

# EXODUS

## THE GOD WHO REDEEMS

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### **SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 19:16-25**

To understand more about Mount Sinai and the holiness of God.

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#### **Read the Text:**

*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. (Exodus 19:16-25, ESV)*

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#### **Study the Text:**

### **Sinai, Pt. 2**

Chapter 19 continues with a description of what happens around Mount Sinai when the LORD descended on it (Ex. 19:16). This chapter also focuses on the LORD and Moses' conversation and concern for the people as they stand at the foot of the mountain (Ex. 19:21-23), before concluding with the LORD telling Moses to bring Aaron up the mountain (Exodus 19:24). Below is a breakdown of some of the keywords and phrases in this passage.

#### **THE COMING OF THE LORD**

Although only a short wait, three days, the LORD comes in an even more dramatic way than promised. In last week's study, the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud" and also, "when the trumpet sounds a long blast" (Exodus 19:9, 13). But the description here shows what it is like when God Almighty comes "down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people" (Ex. 19:11). "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" (Ex. 19:16). Not only does His presence on the mountain include the addition of thunders and lightning, but the trumpet blast that is promised is so loud that the people in the camp tremble. The LORD's presence is not just a spectacle; He comes for a reason. He is wanting the people to pay attention so that they hear Yahweh speak to Moses and believe Moses forever (Ex. 19:9). The coming of the LORD is a purposeful event, as is all of God's workings. *Nothing* God does is without reason.

#### **THUNDER AND LIGHTNING**

The specific presence on the third day of "thunders and lightnings" is significant, for it represents not only the presence of God but the authority of God to judge. In Revelation 4:5, Christ is seated on His throne, and "from the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder." Later, in Revelation chapter 11,

when the Temple of God was opened and the ark of his covenant was seen within his Temple, “there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail (hail, being another one of God’s judgments against Egypt in Exodus). In Revelation 8 and 16, when the Seventh Seal is broken and the Seventh Trump is blown, both lightning and thunder are present in the judgments of God against the Kingdom of the Beast. Thunder and lightning are representative of the power and terror of the living God, and His authority to judge all who stand before Him.

### **FIRE**

Moreover, fire is present as well. Recall that in chapter 3, Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law on this very same mountain, Horeb, *the Mountain of God*, and “the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush... the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed” (Ex. 3:2). We find a similar situation in chapter 19. However, instead of a bush, *the whole mountain* is ablaze: “Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire” (Ex. 19:18).

### **TREMBLING TO CURIOUS**

All the people in the camp trembled at the beginning of this chapter, but then in verse 21, God has to tell Moses to “warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to look and many of them perish.” Whether curiosity or blatant disobedience, the people who stood at the foot of the mountain have had limits set and a warning to “take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death,” and yet Moses must go back down to warn them again. The curiosity of the people toward the LORD is enough to pull them toward a trembling mountain in a state of unquenchable fire. The LORD draws His people despite outward appearances.

### **BREAK OUT AGAINST THEM**

Verse 22 adds, “lest the LORD break out against them.” Both the priests and the general population are both to be warned of the consequence of coming up to the LORD. The LORD breaking out against them is not a veiled threat; it is a guarantee of their death. No matter the sacrificial steps anyone takes to be before the LORD (e.g. washing garments, staying sexually pure, etc.) it will *never cover disobedience*. And the LORD telling Moses to repeat it over multiple days to both the general population and the priests speaks to both their hearts as disobedient and the likelihood that without the repeated warning, they would have sought to see the LORD, and would have died as a result.

### **DOWN AND UP**

Throughout the passage there are a number of directional cues: “The LORD came down,” “the LORD called Moses to the top,” “Moses went up,” “the LORD said to Moses,” “the LORD said to him, “Go down, and come up,” and finally “so Moses went down.” Even Aaron, the initial lineage of the high priests, has to go up. Ascending and descending is the fate of the one who is intermediary between God and man. And while Moses faithfully does what the LORD demands in chapter 19, he will come to a point where he falls short of God’s demands (eventually, in Num. 20). However, the good news is the Lord said to another, “Go down, and come up,” and He did not fail in any part. For, “no one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man” (Jn. 3:13) and, “we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God” (Heb. 4:14). Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, and although Moses intercedes for the LORD here, Jesus is a better intermediary for all time because while he is fully man, He is fully God, and God is one.

## What About Now?

One takeaway in this passage is the mercy of God. God knowing that his people will hear His voice and want to approach, even if only to see their God, would be approaching the Lord in a disobedient manner. He demands obedience, and He deserves it. Another takeaway is knowing that we are not replacing Moses. Sometimes we approach God as if we are to make ourselves holy by sacrificing our time, money, etc. in order to gain the intercessor role that Moses plays here. However, the scripture is clear. Jesus fulfills this role, and while we are called to obey all that He commanded, we are not sacrificing anything in order to obtain God's favor or for God to not "break out against" us. Jesus has already taken on the wrath of God and is seated at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Exodus 19:16. What was the scene on the third day? What was the peoples' response?

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2. Read Exodus 19:17. Where does Moses take the people? Is this in line with what the LORD spoke three days earlier to Moses (Ex. 19:12)?

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### Day Two

1. Read Exodus 19:19-20. Where was Moses when he spoke and God answered him in thunder? Why do you think the conversation started there? (Hint: See Ex. 19:9)

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2. Read Exodus 19:21. What does the LORD want Moses to warn the people about? What will happen?

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### Day Three

1. Read Exodus 19:22. Who does God want Moses to warn next? What must they do?

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2. Why do you think the priests are added to the list of those who should not break through to come up to the LORD in verse 24, when mentioned separately in verse 21?

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### Day Four

1. Read Exodus 19:23. Seeing how Moses responds to the LORD, do you think he has confidence in the peoples' obedience?
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2. Read Exodus 19:24-25. Given the LORD's response, should Moses have felt differently? What does Moses do with the LORD's last comment?
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#### Discuss the Text!

### Week 46 Discussion: Refocus Your Worship

Exodus 19:16-25 shows us a picture of God's presence as thunders, lightning, thick cloud and loud trumpets, and as a fire that gives smoke to completely surround the mountain. This is a picture that should make you tremble as it did the Israelites. And like the Israelites, we are to keep ourselves from sin, but we also have someone who not only tells us what God has said, but helps us in every way. Talk as a group about the role Jesus plays in our communion with God.

1. Icebreaker: When you think of God do you think of Him as peaceful or bringing thunder, lightning and fire?
2. Does God still require his people to be holy to approach Him? Why or why not?
3. What are the consequences of approaching God with sin in our lives?
4. How does Jesus stand between God the father and man differently than Moses? Does this give you boldness?

### Takeaways:

1. The Lord came down on Mount Sinai.
2. God's presence makes the people tremble.