

In God's Holy Presence

Read Exodus 19

Throughout history, God has drawn near to individuals: Adam and Eve; Enoch; Noah; Abraham; Hagar; Jacob; and many more. Often in these encounters God is tender and personal.

But here in Exodus 19, He was anything but tender and personal. A thick cloud (v.9), thunder and lightning (vv.16, 19), a mighty trumpet blast that grew louder and louder (vv.16, 19), fire, smoke, and earthquake (v.18) - these are the ways the With-us God revealed His presence. While God was on the mountain, any living thing that touched the mountain must die, whether human or animal. The people stood at a distance and trembled with fear.

Did the God of Exodus 19 really want to be with His people, or was He trying to scare them away? These people witnessed God's presence more directly, with their senses, than perhaps any other people ever have. They saw and heard and felt the presence of the Living God. And what was their reaction? They were terrified! They were glad to listen to God's words from Moses, but they didn't want to hear God's voice any more (Exodus 20:18-19).

Why did God reveal Himself in such a way to His people? Why did He want His presence to be so terrifying? What was He teaching them, and what is He teaching us?

- If we are to have a relationship with the Living God, we must know Him for who He is. Realize that the One who draws near us is also transcendent, high above us. The One who is gentle and tender also has fearsome power. None can oppose Him. The One who loves us as we are is also holy - pure, sinless, and separate.
- Moses explained it this way:
"Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin." (Exodus 20:20, NASB)

To be the people of the Holy God, we must be holy. For Him to be *with us*, we must be cleansed as only He can cleanse us. We must be separated entirely to Him. We must be His completely.