



Potomac Hills

Presbyterian Church, PCA

By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
Exodus 19:7–25

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English Standard Version

“The Thunder of the Lord”

The 26th Sermon in a series on the Book of Exodus entitled

“The Glory of the Lord!”

Exodus 19:7-25

“So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. ⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.” When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD, ¹⁰ the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments ¹¹ and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹² And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. ¹³ No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.’ When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.” ¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. ¹⁵ And he said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.”

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended

on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. ¹⁹ And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. ²⁰ The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. ²¹ And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to look and many of them perish. ²² Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them.” ²³ And Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for you yourself warned us, saying, ‘Set limits around the mountain and consecrate it.’” ²⁴ And the LORD said to him, “Go down, and come up bringing Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them.” ²⁵ So Moses went down to the people and told them.”

Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. We need to be reminded of that God is so much greater than we can imagine! We need to be reminded that the Glory of the Lord is so much greater than we can imagine! We need to be reminded that Exodus is a redemption story. We need a redemption story. And so we pray that by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, our Redeemer, in His name we pray, amen.

INTRODUCTION: Major Changes in Modern History ¹

Hey, in the weekly email this week, I asked you a question — What's the biggest change **you've ever seen**? I'm not talking about personal things, but **global**. And I'm not talking about things that effected just you or your family, but **monumental** changes that effected **everyone**. In your lifetime, what changes have you seen take place that's effected **the whole world**? What comes to mind first? Now that you've got that change firmly in your mind, let me ask a follow up question — Was that change characterized by a specific event? Was there a particular event that came to symbolize global change?

Of course, how you answer those two questions (biggest change and symbolic event) will vary a great deal depending on how old you are. For most of our congregation, it's quite possibly **“The Rise of Terrorism”** as symbolized by **9/11**. And yet, for the remaining wise seniors in our congregation (there are still a few!), nothing could eclipse World War II, which could be symbolized by either the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor at the beginning of the war, or the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan near the end of the war. You might pick D-Day or VE Day, both huge events at the time.

About 9–10 years ago, when my daughter Sarah was in college, we talked about a history assignment she had. And that assignment was trying to answer these questions of biggest change and most symbolic events **in her lifetime**, which takes you back to the early 80's. I found my list the other day and this is what I came up with – now, remember, this list is about 10 years old.

- 1. The Passing of Modernity** – symbolized by the Fall of the Berlin Wall.
- 2. The Power of Moral Influence** – symbolized by the reign of Pope John Paul II.
- 3. The Push for Freedom** –symbolized by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

¹ Part of the Introduction is adapted from the article *“How the Wormhole Decade (2000–2010) Changed the World: Five implications no one can afford to ignore.”* By Sally Blount, from the online journal, *Kellogg Insight*, 4/7/16, <http://insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu>.

4. **The Pervasiveness of Globalization** – symbolized by protesters in the Muslim world wearing Levi’s and Nike’s.
5. **The Rise of Terrorism** – symbolized, obviously, by 9/11.
6. **The Pulse of Technological Change** – symbolized by the dominance of the Internet and access to near–instantaneous global information.

I don’t know what your list would look like, but I think she got an A on that assignment. A safe bet, since she got an A on most of her assignments. But even more intriguing than the momentous events of the past is the fact that I don’t know **what’s coming next**. What will the next generations look to? It’s probably too soon to say for anyone under the age of 25, and we hope it won’t prove to be tragedy like the ones I’ve mentioned, but if history’s a guide, it most likely will be.

But perhaps not. My early vote will be for **massive, unnoticed change**. If you stop and think about life since 9/11, you’ll realize that it’s rare in human history that a single generation comes of age during a time of **truly foundational change**. But from 2002 to 2012 (which is the last year we have good historical records) everything happened at warp speed — and in such a strange way that most people **didn’t seem to notice the magnitude** of these changes. So much so, that one writer, a Dean at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, has called it the **“wormhole decade”—a period when the traditional rules of economic might, social status, and political hierarchy were completely rewritten**. And she called it the wormhole decade because it’s as if we were all transported into a new universe through a wrinkle in the space–time continuum.

The wormhole decade began with 9/11, the first major foreign attack on the continental United States in nearly two centuries. Two months later Goldman Sachs introduced the term “BRIC” (which stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China) and the idea that these economies might grow in importance in the 21st Century. At that time, they were together producing approx. 5% of global GDP [Gross Domestic Product – or how much each country contributes to the world economy]. By 2010, with the European and U.S. economies struggling, the BRIC countries accounted for nearly 20%, and today it’s estimated to be 30%, of global GDP — that’s a huge shift in economic power.

Meanwhile, the expansion of the Internet exploded the amount of data and information available, and the invention of smartphones and tablets created a world of unparalleled market transparency, creativity, and collaboration. A 16-year-old in Mumbai now has so much data and network access at her fingertips, it’s akin to what a Fortune 100 CEO had in back in the 80’s. With the founding of Facebook, Twitter, and Ted Talks, we learned about likes, retweets, and views — revolutionizing the way we think about social status, branding, and reputation-building. With Uber’s founding in 2009, the taxi industries that crisscross the world’s capitals were upended in less than five years.

This rate and magnitude of societal change is **unprecedented** in human history. Now halfway through the second decade of the 21st Century, have any of us fully understood the depth of these shifts and how they will impact us for years to come? People of all incomes, ages, and life experiences struggle daily with an **overwhelming** amount of information. We spend so much time on handheld devices that we have almost stopped living “real.” Family members and work colleagues alike **struggle to be as present when face to face** as they are to their virtual relationships on e-mail, Facebook, and Instagram. Even people waiting in lines don’t look at

each other or out at the world anymore — only downward, at their screens. Research shows us that we can't resist the addictive pull, yet we are not getting smarter, more fulfilled, or nourished as a result. Just more isolated, distracted, and discontent. It is a strange new world. And we all need to wake up and catch up. Some of the most fundamental rules of human organizing have just been rewritten, and few people seem to realize it.

The last 15 years of the 20th Century and the first 15 years of the 21st Century will undoubtedly be remembered both as an era of mushrooming technology **and vanishing virtue**. As the world's scientific achievements increase, **its moral discernment declines**. Institutions once sacred are now **scorned**. Beliefs that our less sophisticated forefathers revered and respected are now **relinquished** and **ridiculed**. The last thirty years has spawned a noticeable decrease in reverence, and this tendency is nowhere more evident than in religion. **Even The Church** has a **grossly inadequate appreciation of who God is and how He should be revered**.

Now what does all this have to do with Moses and **Exodus 19**? I think a lot, actually ... because in this chapter we're confronted by a moment of **massive social, economic, political, and personal change**. We have moved from Genesis, which was focused on a family ... to Exodus, which, starting in this chapter is focused on a nation of families, which will last all the way through the Old Testament up to the Book of Acts ... and then the focus shifts to a family of nations, which will take us up to the return of Christ. Family to a Nation of Families to a Family of Nations – that's **the scope of change** through Biblical History. And I was thinking about this because we've come to one of those turning points – a life-changing event for an entire nation. After being eyewitness to a dramatic series of terrible plagues; and to the parting of the Red Sea and the drowning of the Egyptian Army; you would think the people of Israel could handle just about anything that came their way. But in **Exodus 19:7-25**, our passage for this week, God shows up. We're told that God descends on Mt. Sinai in fire and that He answered Moses in thunder. And we're told that **“all the people in the camp trembled.”** The people were **more scared** of God than they were of the plagues or the Egyptians or the miracles. They were **more unsure and uncertain** about this **unknown God** than they were over all the massive change crashing into their lives. You can read this chapter and think it's just a boring story **without realizing** that this is one of the **great turning points** in human history. And you can read this chapter and think it's just about an historical event **without realizing** that it's also one of the **great introductions** of the Gospel. So let's turn to **Exodus 19:7–25** and see what it says. And the first thing God wants you to know, in the midst of all this turmoil and upheaval, in the midst of massive change and momentous events, whether noticed or not, is that ...

v. 7–15: GOD IS HOLY ²

“So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, “All that the

2 The Exposition of the text is adapted from the books, Preaching the Word: Exodus by Dr. Philip Graham Ryken, pages 491–500; The Lamb of God: Seeing Jesus in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, & Deuteronomy by Nancy Guthrie, pages 119–126; and Exodus: A Commentary for Children by Nancy Ganz, pages 127–131. **And the sermons**, “*Life with God: Preparation for a Divine Encounter*” 1/27/02, and “*Life with God: Meeting God*” 2/17/02, both by Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, Chancellor, Reformed Theological Seminary, preached at First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, www.fpcjackson.org; and “*The New City*” by Dr. Timothy Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 10/27/02, sermons.redeemer.com, Logos Bible Software 6.9, *The Tim Keller Sermon Archive*.

LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. ⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.” When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD, ¹⁰ the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments ¹¹ and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹² And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. ¹³ No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.’ When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.” ¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. ¹⁵ And he said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.”

First of all, I want to start with the last few verses. Look with me at **verses 10–13**. Here God says, now I’m going to come **and meet you**, and not just you Moses, I’ve been meeting with you for a while, but now I’m going to come and **meet My people**. I’m coming for a visit. I’m moving into your neighborhood and in preparation for My coming, the people need to consecrate themselves. To consecrate means to set apart or make holy. And in **verses 10–13**, He tells us at least three ways that the people of Israel are to consecrate themselves — to be set apart to the Lord and for His service.

First, end of **verse 10**, they’re to wash their garments. **Second**, they are to be ready for the third day. **Third**, bounds are to be set around, not the people, but around the mountain. What’s going on? **First**, they’re to wash their garments. What do you think this symbolizes? It’s not just that they need to be good and clean. You know, like your mother scrubbed you up real good on Saturday night, so you’d be presentable at church on Sunday morning. There’s something of greater significance here. **God is holy, the people are not. God is clean, the people are not.** They need to be clean before the Lord in order to come into His presence, and the washing of the garments reminds us of that truth. That is a truth that Moses is going to elaborate **repeatedly** in the next three books of the Old Testament. To dwell in the presence of the Lord, you must be **clean**, you must be **holy**, so the garments must be **washed**. It’s a physical reminder of a spiritual truth – ***without holiness no one can see the Lord.***

Second, be ready. There’s a three-day wait involved. God says, I’m coming, but I’m not coming for another three days. Now that gives them time to **prepare**, but it also gives them time to **reflect** about what it is to have the Lord come visit you. I would think that there was some nervousness amongst Israel ... **waiting** for the Lord to come meet them. Among other things, it required them to **focus** on the Lord. You see in **verse 15** that Moses says that during that time there are to be no marital relations? Why? Because sex is sinful? No, because their focus is to be on the Lord. Marriage is a wonderful gift from God, but the children of Israel are to wholly **focus** on the Lord for three days.

Finally, boundaries are set around the mountain. Again, why? The mountain is going to become a tabernacle. There was no tabernacle at this time. Mt. Sinai is going to **become** the tabernacle. God is going to dwell there. Under the laws of the tabernacle, who could enter into the holy of holies? Only the priest, only the mediator appointed by God, and him only once a year. Otherwise you go in **and you die**. The same thing for Mt. Sinai. What’s the point? **God is holy**, we’re not. It’s an awesome thing to commune with the living God. Over and over again

the holiness of God is being emphasized. It's a serious thing, it's serious business to commune with God.

I think that's a very important lesson for the Christians today. We live in a day and age where professing Christians deal **flippantly** with God. We're **casual** about our relationship with God. Just listen to how some people pray – some people talk with God like He's the beer salesman at Camden Yards – “Yo God, can we get some blessing over here?” I just shake my head and repeat to myself, “you're not allowed to hit people, you're not allowed to hit people, you're not allowed to hit people.” But frankly, that type of **casual** attitude towards God pervades the church today. Is it possible that we are more comfortable worshiping God **than we should be**? I love the passage in her book Teaching a Stone to Talk where Annie Dillard worries that we have forgotten how **dangerous** it is to come into the presence of the living God. She writes, “On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of the conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are [like] children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews.” We have forgotten that **God is holy** ... and that God is **wholly other, different, above, transcendent**. God is reminding us here in **Exodus 19** that meeting with God **is serious business** and it's no less serious today than it was at Mt. Sinai.

Now, let's go back and look at **verses 7–9**. In that section, we're seeing the covenant confirmed between God and His people through Moses **the mediator**. There are some strange things here. It's not strange for us to hear God tell Moses to go tell the people His words. Up to this point God has not spoken directly to His people. In **Exodus 20**, that changes and God is going to speak directly to the people and something very interesting is going to happen, but I'm not going to tell you yet, you'll have to come back next week. Here, however, nothing strange about God saying, “*Moses, go tell the people what I said.*” **You know what is strange?** Look at the end of **verses 8 and 9**. We're told there that Moses goes back up the mountain and **tells God** what the people said to His promises, what the people said to His offer of this covenant of grace. Now, if you're like me, you're scratching your head and you're saying, “Why is Moses going back up the mountain to tell God, **who knows everything**, what the people said?”

Not because God **needs** someone to tell Him what the people said. What we're seeing enacted here is a covenant ritual where the representative of one party goes to the other party and says, “Here are the conditions of the covenant, here are the promises of the covenant, here are the stipulations of the covenant.” And then a representative of the other party comes back and says, “Well, they agreed to those conditions. They agree with those requirements.” But here Moses is the mediator for both parties, as the one appointed by God.

Now notice in **verse 8** that the people respond to God's gracious offer of this covenant by saying, “*All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.*” Again, if you're like me [thank God you're not], you're wondering, “Wait a minute, you haven't heard **Exodus 20** yet.” It would be easy to criticize the children of Israel for being **a bit too hasty** to say that they were going to be able to do all this. You have to understand that the children of Israel **had to embrace this covenant**. This was God's purpose, **for them to willingly embrace His covenant**. God offers His covenant, He makes promises, He offers blessings, but that covenant **must be embraced**. The

children of Israel had to **embrace** this covenant **by faith**. They had to acknowledge God's lordship, and they had to **trust** in His blessing, through the promises that He had made in this covenant.

So, when the children of Israel say, “*All that the Lord has spoken we will do,*” among other things, they’re confirming that, as a people, as a nation, they **embrace** the blessing and the promises of this covenant that God has made with them. They **trust** in Him, they acknowledge Him to be who He says He is, and they acknowledge Him to be their God. They are embracing the covenant.

That’s not something that passed away in the days of the old covenant. Today, in order to have a saving relationship with God ... you still have to **embrace** the covenant. You know, there are all sorts of people who your friends with, who believe that God exists. They may believe that He’s a God of love and mercy and compassion. They may even believe some of the things the Bible says about Him, **but they have never embraced Him**.

Notice that, in this very passage, Moses is emphasizing that even when God is offering grace, **it must be embraced**. The way the children of Israel do that is, fundamentally, **by faith**. They acknowledge God to be the Lord and they **trust** in His promise. The obedience flows from that, but fundamentally they **embrace** Him as Lord and they **trust** in His promise. The covenant must be **embraced**.

I want to pause right now and say, it's a wonderful thing to come to our worship service and hear about God, Sunday after Sunday after Sunday. It would be a terrible thing to do that **and never embrace the promises** that are set forth by Him and about Him in His Word and in the Preaching of the Word. If you want to know God, savingly, eternally, you must **embrace His promises by faith**. It's not enough to know **about** them, it's not enough to know **about** Him, but you must **embrace** the promises of Him as your Lord. You **must trust** in Him.

Of course, for those of us who live in this age, which is the time after the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that means **trusting in Christ alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel**. God's grace as offered in the gospel demands a human response. That human response is an **embrace** of the promises and that happens **by faith**. If you want to know Him and enjoy Him forever, you must **embrace** Him, you must **trust** Him. That truth is as true now as it was in **Exodus 19. You Have To Get This!** God's covenant of grace has to be **embraced** and it has to be **embraced by faith**.

The first part of the Gospel is to realize that **God is holy** and that ...

v. 16–25: MAN IS SINFUL

“On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. ¹⁹ And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. ²⁰ The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. ²¹ And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to look and many of them perish. ²² Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them.” ²³ And Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot

come up to Mount Sinai, for you yourself warned us, saying, 'Set limits around the mountain and consecrate it.'" ²⁴ *And the LORD said to him, "Go down, and come up bringing Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them."* ²⁵ *So Moses went down to the people and told them."*

Here we see **God's awesomeness** revealed in this tremendous display at Mt. Sinai. We're greeted with a scene that looks like a combination of a volcano and a colossal thunderstorm. Thunder and lightning. Peals of thunder and flashes of lightning explode in the sky. You know, in the Scriptures, God manifested His presence to His people with a display of thunder and lightning. Here it is again. Thick clouds descend upon the top of Mt. Sinai. This is the cloud of glory. This is the Shekinah glory, the glory cloud of God. It signifies His **presence**. The Hebrews knew that God was not confined to Mt. Sinai. They knew that He was not just the God **in** the clouds, but that He was the God **over** the clouds. When God manifested Himself **in** the storm, **in** the fire, **in** the cloud, the Hebrews knew that meant He's the God **over** all those things. All these naturalistic phenomena are designed to emphasize **His sovereignty**.

Then we're told that there's a loud trumpet. This is the ram's horn, the shofar, that was used to announce the arrival of the King. It grows louder and louder, more frequently and frequently. The King is drawing near. The Lord drawing near to His people. His people would have understood the significance of that horn sounding. Smoke and fire are mentioned as one of the manifestations. The smoke is ascending like a furnace, we are told. You have this picture of this gigantic fireplace, belching smoke into the air, thousands of feet above Mt. Sinai.

It's an incredible scene, but do you remember the last time that God manifested Himself to His people like this in the books of Moses? It was at Sodom and Gomorrah, the last time He manifested Himself in the form of the fire and in the form of the smoke and in the form of the furnace. **Genesis 19:28** was the last time God had revealed Himself with this kind of phenomena, and it was a sign of **judgment**. Now think of it here. God preparing to enter into covenant with His people, and He comes, not only with a sign of **power** and a sign of **presence**, but with a sign of **judgment**.

In **verse 18** we're told that the mountain itself **quaked** like a volcanic eruption, that it felt like an earthquake. The natural order is **shaking** under the weight of the **presence** of the Almighty. The Almighty has made this mountain to be the tabernacle of His **presence**, the holy of holies, and the physical structure of the mountain **quakes** under His **presence**. No wonder we're told that the response of God's people in this scene is to **tremble**. Wouldn't you have trembled?

The purpose, my friends, is to declare the presence of **the Glory of the Lord**. To prepare the way for the sermon that God is going to deliver with His own lips, to provide the context for this covenant making ceremony which is going to come in **Exodus 20–24**, and to remind the people they're **meeting with God**.

Do you realize that **never before** and **never after** did God manifest Himself to the gathered assembly of His people with such a **spectacular display** as this? Do you realize that **never before** had there been a manifestation **on this order** to God's people? Do you realize that **never** in the ministry of Joshua, **never** in the ministry of the Judges, **never** in the times of the kings and the prophets, **never** in Isaiah's time or Ezekiel's time or Jeremiah's time, or in Malachi's time, or in Paul's time, or Peter's time, or John's time, or James' time, or in Jesus' time, **did God ever manifest Himself** like He manifested Himself here? **There has NEVER** been a

physical display in the history of God's redemption like this one. There never will be again ... until the Lord Jesus comes on the last day in power and in glory. I want you to understand that God is putting the exclamation point on this because the sermon that He's about to preach, beginning in **Exodus 20**, is something that He wants to get through to us. God Himself is going to be the preacher. It's as if God is saying, 'What's about to happen is incredibly important. I don't want you to miss this,' so we get this incredible sermon introduction like no sermon introduction you have ever heard.

It is vital to understand **Exodus 19** so that you don't misunderstand **Exodus 20**. You can even say more than that. You can say that it's vital to understand **Exodus 19** less you misunderstand the whole purpose of **Exodus 20–24**. **Exodus 20** gives us the summarization of God's law in the Ten Commandments. **Exodus 21–24** gives the elaboration on that law, especially with regard to loving your neighbor. It's possible to go to all those commandments and think, "Ah ha, this is how God is telling you how you can be saved. This is how God is telling you to be able to be declared righteous and accepted by Him and justified." But if you understand **Exodus 19**, you'll never think that about **Exodus 20**.

So it's vital for us to understand the grace foundations of God's law in order that we might appreciate the correct role of God's law in the Christian life. Moses is given words from God, which contain both grace and promises, and calls to obedience and responsibility. So, in the words that Moses has already been given to speak to the people, we see words of grace and words of responsibility, words of promise and words of obedience. In this relationship, which is being established between God and Israel, we see that **God's grace** is the foundation of that relationship, but that that relationship will require our response of obedience. Obedience is not the way **we get the grace** of God, but it's the lived out demonstration that **we've already gotten the grace** of God. And so there's no change in salvation, there's no change in the covenant of grace, there's no change in our need to get God's grace, and then responding to that grace with our obedience. **But there is one difference.** We are moving from ...

Hebrews 12:18–24: MT. SINAI TO MT. ZION

We're no longer at Mt. Sinai ... but now we have come to Mt. Zion. And that may not mean much to you, but that difference is **great**. That difference is **huge**. That difference carries **enormous weight** for each one of us. Now let me prove that to you. Turn in your Bibles to **Hebrews 12**. We're going from near the beginning of the Bible to near the end of the Bible. The **first** thing I want to emphasize is this, you must **trust**. You must **trust**, you must **by faith embrace** God's covenant of grace. **Second** communing with God is serious business. God is sovereign, He's almighty, He's not to be messed around with. **Third**, the great difference between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion is not that God was awesome then and He's not so awesome now. Not that the scene is fearful then and it's not fearful now. The great difference between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion **is the mediator**.

Look at what the author of Hebrews says in **Hebrews 12:18–23**, "*For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.²⁰ For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn*

who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,”

Stop there for a second. You see, the scene is **no less awesome**. It's not that there's less to be in awe of at Mt. Zion. What happens in the Bible when angels come to visit people? One angel appears and suddenly there's **object fear** and the angel always has to say, "Don't be afraid. I'm not going to hurt you." Here, you're told that you're going to be in the midst of **innumerable angels**. It's going to be an awesome sight. What's the difference? Not that God is less awesome, not that it's a less awesome thing to enter into the presence of God at Mt. Zion. So what's the difference? **Verse 24, "and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood which speaks better than the blood of Abraham."**

There's the difference. The difference between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion is that now you have, **by grace**, through the work of the Holy Spirit, been united to the Mediator. The mediator is no longer a man of great admiration and godliness, but is still a sinner. Now the Mediator is the God-man Jesus Christ, perfect in holiness, power, love, and purity. You are united to Him **by faith**, and whereas, in the old covenant, meaning the Mosaic Covenant, only the mediator went to the tabernacle or to the mountain and the people watched and waited, in the new covenant, because we're united to the Mediator, we go within the veil with Him.

The veil is awesome, Mt. Zion is awesome, the innumerable angels are awesome. God the judge is awesome, but we go there, boldly, confidently, because we're united to the Mediator, **Hebrews 4:14-16**, "*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*"

Have you **trusted** in the mediator, who can take you into the presence of God and you will not be consumed? That's what Moses is reminding you to do as we read this Old Covenant passage with New Covenant eyes. He's reminding you that it's serious business to commune with the living God. He can't be taken flippantly. And you've got to **embrace** His covenant of grace. How do you **embrace** it? You **embrace** it by **trusting** the mediator, **the Lord Jesus Christ**. When you do, you find that the blessings of the covenant of grace are so much yours that you can enter into the presence of the living God, and see Him, **and not be consumed**. The people of Israel **feared the unknown God**. But once He met them, and spoke with them, and established a saving relationship with them, and communicated how they are to do life as saved people ... then they **feared this known God**. But they changed the definition **of fear**. They used to **fear God** in the sense of being afraid of Him. Now that they know Him, they **fear God** in the sense of great awe and reverence and respect and before whom we ought to humble ourselves and be grateful for His grace and mercy. So let me end with this question ... How do you **fear God**?

Think about that ... You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Teach us the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord, the One True Mediator between our sinful selves and a Holy

God. Thank you that “For our sake You made Him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in Jesus, we might become the righteousness of God.” Grant that we may live in that holiness and righteousness, in the name of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

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1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

#ExodusGlory

“Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”