly, people trembled and stood far off, begging Moses to mediate. They said, 'Let not God speak with us, lest we die' (Exodus 20:19). Moses became mediator between holy God and sinful people, prefiguring Christ's superior mediation. Rabbinic tradition elaborated on Sinai's terror—some traditions claimed many Israelites died from fear, others that their souls left their bodies. Whether literally or figuratively, these traditions emphasized Law-giving's terrifying nature. First-century readers needed to understand that Christ provides something far superior to Sinai—comfortable access to God rather than fearful distance.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Israel's terrified response to God's voice highlight the need for Christ's mediation?
2. In what ways do you approach God's Word—with Sinai-like dread or gospel-enabled delight?
3. What does this passage teach about the Law's purpose in driving people to recognize their need for grace?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	σάλπιγγος	ἤχῳ	καὶ	φωνῇ	ῥημάτων	ἧς	οἱ
And	of a trumpet	the sound	And	the voice	of words	which	G3588
G2532	G4536	G2279	G2532	G5456	G4487	G3739	
ἀκούσαντες	παρητήσαντο	μὴ	προστεθῆναι	αὐτοῖς			
voice they that heard	intreated	not	any more	to them			
G191	G3868	G3361	G4369	G846			
λόγον							
that the word							
G3056							

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 18:16 (Parallel theme): According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

1 Corinthians 15:52 (Parallel theme): In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Deuteronomy 4:12 (Word): And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.

Exodus 20:22 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (Parallel theme): For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Deuteronomy 4:33 (Parallel theme): Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

