

GOD'S PRESENCE AT MOUNT SINAI

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

LESSON 60 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh" (Hebrews 12:25).

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

NOTES:

Sinai

The Children of Israel have come to the wilderness of Sinai. This was not strange territory for Moses, because it was here that he had tended his father-in-law's flocks while an exile from Egypt. It was at Mount Horeb that God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and commissioned him to go back to Egypt to lead out His chosen people. Mount Horeb is a chain of mountains of which Sinai is a peak, and the names are used interchangeably. The Children of Israel are to camp in this location for almost a year, and some of the most solemn and impressive scenes in Bible history appear here. Here God gives the Ten Commandments.

God had spoken from time to time to Moses from the pillar that was leading them on their pilgrimage, and now the cloud evidently hovered over the top of the mountain, and Moses went up to talk with God. We read of Moses, at the close of his life: "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face" (Deuteronomy 34:10). What wonderful blessings Moses received because He lived wholly to please God!

On Eagles' Wings

The Lord told Moses to remind the Children of Israel of the wonders they had seen Him perform in Egypt, and to remind them of the way He had borne them up as on eagles' wings. When a mother eagle teaches her young to fly, she pushes them out of the nest to force them to use their wings. But if the eaglet cannot keep aloft, or is in danger of dashing itself against a cliff, the mother will fly under it and lift it again on her wings to a higher altitude for a new effort. In like manner God had lifted up His people and kept them from hurting themselves. He had drawn them to Himself, a special people. That is how much He loved them, in spite of their murmurings. And He did so want them to love Him!

God told Moses that if the Israelites would obey Him they should be a peculiar treasure unto Him. We know what a treasure is: something that is very valuable to us, something we especially love and take good care of. That is just what God thought of the Children of Israel. He was the Creator of the world and everything that is in it, including all the people; but He was going to show special favour to this group of people whom He had chosen to bear His name. He wanted them to be a holy nation, and they should all be priests (Exodus 19:6). We shall see that they failed miserably of living up to what He desired; but through the Blood of Jesus we can fulfil that will of God and be a royal priesthood unto God (**I Peter 2:5** ⁵ Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.).

Hasty Promises

Moses went down from the mountain and told the people what God had said. The promises God had made sounded good to them; they were eager to receive the blessing about which God spoke. They quickly promised to do everything that God asked, but they did not stop to consider what it meant to do the will of God. Very soon after His glory was shown to them, they forgot all

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 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

about the Lord. Solomon, the wisest man in all the earth, said, "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:5). They promised to do all God asked, but almost immediately they went back on their promises.

God offers us even more than He promised the Israelites, and He asks so little in return; but how few there are who are willing to be obedient to the Lord in order to enjoy His blessings!

Moses returned the next day to the mount and told God that the Children of Israel had promised to do all He asked.

The Voice of God

God now tells Moses a little of the awesome event that is about to take place. In three days He is going to speak out of a thick cloud to Moses in such a manner that everyone will hear. They will never be able to offer the excuse that Moses is not sent by God, that He knows no more than they. They will hear the Voice from the cloud, but they will see no one.

Think how those people must have felt when they were going before the Lord! Moses directed them to cleanse themselves thoroughly, and wash all their clothes. They had to be clean when they came before the God of all the earth. When one comes before God he cannot cover any of his sins. If he expects an answer to his prayers, he must confess his sins first, and be forgiven, then he can ask God for greater things. The washing of clothes here is a type of our inward cleansing when the Blood of Jesus covers our sins.

The people were given three days to prepare themselves, and then they were to gather at the base of the mountain to listen to God.

Fifty Days After the Passover

It was now the third month since the Israelites had left Egypt. Some believe that when the Scripture states "the same day" it refers to the first day of the month. If such be the case, and one day is allowed for Moses' going into the mountain and returning, and another day for his giving the people's answer to God, the next three days would add up to fifty since the Passover.

After the mode of living for the Israelites was established, they were to celebrate three feasts: the Passover on the 14th day of the first month; the Feast of Weeks, which was celebrated a week of weeks (seven weeks) after the Passover; and the Feast of Tabernacles, which came in the fall of the year. The Feast of Weeks (fifty days after the Passover) is called Pentecost in the New Testament, and was the day the Holy Ghost fell upon the 120 in the upper room, 50 days after Jesus died as our Paschal Lamb. It is believed by some that the Feast of Weeks was held to commemorate the giving of the Law (**Deuteronomy 16:9-12**).

⁹ Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from *such time as thou beginnest to put* the sickle to the corn. ¹⁰ And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give *unto the LORD thy God*, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: ¹¹ And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there. ¹² And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.).

The Mount that Burned

The great day came. All the people were gathered around the foot of the mountain. God had commanded Moses to set a boundary so that none of the people through curiosity or boldness would venture too near, because "if so much as a beast touch

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:

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

the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart" (Hebrews 12:20).

That morning there was a rumbling on the mountaintop, and smoke billowed high. Thunder crashed, and the whole mountain shook as by an earthquake. There was such an upheaval of nature that even Moses became frightened. Then came the long clear blast of a trumpet, blown by God Himself or the angels who accompanied Him. It blew louder and louder until Moses spoke to God. The Lord answered Moses "by a voice," and commanded him to ascend the mountain. But God was not ready to give the Law. He knew how wilful the Children of Israel were, and He was still they did not realise how important it was for them not to come too close to the mountain. So He sent Moses down to warn the people once more to keep their distance. However, when he came up the mountain again he was to bring Aaron with him, so he, too, could hear when God gave the Law. Aaron was soon to be anointed as priest, and he needed the divine authority to give him honour with the people.

The people became so frightened with all the thunder and lightning, the fire and smoke, that they drew back from God. They told Moses he could go and talk with God, and tell them what His commandments were, "but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

The Love of Jesus

Today we do not have to be afraid when we come to Jesus. He holds out His arms of love; He died to satisfy the wrath of God, and made the way whereby we can enter into the Holiest of All. He has made us, who are washed in the Blood of Jesus, members of the church of the first-born whose names are written in Heaven (Hebrews 12:18-24). But since Jesus has given us such wonderful heavenly blessings, we must be careful to live to please Him, or we will deserve even greater punishment than the Israelites had to suffer when they disobeyed God.

QUESTIONS

1. Where are the Children of Israel now camped?
2. Have we ever heard of this site before?
3. What does God tell Moses is going to happen after the Israelites have purified themselves for three days?
4. How did God announce His presence? Why were the Israelites afraid?
5. What would happen if either a man or an animal touched the mountain?

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: