

GOD'S PRESENCE AT MOUNT SINAI

BIBLE TEXT : Exodus 19:1-25; Hebrews 12:18-25

LESSON 60 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Exodus 19:1-25

¹ In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they *into* the wilderness of Sinai.

² For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come *to* the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

³ And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

⁴ Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

⁵ Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine:

⁶ And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

⁷ And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

⁸ And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

⁹ And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

¹⁰ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,

¹¹ And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

¹² And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, *that ye go not* up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:

¹³ There shall not an hand touch it, but he

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Israel's Arrival at Mount Sinai

1. They come to the wilderness of Sinai and pitch camp the third month, the first day, Exodus 19:1, 2
2. Moses goes up before the Presence of God and receives a message for Israel, Exodus 19:3
3. They are reminded how God brought them out of Egypt to be unto Him a "peculiar treasure," Exodus 19:4-6
4. Israel enters into a solemn covenant with God, and Moses is confirmed before them, Exodus 19:7-9

II Israel's Preparation for God's Presence

- 1 God commands Moses to sanctify the people in preparation for His presence, Exodus 19:10, 11
- 2 Bounds are set about the mount that none may touch it, lest he perish, Exodus 19:12
- 3 He who touches the mount, whether man or beast, shall be put to death, Exodus 19:13
- 4 Moses sanctifies the people and commands them to be ready against the third day, Exodus 19:14, 15

III The Majestic Presence of God upon the Mount

- 1 All the people tremble at the thunders, lightnings, and trumpet exceedingly loud, Exodus 19:16
- 2 All Israel beholds the mount smoking like a furnace as the Lord descends in a fire, Exodus 19:17, 18;
Psalms 50:3 ³ Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.
- 3 The trumpet sounds long and loud as Moses tremblingly goes up to commune with God, Exodus 19:19, 20; Hebrews 12:21
- 4 The people are warned not to approach, and the priests to sanctify themselves, lest they perish, Exodus 19:21-25; Hebrews 12:14, 29

IV Mount Sinai and Mount Zion Compared

- 1 We who are Christians are reminded of the awe-inspiring presence of God at Sinai, Hebrews 12:18-21
- 2 We, however, are come unto Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, Hebrews 12:22
- 3 We are come to the church of the first-born, to God the Judge, and to Jesus the Mediator, Hebrews 12:23, 24
- 4 If they escaped not who refused Moses who spoke on earth, how shall we escape if we refuse Him Who speaks from Heaven? Hebrews 12:25; 1:1, 2; John 1:17

Hebrews 1:1-2 ¹ God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

² Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

John 1:17 ¹⁷ For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

NOTES:

The Law

God's dealings with man are marked occasionally by great turning points in man's history. That was indeed a memorable event when God through a series of mighty miracles led Israel by the hand out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether *it be* beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

¹⁴ And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

¹⁵ And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at *your* wives.

¹⁶ And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled.

¹⁷ And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

¹⁸ And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

¹⁹ And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

²⁰ And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses *up* to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

²¹ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.

²² And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.

²³ And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.

²⁴ And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them.

²⁵ So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them.

Hebrews 12:18-25

¹⁸ For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

¹⁹ 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:

And it was no less an event when He brought them into the wilderness of Mount Sinai where Moses some months before met God at the burning bush. For it was here that Israel was to receive at the hand of this Moses that unimpeachable Law of which the Psalmist sang:

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

"The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

"Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:7-11).

The Dispensation of the Law

The giving of this Law marked the dawn of a new dispensation, revealing God's holy will, not only to the Israelites but to all mankind; that the Law like a teacher might lead men to Christ, the promised Messiah, eventually fulfilling that great prayer, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

We need not wonder, then, that the giving of the Law was attended with lightnings, thunders, and the blast of a trumpet exceedingly loud, causing all the people to tremble and even Moses to fear and quake. **For** these signs announced the presence of Almighty God Himself upon that smoking mount, and they portended the fearful judgments to be visited upon all men who broke that Law which God was about to write with His own finger.

Israel's Covenant with God

When Israel, after many marches, arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai and pitched their camp, Moses the next day went up into the very presence of God and returned with this message: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the **LORD** hath spoken we will do." Thus Israel at Mount Sinai entered into **a solemn covenant** with God.

Israel's Preparation for God's Presence

Israel's next step was to prepare for God's holy presence upon the mount. And to this end the Lord said unto Moses, "Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai."

The part in this preparation assigned Moses and the people was an outward symbol of the inward holiness which God required, "without which no man shall see the Lord," and also with which the Israelites might "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" revealed in the Law which was about to be given. And thus the justified soul, typified in Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, has a part in the perfecting work which God has planned for him — he must consecrate his all to the Lord, in order that he may be sanctified wholly: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by

²⁰ (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

²¹ And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

²² But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

²³ To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

²⁴ And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

²⁵ See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven:

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did the Children of Israel encamp when they arrived at Mount Sinai?
- 2 What had Moses experienced previously at the foot of this same mount?
- 3 What official position was Moses given when Israel arrived at the mount?
- 4 What was Israel required to do in preparation for the appearance of God?
- 5 What did this preparation typify, and what did God require of them inwardly in the way of preparation?
- 6 How did this preparation help them in regard to the Law which God was about to give?
- 7 Is anyone capable of so keeping the Law that it may bring about his salvation?
- 8 What is the function of the Law in relation to salvation through Christ?
- 9 Why did lightning and thunder and the sound of the trumpet precede the giving of the Law?
- 10 What is the substance of the Mosaic Law as it was given on Mount Sinai?

the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. **And** be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2).

This scene at Mount Sinai was thus a great turning point, not only in the history of the Jews but eventually also in the history of all the families of the earth, for unto Israel were committed the oracles of God to be handed down to mankind. And some Bible students, in calculating the chronology of the events narrated in this chapter, believe that God appeared on the mount just fifty days after the Passover observed in Egypt on the night of Israel's deliverance out of bondage. Thus this momentous event upon Mount Sinai, they hold, marks the day of Pentecost.

Mount Sinai and Mount Zion

The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that **we** are living in more serious times in this day of grace than the Israelites experienced under the Law. They indeed trembled when the sky was rent with lightning and thunder, and the mount echoed with the blast of the trumpet exceedingly long and loud, as Almighty God appeared on the smoking mount. And even Moses himself, said, "I exceedingly fear and quake."

"But ye are come," the apostle reminds us, "unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

If, then, Israel, who refused him who spoke on earth — even Moses **the** lawgiver — escaped not, how shall we escape if we refuse Him Who speaks from Heaven — even Jesus the Lifegiver? Soon He is coming again; and He is coming, not as the lowly Man of Nazareth, but as Judge of all the earth. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:15, 16). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."